

LITERARY CRITICISM AND
CULTURAL THEORY

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Tanya Ann Kennedy

“KEEPING UP HER GEOGRAPHY”
Women’s Writing and Geocultural Space in
Twentieth-Century U.S. Literature and Culture

Tanya Ann Kennedy



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Chapter One

Feminism and the Public/Private Divide

In her essay, “Feminist Critiques of the Public/Private Dichotomy,” Carol Pateman argues that “[t]he dichotomy between the private and the public is central to almost two centuries of feminist writing and political struggle; it is, ultimately, what the feminist movement is about” (118). Most political theorists see the origins of the public/private divide in the modern nation-state and industrial capitalism; men became citizens and workers in the public sphere and assumed authority over women and children in the private realm of the family. Thus, feminist theorists have traditionally understood the binary as key to women’s exclusion from citizenship and their subordination in the home. As Pateman argues, feminist theorists have challenged this gendered divide, as well as critiquing Marxist and liberal political theories of the modern nation-state that ignore gender. These feminist critiques have demonstrated that the public and private are mutually constitutive, that gender is a key organizing principle of the binary, and that the “personal is political.”

More recently, feminist scholars have debated the usefulness of the public/private divide as a framework for analysis.¹ However, both this debate and traditional feminist critiques of the divide have been mostly neglected in feminist U.S. literary studies, because these feminist critics tend to focus more on the nineteenth-century ideology of separate spheres. But just as feminist theorists in other disciplines debate whether or not to use the public/private as a framework for analysis, some critics in U.S. studies have called for an end to the use of separate spheres as a model for analyzing gender relations.

Cathy N. Davidson and Jessamyn Hatcher’s *No More Separate Spheres!* is an extended argument against using separate spheres as a framework for analyzing gender relations in nineteenth-century U.S. culture. The authors also want to rid American Studies of separate spheres criticism, feminist criticism devoted to the study of women as a separate category of analysis. When

Davidson and Hatcher trace separate spheres theory through literary and historical models, they tend to focus on a generalized view of separate spheres criticism as essentialist and to conflate this view with the public/private binary.² This leads to the neglect of significant feminist work challenging the binary and a repetition of arguments that have been theorized in feminist work not situated squarely within the field of U.S. literature.

As Davidson and Hatcher note, they are not alone in calling for an end to a use of the separate spheres model in feminist analysis. Many of these critics seem to see the doctrine of separate spheres not as a specific historical and cultural manifestation of the public/private divide, but as merely another dualism in a long list of dualisms. Davidson and Hatcher argue that

[w]ithin the rigid logic of separate spheres, the originary organizing binary of male/female on which the concept is grounded aligns and affiliates with any number of other dualities: woman/male, femininity/masculinity, emotion/reason, sentiment/logic, domesticity/politics, private/public and so on. (20)

Here, it seems to be the use of the separate spheres model—feminists' literary and historical analysis of women—that generates the binary of public/private. The assumption is that any use of a binary model must necessarily adhere to the binary logic of the model itself. Moreover, the authors make no specific distinction between separate spheres—a binary that uses gender as its specific organizing principle—and the public-private binary—a Western cultural model that tends to make the politics of gender invisible. Therefore, they cannot provide a complex historical account of how these two binaries operate in relation to one another.

This dismissal of the gendered ideologies of the public/private binary may be the result of the authors' inattention to the complexity of feminist critics' analysis of how the public/private binary reproduces women's inequality in the United States. For example, Davidson and Hatcher footnote, rather than discuss, the numerous scholars who, throughout the 80s and 90s, critiqued the use of the separate spheres model, but they also neglect work by feminist scholars who analyze the ideology of public/private in the United States and its effects. In the following analysis, I focus on two examples of this scholarship that complicate Davidson and Hatcher's notion that feminist criticism can easily move beyond the gendered binaries that structure U.S. dominant culture. These examples suggest that there may be problems with feminists arguing that they are done with a dominant ideology, such as the public/private binary, *when it is not done with women*.

In bell hooks' "Theory as Liberatory Practice," she describes the effects that separate spheres ideology can have on black families who attempt to conform to this ideology without the economic and racial privilege that the ideology assumes: "Imagine if you will this young black couple struggling first and foremost to realize the patriarchal norm (that is of the woman staying home, taking care of the household and children while the man worked) even though such an arrangement meant that economically, they would always be living with less" (28). Hooks reminds readers that ideologies may not reflect reality, but they do have real effects, and those effects can be personally and socially destructive.

Similarly, Angela Davis in "Outcast Mothers and Surrogates: Racism and Reproductive Politics in the Nineties" points to the damaging effects of the "privatization of family responsibilities" in the contemporary United States. The privatization reflected in the public/private binary described by hooks has not lessened in contemporary life, but, according to Davis, has increased as the state refuses to provide the necessary social and healthcare services that make it possible for women to exercise their reproductive rights. Davis argues that we must reconceive "family and reproductive rights in terms that move from the private to the public, from the individual to the social" (484). Far from seeing the genderedness of the public/private dichotomy as an obsolete fiction that, if it applied at all, only applied to middle-class white women in the nineteenth century, hooks and Davis articulate the damaging effects of this ideology for women of color and poor white women.

The arguments of hooks and Davis point to the disabling effects of the public/private binary in contemporary culture. But Davidson and Hatcher ignore these effects, or rather, seem to attribute them to feminist criticism itself. Yet feminist critique has been instrumental in challenging how this division shapes what we define as politically, historically, economically, and culturally significant and in showing how ideologies of the public/private in the modern nation-state have been constitutive of our imagining of citizenship. The more important work may be reappropriating and building on this long tradition to better understand how feminist challenges might complicate and refocus critical studies of U.S. culture.

The public/private binary has been challenged most thoroughly in the writing of contemporary feminist political theorists. The most powerful of these challenges have come from feminist critiques of liberal notions of the individual. First, political theorists argue that the "individual" established through the public/private binary is imagined as abstract, disembodied, and sexless, primarily concerned with pursuing self-interest without the intrusion of the state. Second, these same theorists have argued that the liberal

state has in fact always intervened in the private sphere.³ This contradiction, rather than undermining the logic of the public/private binary actually helps to support it. As Nicola Lacey argues, “The ideology of the public/private dichotomy allows government to clean its hands of any *responsibility* for the state of the ‘private’ world and *depoliticizes* the disadvantages which inevitably spill over the alleged divide by affecting the position of the ‘privately’ disadvantaged in the ‘public’ world” (qtd. in Boyd 97). While the state intervenes in the “private,” the rhetoric of the “private” can also be a mechanism of disablement; in this analysis the public/private binary is not merely another binary to be done away with, but is a framework drawn so as to reproduce its own organization. Therefore, pointing out that the public and private realms are in fact implicated in one another is not enough; how they are implicated in one another is the problem.

Moreover, feminists have pointed out the ambiguity of the binary. Pateman, Nina Yuval-Davis, Ruth Lister, and Judith Squires (among others) all indicate the extent to which the binary is destabilized by its own ambiguity, and argue that this is its power, inasmuch as it allows dominant ideologies to prevail. Most of these theorists, however, have themselves different ways of defining the public/private binary. The most salient point of their revision of the binary is their recognition that there are actually two realms to which the private refers; it can refer to the domestic (familial realm) or to the social realm (civil society). Classical liberal theorists and contemporary political theorists have been less than precise in articulating the difference this distinction makes. However, feminists, long concerned with the relation between the domestic and the political, see this as a significant oversight, because it means that the domestic actually holds a more ambiguous place in classical liberal theory than has been recognized.

As Judith Squires indicates, in most political theorists’ discussions of the public/private binary, it is civil society—the social and economic—that represents the private realm in which individuals pursue their own interests and the public is the state. The home is ignored. In most discussions of separate spheres, feminists have tended to see the home-domestic-family as the private and the public as the sphere of the political, the economic, and the social. But if the home has no place in classical theory, if the private actually refers to the marketplace and to the civil realm, then this split—much more so than the public/domestic split—reveals the extent to which the public/private binary depends on the individual abstracted from relations with others. However, feminists, drawing on Habermas, have pointed to the social realm as a third arena that mediates between the public and private realms.

The recognition of this third realm is an important critical tool for feminists' critique of dominant conceptions of the binary.

Recognition of this third term also points to a need to rethink how separate spheres has been understood in feminist critiques of its use as an analytical model. Many feminist critics tend to reify separate spheres ideology as a rigid spatial separation of men and women. For example, Karen Hansen, in "Rediscovering the Social," examining working-class women's diaries from the mid-nineteenth century, argues that it "seems absurd to describe the lives of the women I have studied, with their bustling rounds of varied activities and wide-ranging interactions, as private in any meaningful sense of the term" (291) and that these women were "out and about in the social sphere, hardly confined to their domiciles" (292). However, it seems a false reading of the doctrine of separate spheres to assume that it mandated a strict spatial segregation of men and women. Nor does this reading of the public/private binary take into account that within this ideology there is no clear distinction between the domestic and the social in its representation of women's sphere. For example, in Jonathan F. Stearns' "Female Influence, and the True Christian Mode of Its Exercise" (1837), the minister attempts to prevent female congregants from speaking out against slavery by reminding them of their social duties: "But the influence of woman is not limited to the domestic circle. Society is her empire, which she governs almost at will. . . . The cause of benevolence is peculiarly indebted to the agency of woman." He then defines women's special duties as caring for the sick, the orphaned, and "lighten[ing] the burden of human misery" (Stearns 47). Stearns' sermon highlights the extent to which separate spheres ideology is implicated in many of the major cultural debates of the nineteenth century, calling into question whether contemporary feminist scholars can afford to ignore its pervasiveness. But it also highlights the necessity of rethinking how feminist critics have represented the public/private binary in their debates about separate spheres ideology.

Joan Landes asks two astute questions about the debate over the public/private binary: "Has the public/private division been mistaken for the Victorian model of separate spheres? Is the public/private a spatial, symbolic, or rhetorical construct?" (28). My response to both of these questions is yes. Within U.S. cultural studies, the public/private binary and its construction of gender inequality has been both generalized beyond its specific historical and cultural context and narrowly redefined in terms of middle-class women's domestic confinement and segregation from the public world of men.

My argument rejects both the generalization of separate spheres ideology to include second wave feminist criticism and the reification of separate

spheres as a strict division of men and women into the realms of public and private. I argue that feminist theorists' recent attempts to rearticulate how the public/private divide operates through gender show that this line of investigation remains a politically and theoretically productive line of thought for understanding women's challenges to the divide, and for understanding how it has been constitutive of women's subordination.

In this project, I build on the insights of those theorists who argue that the social realm as a third term can be usefully incorporated into feminist challenges to the public/private binary, that the concepts of public and private are "protean" terms, and that such terms need definition within specific contexts.⁴ In agreement with Karen Hansen, I argue that not only is the social realm a key third term in analyzing the public/private divide, but that it mediates between the public and private. However, I do not define the social realm in the same way as Hansen. She defines the social as "informal interaction in everyday life" (269). I argue that the social is a gendered concept and a key site of women's subordination in U.S. culture.

The social realm does act as mediating realm, but women are the primary representatives of this mediation. I argue in this chapter that the public/private dichotomy is managed through a gendered ideology that requires women—historically white middle-class women—to mediate between these two realms and that this mediation is a site of subordination that the public/private dichotomy works to obscure. As Stuart Hall argues, dominant ideologies narrowly construe the political realm and, in fact, to define an issue—as many "women's issues" are defined—as a "social problem" is a political act in itself meant to subordinate the social to both the private and the political realms, and to assign identities associated with such "problems" to a subordinate place in the nation-state.

As I noted above, Stearns' sermon reminds us that women were key actors in the social realm in the nineteenth century and that separate spheres rhetoric operates in the major debates about slavery, race, citizenship, and labor that occurred during the century. And as Leonore Davidoff points out, "'Racial' and national identity have extended or overtaken gender as a focus of historical analysis, issues where the separate spheres approach seems irrelevant—although, in fact, the division between public and private, as a central part of Western culture, has been a key factor in the imposition-and attraction-of colonial encounters"(11). In other words, the public/private dichotomy is embedded in the structural organizing of culture at every level; and in the nineteenth century one can see separate spheres ideology operating as a key mechanism for organizing U.S. culture. As I argue in the second section of this chapter, far from acting as a "disincentive" to discussing the relation

between home and nation separate spheres rhetoric is central to nineteenth-century women's critique of how dominant ideologies of the public/private divide construct citizenship.⁵

Finally, I argue that analyzing early twentieth-century women's challenges to various versions of the public/private divide will help open up the debate in U.S. literary studies to an understanding of the relation between material and cultural spaces and the public/private divide. The contemporary reification of separate spheres discussed here assumes a somewhat simplistic relation between ideology and social space. Feminist geographers' understanding of the public/private binary can help feminist theorists reconsider this relation. Gillian Rose in *Feminism and Geography* (1993) traces feminist geography's interest in the public/private divide as a divide between reproduction (the private home) and production (public). This traditional understanding of the divide is much more similar to Davidson and Hatcher's understanding of the separate spheres binary as a (spatial) home/work division. However, in the 1980s, feminist geographers complicated this model in ways similar to political feminists: first, pointing to the home as a social location, as the site of social reproduction (rather than as the site of biological reproduction only) rather than as private; and, then, pointing to the home as a site of labor, and recognizing that the home/work divide cannot adequately account for the construction of gender in relation to other categories of identity such as race and class.

My interest in recontextualizing the public and private in terms of the relation between different geocultural spaces, or what geographers call spatial scales, comes, in part, from reading Doreen Massey's *Space, Place, and Gender*. Massey, like many contemporary geographers, argues that the "geography of power relations in spatial form is an important element in the constitution of power itself" (22). Thus, power can be renegotiated through geographical strategies that deconstruct spatial ideologies and by the placing of "phenomena in relationship to one another in such a way that new social effects are provoked" (4). Contemporary geographers, such as Massey, have worked to make this connection between geography and power central to current interdisciplinary debates about history and culture, focusing on the ways in which space and concepts of space are both products of and producers of social organization. Therefore, if feminists focus on spaces other than the generalized home/work dichotomy or the even more generalized notion of the public/private divide, then spaces become historical and cultural sites implicated in the construction of these binaries but not reducible to those binaries.

The high visibility of emerging and intersecting (re)definitions of key spatial concepts—the nation, the urban, the regional, and the domestic—in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century provides a crucial context for understanding how the public/private binary has been constructed and contested, and why it operates so forcefully to reproduce gender inequality. It is in this period that we can most clearly trace how challenging this binary has been central to feminist reconstructions of citizenship, of selfhood, the body, and the relation between what Massey calls different spatial scales. These concepts have been central to U.S. feminist and literary studies, and, in each chapter, I show how these early feminist reconstructions often call into question contemporary cultural critics' understandings of the public/private binary.

In the section that follows, I show how elite late nineteenth-century women use the rhetoric of separate spheres to dismantle it and to argue for a new definition of citizenship based on the mutually constitutive character of the private, social, and public. To further develop the relation between contemporary feminist perspectives on the public/private binary and the nineteenth-century ideology of separate spheres as a site of analysis, I turn to conceptions of the public/private binary in late nineteenth-century culture as they were constructed through the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 and in The World's Congress of Representative Women held at the Exposition. Listening to what women of the Exposition have to say about the relation between public and private allows us to see how this crucial distinction shaped women speakers' conception of citizenship, the individual, and gender. The Congresses offer an ideal site for understanding how late nineteenth-century women understood the public/private dichotomy, and its significance to the struggle for economic independence and suffrage.

The Columbian Exposition also allows us to compare the representative women's definition of citizenship and "Americanism" to other participants' definition of these terms. In the following pages, I first look at how the Woman's Building's placement in the landscape of the exposition grounds is symbolic of EuroAmerican women's positioning within Western culture; then, I discuss the relation between civilization, citizenship and the women speakers' articulation of the need for women's suffrage, comparing their notions of the American individual with masculine ideologies of Americanism. Throughout, I focus on the ways in which they seek to challenge their symbolic place in Western culture by reconfiguring dominant ideologies of public and private. Any understanding of their arguments will lead necessarily to questions of difference, exclusion, and the suppression of conflict—but this does not mean that we should ignore the oppositional

stance that separate spheres allowed women to take against the male political establishment. Recognizing the Congress as a form of what Nancy Fraser calls “a strong public” (recognizing the existence of multiple publics that are sometimes in opposition to the state) does not allow us to ignore the state’s ability to define the political. Recognizing the ways in which the Congress is sometimes complicit with the project of nation-building should not lead us to abandon wholesale the usefulness of the speakers’ complaint against masculine political, social, and economic structures. If we marginalize their opposition to what they themselves term “masculine culture,” then we may fail to see how late nineteenth-century debates about gender and civilization can usefully illuminate why the public/private dichotomy and feminists’ theorizing of this dichotomy should have a more central place in contemporary American Studies. Indeed, the debates at the end of the late nineteenth century may share more structural similarities with contemporary debates about gender than Davidson and Hatcher allow for, and it is those similarities that may lead us to usefully explicate how the public/private binary still matters.

I. PUTTING WOMEN ON THE MAP? THE WOMAN’S BUILDING IN THE GEOGRAPHY OF THE WORLD’S COLUMBIAN EXPOSITION

The Exposition’s architecture and its mapping of exhibits and buildings spatially manifested the historical evolution of civilization. Its spatial design explicitly pointed to Western culture as the endpoint of that historical evolution and the United States as its apex. This view of the fair’s organization has become a truism. For example, Alan Trachtenberg, in *The Incorporation of America*, argues that the fair’s spatial design functioned as metarepresentation: not merely representing the past and the model future, but embodying in its design the importance of space to the ordering and organizing of cultures:

The Court of Honor provided the center around which the rest of White City was organized in hierarchical degree; indeed, the carnival atmosphere of the Midway Plaisance confirmed by contrast the dignity of the center. And, of course, the center represented America through its exhibitions, the outlying exotic Midway stood for the rest of the world in subordinate relation. (213)

One of the more controversial aspects of the fair became one of its most popular destinations: the Woman’s Building. It was the smallest building on the main fairgrounds with the exception of the Administration Building, but,

to the Board of Lady Managers, and to many women, the building and its contents were proof of women's independent achievement. With the exception of the actual construction, it was solely the work of the women—from the installations and the hastily constructed rooftop restaurant to the design of the building itself. Although some women felt the Woman's Building represented a marginalization of the achievements of women (many artists initially refused to show their work there), an overwhelming number of women responded to and participated in the building's success—even if the compliments directed toward the building were rather backhanded. For instance, Candace Wheeler described the building as “a man's ideal of woman—delicate, dignified, pure, and fair to look upon.” In a similar fashion, a reporter described the building as “chaste and timid” (qtd. in Weimann 262). In this way, the building itself came to represent the tensions that plagued women organizers' attempt to assert a public identity for women at the fair, one that appealed to the majority but challenged the marginalization of women's work.

Another significant aspect of the Woman's Building did not go unnoticed. In popular Christian novelist Clara Burnham's novel *Sweet Clover: A Romance of the White City* (1893), one of her characters describes her emergence from the Midway Plaisance in these terms: “You come out o' that mile-long babel . . . you pass under a bridge—and all of sudden you are in a great beautiful silence. The angels on the Woman's Building smile down and bless you, and you know that in what seemed like one step you've passed out o' darkness and into the light” (qtd. in Weimann 257). Burnham may have been the first to note that fair designers had placed the Woman's Building at the far end of the Exhibition grounds proper and adjacent to the Midway, with its pseudo-ethnological displays of indigenous peoples from Africa and the Americas and its carnivalesque atmosphere of primitive cultures as spectacle against which Americans could measure their own civilization.

Contemporary scholars have also noted the building's placement. Robert Rydell interprets its positioning in this way:

the Woman's Building was located in the northwest corner of the White City, at the Gateway to the Midway Plaisance, the mile-long avenue that combined amusement with ethnological instruction about people who were typed as exotic or savage. . . . Looking up at the angels on the Woman's Building, Burnham's fictional fairgoers could feel elevated by the progress they had made from the chaos associated with the Midway to the order symbolized by the White City.

There was, of course, another message in this ideologically laden mapping of the exposition grounds. If the position of the Woman's Building right at the doorstep of the Midway was any indication, women, in the eyes of the exposition's male sponsors, came close to slipping into the category of 'otherness' reserved for 'savages' and 'exotics.' They were redeemed only by their capacity to serve as mothers of civilization—a stereotype that some upper- and middle-class white women were only too happy to embrace to advance their own reform agenda. As a result, women's representation at the World's Columbian Exposition recapitulated and reinforced prevailing sentiments of white supremacy. (Rydell 156–57)⁶

Rydell's assessment of the building's placement is the most compelling of the numerous interpretations that writers—beginning with Burnham—have brought to the building's placement and its figural representation of womanhood, but he misses—as do most critics—the overriding influence of Christianity in Western women's conception of both their maternal citizenship and their international feminist citizenship, the meaning uppermost in the passage from Burnham. If the geography of the world was manifest at the fair as an evolutionary map of man's rise from primitive man to republican citizen, then this placement of the Woman's Building also made woman's place in the historical map clear: Western women's role as citizens was clearly to mediate between the primitive and the civilized spots on the map as Christian citizens, and their ability to do so, was, indeed, as woman after woman reminded the audiences of the Congress, a measure of that nation's progress. And, if white Western women had always used this mediating position to negotiate between the private world of home and the social needs of the nation, they were now using this position as a basis to claim their rights as citizens: women were needed in the public realm of government to complete the course of Christian civilization. The notion of civilization that operated most forcefully at the Women's Congress was the distinction between the Christian and the non-Christian, inasmuch as Christianity was a discourse associated with what most speakers saw as women's superior status in the West.

Gail Bederman, in *Manliness and Civilization*, sees the Woman's Building as a sign of women's marginal position in civilization. However, as Rydell suggests, the building's placement is actually more complex, because it works to remind Christian women of their pivotal role in constructing civilization, a civilization—like the exposition grounds themselves—that is directed toward the ends of a white masculine culture. The “dominant

version of civilization” in the late nineteenth century is usually understood by contemporary historians to be equated with the influence of social Darwinism (Bederman 25). As Bederman notes, advanced civilizations “could [be identified] by the degree of their sexual differentiation . . . men and women had evolved pronounced sexual differences” (25). However, the discourse of civilization and women’s status is much older than social Darwinism and was actually used against female abolitionists by ministers at least as early as the 1830s. For example in the previously mentioned sermon by Stearns, he forcefully argued against women’s political participation in abolitionism, not on the basis that women should stay and see to their duties in the home, but based on their mediating role in creating civilized men. Stearns warned women that they may perform the social duties of helping the poor, orphans, and the outcast, but to speak out publicly was to relinquish the benefits of civilization. Stearns told his female congregants,

Yours it is to determine, whether the beautiful order of society . . . shall continue as it has been, to be a source of blessings. . . . Yours it is to decide, under God, whether we shall be a nation of refined and high minded Christians, or whether, rejecting the civilities of life, and throwing off the restraints of morality and piety, we shall become a fierce race of semibarbarians, before whom neither order, nor honor, nor chastity can stand. And be assured, ladies, if the hedges and borders of the social garden be broken up, the lovely vine, which now twines itself so gracefully upon the trellis, and bears such rich lusters, will be the first to fall and be trodden under foot. (50)

The feminist/antifeminist debate over the meaning of civilization was quite old at the end of the nineteenth century, and was definitively connected to debates about women’s participation in politics and their physical presence in public—a presence that not only is supposed to represent the destruction of civilization but implies that women will suffer the consequences through physical assault. In these debates, the power of separate spheres as an ideology is directly related to both the promise of physical protection and the threat of physical assault.

By the time of the Exposition this threat seems to have lost some of its power, but it was still relevant for women’s redefining of civilization and imagining of citizenship; their vision of civilization would have to show why this threat was no longer relevant, why female embodiment, represented as physical weakness, no longer mattered in the structuring of civilization. The version they produced in opposition to masculine definitions of civilization

was exclusionary, utopic, and contradictory, bearing the traces of conflict and dissent that had already been evoked throughout the planning of women's participation in the exposition—black women's representation on the Board of Lady Managers, the place of suffragism, the question of integration and separation in the exhibiting of women's work, and the wisdom of constructing the building itself. Moreover, a debate occurred between those who placed women's economic independence at the center of women's interest and those who placed suffrage at the center of their arguments for women's equality. This nascent debate—which never really became central for reasons I discuss later—seems to me to be quite relevant for a discussion of the public/private binary. For it details how the tension between middle-class women's own understanding of women's inequality is specifically related to their focus on the production-reproduction axis and the private-political axis of the binary. Furthermore, it illuminates how late nineteenth-century women speakers understood the home as a social location and understood its interrelationship with the political realm of citizenship. The point here is partly to rediscover what seems to have been lost in contemporary debates about separate spheres—the majority of the women speakers understood quite well that the two spheres were mutually constitutive and based their arguments for citizenship and their definition of civilization on the grounds of this interrelationship. But it also shows the extent to which this insight leads in radically different directions and results in conflicts that are not so different from current debates in feminist and American studies.

According to Jeanne Madeline Weimann, in *The Fair Women*, Susan B. Anthony “said that the Fair had done more for the cause of woman suffrage than twenty-five years of agitation, giving it ‘unprecedented prestige in the world of thought’” (595). This is a significant tribute to women's participation and role in the Exposition. This tribute is significant because Anthony, along with other suffragists, helped petition for women's administrative participation in the event, but both suffragists and suffragism were marginalized in women's organizing of the fair. Suffragists wanted membership on the national committee; instead a separate Ladies Auxiliary Board of Managers was created, with Bertha Palmer, a wealthy Chicago clubwoman, as its President. Palmer was not a suffragist but was committed to women's economic issues, to exhibiting women's achievements, and to proving women capable of performing the kind of organizational work assigned to the Board on a national and international level. However, the World's Representative Congress of Women was organized not by Palmer, but primarily by the suffragist May Wright Sewall, and it was within this venue that the Exposition became specifically an argument for women's suffrage.

Surprisingly, the Representative Congress seems to have been mostly ignored when considering the Exposition's significance—in spite of Anthony's enthusiasm. Most mentions of the fair focus on the building alone or focus on the Women's Congress held in the Woman's Building which was a separate and more traditional event. Both Alan Trachtenberg and Erik Trump's assessment of women's visions seem to have been based on the speeches given at the Woman's Building.⁷ Thus, Trachtenberg, Trump and Bederman all conclude that women's participation in the Exposition was marginal and their representation almost entirely domestic. But the two separate Congresses seem to have decidedly different goals in terms of representation. While the Representative Congress had speeches from representatives of national women's organizations and focused almost exclusively on the work of those organizations and their commitment to suffrage, the Woman's Congress in the Woman's Building treated a variety of different subjects and was, as critics indicate, much more traditional in its approach to defining women's place in culture.⁸ Ignoring the Representative Congress means ignoring how women used the Exposition to redefine civilization, overlooking a significant moment in the suffrage movement, and neglecting black women's most visible—almost only—participation in the Exposition.⁹

Women's desires to organize across race, class, and national boundaries are repeated again and again at the Representative Congress, but, as Trachtenberg's phrase "unity in subordination" suggests there was also a significant tension between the ideals of Christian unity and the articulation of women's status within the nation representing a nation's place on the evolutionary scale of civilization. For example, while Lina Morgenstern of Germany argued that the Congress represented the moment "when the women of all lands unite to form an international bond of union" and her hope that "this bond [could] help to overcome all prejudices of nations, races, and faiths!" (Sewall 550), her vision of unity chiefly included Anglo-European middle-class women and a few representative women from the Middle East and Latin America and middle-class representatives of black America.¹⁰ But this "unity through subordination" must also be seen as one that originates from the association of America with women's freedom. According to the women of the Exposition, contradicting both Darwinist and Christian definitions of women's role in civilization, America represented civilization precisely because of the political, educational, and economic gains of American women. Their public presence, and not the industrial complexity of the White City, indicated the extent to which America had achieved civilization.

Florence Fenwick Miller, a representative from England, put it this way, "When I first began to talk on women's questions they were generally spoken

of as 'Americanisms.' . . . Any new idea as to the education of women, or the admittance of women to the learned professions, or any improvement in women's dress was an Americanism" (Sewall 20). Thus, before there was feminism there was "Americanism" a testament to what was seen as American women's status in U.S. culture. Since, as many women at the Congress reminded the audience, the status of women was the leading indicator of a nation's progress toward civilization, then American women and the United States were looked to as the forerunner of women's rights.¹¹ This nationalist progressive history of women's status in the United States is aligned with the Exposition's design to represent America itself as the apex of civilization:

It is as true as it was four hundred years ago that the condition of the women of a nation is the measure of its culture and civilization. Whether we look at our own land where women may vote, hold office, do business, enter upon any profession as the social equal of man, enjoying respectful consideration and chivalrous treatment; or whether we turn our eyes to our sisters in Eastern lands, shut up in the harems and *zenanas* of the rich, or toiling like slaves in the hovels of the poor. (Greene in Sewall 52)¹²

So it is not surprising that the message of the Congress of Representative Women focused on the equation of civilization with women's status. But this discourse of women's status always superseded the nation in the speakers' desire to redefine civilization from a particularly feminist perspective. Part of their task was to divorce women's rights, particularly the fight for suffrage, from the discourse of Americanism and the discourse of difference represented in dominant notions of civilization that represented women's status in the social realm as a *privilege conferred on* EuroAmerican women by EuroAmerican men. This desire is made explicit in May Wright Sewall's closing address to the Women's Representative Congress, "this chapter [the Congress] proves that the woman question is no longer an Americanism; that it is no longer a local question at all; that it can not be regarded as the curious culminating expression of the insane passion for independence characteristic of the Anglo-Saxon race" (Sewall 632).

Examples of this discourse from the speeches given at the Representative Congress are numerous. I have chosen to discuss only a few of those that most clearly define what is at stake in thinking about civilization from the women speakers' perspective. Specifically, while the dominant meaning of civilization may have rested on the notion of the distinction of the sexes, the women speakers were more ambivalent about the future necessity of those distinctions.

Greene, mentioned above, continued her speech, by arguing that “the ideal of the human as in Divine Law shall be attained when there can be neither Jew nor Greek, there can be neither bond nor free, there can be no male or female—for we are above all one in Christ Jesus” (52). This rejection of any distinction between different races, classes, and genders was articulated from within women’s use of separate spheres ideology to define civilization on their own terms. In this respect, they found their unity in defining themselves against “masculine civilization.” This contradictory desire to both make oppositional claims based on sex and the desire to negate the terms of “sex distinction” is not as contradictory or ironic as it seems; it merely articulates the complexity of women’s relation to the public/private dichotomy as they try to enter the public sphere, not as inferior creatures, and, thus, always lesser than men, but not on masculine terms either.¹³ Late nineteenth-century speakers at the Exposition were convinced that women’s full inclusion in public life—represented for them by suffrage—would guarantee not only their own equality with men, but transform the very terms that the gendered public/private ideology used to exclude them—the meaning of what it meant to be an individual and a citizen.

First, women had to articulate their definition of civilization in opposition to that represented by the masculine dichotomy of the Midway and the White City. Elizabeth Cady Stanton argued, “Our civilization to-day is simply masculine. Everything is carried by force, and violence, and war, and will be until the feminine element is fully recognized and has equal power in the regulation of human affairs” (Sewall 485). And women made it clear that the time for masculine notions of “protection” used to prevent them from entering public space no longer represented the future of civilization, only its past, “Since questions of peace, of arbitration, and of reconciliation have superseded those of war and conquest, physical force is at a discount. Reason and justice applied to human affairs mark the spirit of the nineteenth century” (McDonnell in Sewall 684). One of six black women speakers at the Congress, Frances Watkins Harper was particularly virulent in her condemnation of masculine civilization,

Not the opportunity of discovering new worlds, but that of filling this old world with fairer and higher aims than the greed of gold and the lust of power, is hers. Through the weary wasting years men have destroyed, dashed in pieces, and overthrown, but to-day we stand on the threshold of women’s era, and women’s work is grandly constructive. (Sewall 434)

And, finally, many women speakers rejected masculine civilization as imperialism. For example, Julia Ward Howe argued that, “The soldier is no longer the supreme example of heroism, but simply a necessary evil. The

thoughtful, the life-preserving virtues are in ascendant to-day” (Sewall 316). This definition of civilization emerges from the language of separate spheres, but this also allows a redefinition of the relation between public and private and the individual. The progress of civilization no longer hinges on the distinction between the sexes in terms of separate spheres, but on the idea that masculine civilization has outlived its usefulness, an impediment to civilization rather than a contributor to it.

Women, in fact, have been the primary contributors to “civilization” according to Harper (the exhibits of the Woman’s Building were often used to support these claims). And, according to most women speakers, this contribution emerges from her recognition of the interrelationship of the public/private; the women speakers’ interest in the home is not an interest in the “domestic” as it contributes to a configuration of the national as represented in the Exposition, but as that social location that has helped them understand the interrelation between public and private freedoms.¹⁴ The discourse of the home as social location figures not as a support of Darwinism but as a reconfiguration of the principles of citizenship. Most women, such as the Countess of Aberdeen, were willing to forego a discussion of men and women’s spheres to rearticulate the inseparability of women’s social work with the political:

We believe in the essential oneness of the interests of women and men, and we appeal to the sense of justice of the latter to allow us our fair share in shaping destinies of our common country. Men and women have separate spheres no doubt, but it is not for one sex to arrogate to itself the sole right to define the limits of those spheres. . . . There is no such thing as ‘moral and social equality’ apart from political equality. An unrepresented class is always a neglected, abused, and degraded class. (Sewall 418–19)

Similarly, Ellen Foster argued that women’s interrelated interests in the home and in the social realm could not be attained without the ballot:

It is impossible for women to carry movements of social economics in their hearts and in their activities up to the point of these relations of these questions to the government and then suddenly let go their hold and see these various objects of their solicitude lost in the whirlpool of politics, where being disenfranchised, women have no recognized place. (Sewall 440)

In the words of Florence Adams, “A republic is but a political order of a matriarchal home, as an empire is a patriarchal ideal” (Sewall 345). This notion

that the social order that women brought to a home could be extended, was in fact, a metaphor for a republican form of government, was only one way the home became a site of social location. Other speakers noted that a home could not be sustained without the political influence of women—that the domestic and the political were so intertwined that any work women accomplished in the social sphere was wasted if women did not have political rights. This concept of political rights, founded as it was on a notion of the social, necessarily led to a revision of what it meant to be an individual.

According to Sarah Early, the individual was first and foremost a “social being” (Sewall 718). And, Howe argued that “We often hear of the phenomenon of double consciousness, . . . but a double conscience is of far greater importance”(Sewall 711). And Sarah Hackett Stevenson concurred, arguing, “this divorce between the individual and the social conscience is the most dangerous evil of modern times” (Sewall 711). So, the speakers understood the right to vote not merely as an individual right, but as an opportunity to transform what was meant by the individual. Their intent is clearly to use the ballot to transform women’s place in the public/private binary, but they also believed that transforming women’s place meant eradicating any significant difference between the individual, the social, and the political. However, their discussion of the home as a social location not only demonstrates their understanding of the relation of home and state, but points to the problems raised by this insight.

The majority of the speakers believed that the women’s organizations they represented could use the ballot to achieve social ends. Fewer women speakers were concerned with women’s political rights and economic equality as end in itself; the ballot was the political means women needed to carry out their social transformation. Sarah Stevenson may have been in favor of using the ballot as a “social conscience,” but she also warned women against seeing women’s social organizations as a substitute for women’s individual liberties. She argued that “this tendency to organize is not conducive to the highest individual development.” So, although the United States has many “great organizations of women, we have few, if any, great women” (Sewall 708). Stevenson claimed that women would never be able to develop the ability for self-governance and the rights of the individual, as long as they placed organization above self-development. And, in fact, according to Stevenson, women’s organizing abilities to effect social change—their attempt to use the ballot as a means to social ends—was merely allowing “masculine culture” to more narrowly define its own social responsibilities, both in the home and political realm. Stevenson warned that men and women were likely to grow further apart in their definitions of civilization, and, thus, in their perception

of the relation between the public and private. Women, may indeed, inherit the public as the social, allowing masculine culture to neglect individual responsibility for the social domain, and retaining a sense of the private as elite men's individual right to freedom from the claims of the social/public. In other words, women's assumption of greater responsibility through organization, merely allocates men more freedom within the public sphere.

Women entering the public sphere of politics as mediators of the relation between the social and the political become a problem for those speakers concerned with women entering the public domain as independent individuals. As Anthony noted, "It is because women have been taught always to work for something else than their own personal freedom; and the hardest thing in the world is to organize women for the one purpose of securing their political liberty and political equality" (Sewall 464). In fact, Anthony's speech sought to remind women that their responsibilities in the home were precisely what prevented them from working toward their own political rights:

If man is a little world, woman is expected to be a little universe—"all things by turns and nothing long." A woman must be versatile, and ready to fill any niche at a moment's notice. She must sew on a button or write a poem, must roast herself in the kitchen or receive guests in the drawing room, with equal grace and facility; and what with keeping up her geography and her accomplishments she will beg to be excused from what she thinks the dry and uninteresting subjects of business, current events, and politics. (Sewall 328)

Incorporating the home as a social location into the political realm was one thing, but if men and women's relation to the home, and thus, the social, remained the same, then women would continue to be seen as subordinate. Stevenson and Anthony give new meaning to Trachtenberg's argument that the Exposition represents "unity through subordination." Women had already entered the public sphere as representatives of those aspects of the social sphere which were social precisely because traditional notions of the public/private divide continued to reproduce elite men who saw the social sphere as a degraded realm—the site of "problems" for those who would maintain their dominance in those realms defined in masculine culture as private: the marketplace and the home. According to their definition of the individual, the social realm of women need not exist.

Men's exclusion of the social from both the private realm of the marketplace and home, and the public realm of politics can be clearly seen at the Exposition itself. Whereas women were working to divorce women's rights

from Americanism and attempting to redefine the individual as a social being, at the American Historical Association's Annual Meeting, held in conjunction with the Exposition, Frederick Jackson Turner was defining Americanism and the individual in precisely opposite terms. Turner's speech, "The Significance of the Frontier in American History," as Trachtenberg argues, represented a celebration of "heroic masculine traits." Among these traits was the notion of a "dominant individualism" that rejected both the political and the social as a restraint to the character of the American:

The Westerner defended himself and resented governmental restrictions. . . . The idea of the personality of law was often dominant over the organized machinery of justice. That method was best which was most direct and effective. . . . In a word, the unchecked development of the individual was the significant product of this frontier democracy. (Turner 37)

Therefore, Turner's construction of the American character, the contents of his American individual, is fundamentally at odds with those definitions offered by the women speakers of the Congress. Turner's individual is only reluctantly social and only to the extent to which he needs the state to "protect" an already constituted individuality: "As has been indicated the frontier is productive of individualism. . . . The tendency is anti-social. It produces antipathy to control, and particularly to any direct control" (Turner 22). Nor can it be argued that Turner was merely discussing the character of the American past. His portrait of national character suggested that such traits were what made an individual an American.¹⁵ Specific to the venue of the Exposition, we can see that the dominance of the Halls of Technology and Machinery when compared to the small size of the Woman's Building and its marginalization at the boundaries of the White City convey the tension between the women speakers' vision of the political future of citizenship and the dominant masculine version. Women were not marginal but central to this dominant version of civilization. Nevertheless, their attempt to use their mediating position to revise the ways in which the Exposition constructed civilization was only partially successful.

Most women speakers felt that suffrage would signify an end to this dilemma by raising men to their level. However, their notion that women's social role could be transformed into an argument for women's suffrage is dependent on an economic privilege that, although it allowed them to reinterpret civilization for a feminist discourse, was also supported by the public/private distinction they hoped to undermine. The home that they envisioned

as a social location was produced by an economic system that men imagined as being private; thus, the speakers' version of the home as a social location was fraught with contradictions, because it assumed that some version of this home was what made individuals, as Sarah Early put it "social beings," and therefore, civilized.

The focus on domesticity at the Congress reveals women's revisionist understanding of citizenship in its emphasis on the social ethics of citizenship—an ethics with broad appeal to middle-class Christian women, who may have needed—as Susan B. Anthony indicates—to imagine their citizenship rights as catering to more than their individual rights—and that ethics was broad enough to encompass obligations that may have been in conflict with one another. This, of course, is part of the problem of the utopic visions represented by the women speakers' desire to overturn masculine civilization. Hierarchies of race, class, and culture always contradicted their desire for unity. To speak about an international women's movement that would—or could—cure the ills of humanity, partly through the recognition of a common humanity was much easier said than practiced. The failure—and what has sometimes been called the hypocrisy—of such a project has been well-documented from every direction, and, in fact, can be documented in the racist and classist arguments for the vote used by late nineteenth-century suffragists. However, this does not necessarily mean that we should ignore the women speakers' attempt to reconfigure women's relation to ideologies of the public/private, nor should we see them as hopelessly essentialist in their attempt to theorize what it means to be a citizen or an individual in opposition to that dominant culture of which they were so much a part.

For one, it may only be separate spheres ideology and white women's role as mediators of civilization—although middle-class black women who spoke at the Congress imagined their citizenship in similar ways—that allowed the conflicts between women to emerge, and allows us to see how women's attempt to organize within the midst of a male dominated political structure can be particularly damaging if the goals of nationalism supersede the goals of women's representation of themselves. This is particularly apparent in the exclusion of black women from the Board of Lady Managers. There is much evidence to conclude that black women were excluded from the Board of Lady Managers, not only because of southern women's objections to working with black women, but because the Board, like the Exposition itself, was attempting to fulfill a mandate represented by the National Committee's decision to locate the Exposition in Chicago and not New York. Chicago, as a city of the West, was much less closely associated with the bitter sectionalism of the Civil War. Post-Civil War Southern states were

still economically devastated by the Civil War and barely participated in the Exposition—except for southern women. The exclusion of black women was not merely a matter of placating southern women, but of putting the agenda of national reconciliation before questions of inclusion and representativeness.¹⁶ This is all the more apparent when we consider that Palmer herself may have been chosen because she was originally from Kentucky and that she placed a fellow white Kentuckian in charge of black women's interests at the fair.

The problems of race and nation may in fact account for the two separate Congresses—or at least the difference in their participants. The Congress of Representative Women was organized by Sewall, a suffragist whose sympathies were not with the Board of Lady Managers; the Woman's Congress held in the Woman's Building, however, was organized by the Board. southern white women participated in the Woman's Congress; black women did not. And, for the most part, white southern women did not speak at the Representative Congress. Therefore, when the speakers at the Representative Congress rose to speak, they were already well aware of the ways in which the devotion to national unity as a form of citizenship could undermine women's rights.

II. RETHINKING THE PUBLIC/PRIVATE BINARY

Women's inclusion of the home with the social indicates that we should not think in terms of the home as private for women. The home and the marketplace may be considered private only in the imaginings of elite men such as Turner. In fact, women's position in the social indicates that women are actually excluded from the private—the economic and individual autonomy of that person who, as a reflection of the public sphere's interests, has no need to act as a “social being.” The Woman's Building, I think, is a more accurate symbol of women's entrapment in, and appropriation of, the social and their position as bearers and representatives of social reproduction than the conflation of woman/private/home. In effect, what the placement of the Woman's Building and the speakers at the Columbian Exposition make clear is that middle-class women exist neither in the private nor the public, but as mediators between those two realms. This is not an emancipatory position, however; nor should we see it as one of women's own making. Rather it emerges from the ambiguities of the public/private divide in which the private refers to the space of the home, only in so much as that home reproduces the private individual free to pursue his own economic interests, and in so much as it produces the citizen who is capable of representing the interests of the state.

As I argue in chapter two, part of middle-class women's interest in the working-girl in the early twentieth century arises from just such a recognition. Whereas the Congress of Representative Women focused on suffrage as the means to a social end, middle-class women's interest in economic independence was not well represented at the Exposition. Nor were working-class women given a forum to discuss the ends to which suffrage might be used. The Board of Lady Managers attempted to contact working-class women, but repeatedly reported failure in trying to talk to, gain data from, and generally include urban working-class women in the Exposition.¹⁷ Even Jane Addams, who might have spoken about working-class women and suffrage, preferred to focus on explaining all the reasons that working women were abandoning domestic service for the factory. In chapter two, I argue that urbanization and industrialization were factors that destroyed women's development of the home as a place of social reproduction that marginalized both home and the middle-class woman who was struggling to make the home as a social location a foundation for citizenship. The working-girl's representation as a symptom of urbanization becomes central to middle-class women's attempt to reconfigure the relation between women and the public/private binary along the home/work axis of the divide and to reimagine their own social place within that axis. Furthermore, I argue that the reform narratives I discuss show how the home/work axis suppresses the social, as manifested in these narratives' portrayal of the working-girl's attempt to create a social space free of the masculine dominance that structures the home, the workplace, and the street.

In chapter three, I develop this analysis of the public/private divide by examining the southern agrarians' challenge to the public/private binary as it is constructed within the dominant national mode and in the context of urbanization. I demonstrate that the southern agrarians reject any notion of a conventional public sphere in their defining of regional culture. Basing economics, politics, and the social on inherited property, they attempt to maintain strict race, class, and gender exclusion by delegitimizing the public sphere as an aberration of industrialized culture. This agrarian-regionalist appropriation of social reproduction through the land effects a marginalization of both female labor and the female reproductive body. Therefore, I analyze how Ellen Glasgow's novels, *Barren Ground* and *Vein of Iron*, function as a critique of this marginalization, indicating the extent to which the agrarians' refusal to recognize the need for a public, political sphere works to subordinate women's claims to economic, sexual, and reproductive justice to those of masculine inheritance. I show how Glasgow's attempt to redraw the public/private binary from a feminist perspective is instructive, because it

reiterates the necessity of reconstructing a feminist vision of the public/private divide that is not structured by masculine perspectives and properties.

In the final chapter, I return to the discussion of feminist citizenship raised here to explain how two feminist writers appropriate the Turnerian model of citizenship to transform themselves into representative subjects; Zora Neale Hurston and Agnes Smedley appropriate that very construct of the individual that the women speakers of the Columbian Exposition rejected, the model of the heroic frontier citizen. I argue that their appropriation of this model is both disabling and instructive. First, their appropriation of the Turnerian model allows for race and class based feminist critiques of the women speakers' vision of citizenship. Second, it allows us to see how inadequate the Turnerian model is for theorizing a feminist citizenship, because it constructs the female body as a violation of the public/private divide. Finally, their use of the frontier model allows us to see how necessary a feminist revision of the public/private divide still is, if feminists want to continue to transform the meaning of citizenship so that it is responsive to female embodiment and feminist complaint.

Chapter Two

Journeys into Urban Interiors

At the turn-of-the-century, no figure appeared more often or in a greater variety of contexts than the urban working-girl. The subject of numerous fact gathering surveys and reform movements, a prototype for female heroines of mass-marketed romances, high-brow urban novels, and popular tenement tales, she is an object of censure and sympathy, of reform and fascination.¹ The most obviously “new” product of urbanization, industrialization, and immigration, she cuts across disparate spaces, a hyphenated figure defined by her shifting positions in the home, in the workplace, and in the commercial and social places of the urban environment. Not only does the working-girl work, she performs double duty as a symptom through which the changing spatial relations of public and private and their gendered implications are constructed. She functions as an axis of displacement and condensation that holds together heterogeneous spaces and through which the gendered implications of urbanization are articulated and refigured in cultural texts of the era.

The working-girl’s status as a figure representing the problems of urbanization is most evident in social reform texts of the era whose authors desire to ameliorate the environmental conditions in which the working woman lives and works by representing her “world” to a middle-class readership. This desire to depict working-class life to a middle-class audience is representative of the era. For instance, Jean-Christophe Agnew argues that the title of Jacob Riis’s *How the Other Half Lives* (1890) reflects the “new, yet increasingly common assumption among [the book’s] readers that, for the first time in American history, classes had somehow become inaccessible to one another” (Agnew 137). Therefore, the relation between the middle class and the working class is figured as a problem of making one class accessible to the other. In representations of the working-girl, this problem of “accessibility” is figured as one of geographic distance, so that

the difference between middle-class author and the working-girl necessitates a traveling into the world of the other. This distance, I argue, operates as a trope of female downward mobility, articulating the urban environment itself as a dislocation of the female subject's place in the social and economic structure.

In this chapter, I interrogate how middle-class, white female reformers attempt to promote gendered reform through an examination of the urban working-girl's home and work conditions. As a continuation of my analysis of the home as social location in chapter one, my argument, here, shows how early twentieth-century women writers represented the urban and domestic as mutually constitutive of one another and accessed that intersection through the figure of the working-girl. I argue that these authors imagine the working-girl in two related ways: as a manifestation of the process of urbanization and as a fallen middle-class female subject. The working-girl, in these reform narratives, articulates the authors' cultural anxieties about the meaning and place of traditional middle-class female subjectivity in an urbanized culture that marginalizes the home as a social location. Since the middle-class female subject traditionally has represented, and been represented by domestic space, these authors write the home's marginalization as a displacement of female subjectivity. In interpreting the working-girl as a fallen middle-class female subject—and not as a working-class female subject—each of the authors I examine attempts to redefine women's social position in U.S. culture through a rewriting of the working-girl's relation to both domestic and urban spaces. Each attempts to create a new female subject, a female subject capable of reemerging from the trajectory of downward mobility that the working-girl's subordinate position in the urban environment represents.

I examine in depth three of the most popular social reform texts of the era: Bessie Van Vorst's undercover investigation of the working-girl (written with her sister-in-law Marie Van Vorst), *The Woman Who Toils: Being the Experience of Two Ladies as Factory Girls* (1903); journalist Dorothy Richardson's *The Long Day: the Story of a New York Working Girl* (1905), a novel presented as an autobiography of the author's rise from working-girl to writer; and popular travel and fiction writer Clara E. Laughlin's *The Work-a-Day Girl* (1911), a collection of journalistic essays in "story-form."² Writing from the imagined space of the working-girl, the authors attempt to articulate "what the working-girl wants," but also to redefine middle-class female subjectivity in an urban culture that is consistently imagined as marginalizing the domestic space that had traditionally represented middle-class women's position in U.S. culture.

The distance between the working-girl and middle-class woman is imagined as the distance between this domestic space and the urban environment. In particular, the traditional middle-class home is written as separate from the city, existing in the countryside and the suburbs, separate from the urban environment, but also, as the originary point of reference for the female subject's emergence into the urban environment; in these writings, the home defines the female subject, and it is the female subject's entrance into, her falling into, the urban that transforms her into the working-girl. In turn, the urban environment transforms the middle-class space of domesticity into a vacancy within which the middle-class woman is isolated from the urban environment that increasingly defines U.S. culture.³

In examining social reform texts, I reorient traditional U.S. urban studies, particularly literary studies, toward a reconsideration of previously marginalized contexts for understanding the gendered implications of urbanization. The American city has conventionally been read in terms of male canonical authors' concern with public space and its spectacles. Alienation, mobility, rootlessness, and isolation are emphasized as the central components of urban space; as Sydney Bremer indicates in *Urban Intersections*, this view emphasizes the visual and industrial transformations of the public landscape: the skyscraper, the street, the crowd, the train. Even those critics who address the female subject's place within the urban environment tend to exclude reform narratives from study. Literary critics often do not see urban social reform narratives as representative of urban culture; thus, they tend not to examine how these narratives represent and respond to urban culture's effect upon the domestic sphere, and middle-class women's understanding of how that transformation affects their own cultural identity. Critics also overlook the role that gender plays in many urban reform movements—and the centrality of reform narratives to women's writing of culture. Similarly, historical and literary readings of the working-girl do not examine the working-girl as a symptomatic figure whose appearance in myriad texts of the era represents middle-class anxiety about the female subject's place within an urban culture that increasingly marginalizes the cultural influence of female domestic space, and, thus, the female subject.⁴ In contrast, I argue that women's narratives of social reform are important cultural contexts for reexamining both how middle-class women write the gendered implications of urbanization, and how urbanization is figured in their narratives as a particularly gendered problem, one that could be accessed through its representative subject, the working-girl.

While I focus on how the working-girl functions as a trope of downward mobility for these authors, I also argue that the distance between home

and city is interpreted differently in each text, affecting the writer's ability to overcome—through reform—the female subject's subordinate position in U.S. culture. This is most obvious in Bessie Van Vorst's text; because Van Vorst writes urbanization as a threat to home and to the "American" woman's ability to articulate her difference from the immigrant working-girl, she imagines a retreat to the home and a reclamation of the reproductive, aesthetic, and moral influence located there as the only alternative to the masculinization and moral deterioration of the American female. In contrast, Dorothy Richardson incorporates the working-girl as a cultural type into her reform narrative in order to rewrite the domestic plot as the only possible plot for female readers. However, in so doing, she retains the middle-class home in the suburbs as an ideal capable of providing the female subject with a security and success denied her by the economic and social inequalities of the city. Finally, Clara Laughlin examines, through an explicit reversal of the plot of downward mobility, how the working-girl's position in the urban environment is directly related to the female subject's subordinate position within the home.

In the last section of this chapter, I turn to the home's interior to demonstrate how the politics of domestic and urban space manifest themselves within women authors' repeated invocation of the significance of the parlor as a gendered space. In this section, I reject traditional readings of the living room as a space that manifests gendered equality, and traditional readings of the parlor that focus on it only as a middle-class space. I argue that its significance as a site of desire cuts across differences of class and ethnicity, revealing women's attempts to carve out of the male-dominated home and the inequalities of the city a female social space.

I. WHEREIN VORST, RICHARDSON, AND LAUGHLIN JOURNEY INTO 'OTHER' WORLDS TO 'HELP' THE WORKING-GIRL AND EDIFY THE MIDDLE-CLASS

"I am going over now into the world of the unfortunate . . ."

This declaration from Bessie Van Vorst's *The Woman Who Toils* (1903) is simple and clear in its delineation of the separation of the author from those she sets out to investigate: her investigation requires that she leave her own world and enter a world to which few of her middle-class readers choose to journey. In order to do this, she must divest herself of the "Parisian clothes" that "present the familiar outline of any woman of the world" (11). Van Vorst,

however, “determine[s] to make the sacrifice,” and “set[s] out to surmount physical fatigue and revulsion, to place [her] intellect and sympathy in contact as a medium between the working girl who wants help and the more fortunately situated who want to help her” (6). She desires to act as a “mouth-piece” for the woman laborer and “put into words her cry for help” (7). Van Vorst’s desire to act as “medium” between the two worlds carries the spiritual thread of the narrative throughout the text. By the end of the narrative, it becomes clear that this is more than a mere passing metaphor of spiritualism. Van Vorst comes to imagine the working-girl as an uninhabited subject, a vacant body whose very vacancy marks the difference between author and subject. It is this difference that Van Vorst seeks to remedy, not only for the working-girl, but inasmuch as she sees this vacancy within the working-girl as threatening to the cultural position of the middle-class woman.

From the beginning of Van Vorst’s undertaking, she makes it clear to the reader that she is entering a world different from her own, but, also, that the working-girl world represents the tendencies of America’s “new society”; the working-girl world, she implies, represents a future that encompasses her own world, and so presumably all American women. Thus, Van Vorst wants to “discern the tendencies of a new society as manifested by its working girls” (7). This is the troubling paradox that marks the author’s text: if the working-girl’s world is separate from her own, it is also imagined as representing the future of America. It also accounts for the unexamined class slippages of the text: the working-girl is both “other” and a figure for the future of “the” American woman. If Van Vorst desires to help the working-girl, she also desires to intervene in a historical narrative that she consistently imagines as a downwardly mobile spiral that threatens the spiritual, aesthetic, and reproductive potential of the American woman.

Van Vorst’s narrative, as it moves from place to place, is a spatial plotting of the progressive deevolutionary future of feminine America. Her movement from place to place is revealed as a spatialized plotting of the female subject’s spiritual, aesthetic, and reproductive decline. Moreover, her analysis moves progressively from representing the urban working-girl as held in “bondage” to the material demands of industrial organization to representing the working-girl as the one who drives the urban machine of industrialization. This mobility threatens the physical and social regeneration of the American landscape. So, by the end of her narrative, it becomes clear that Van Vorst’s desire is not only, or primarily, to help the working-girl, but to intervene in the urban environment’s spatial organization of gender, to interrupt and disrupt its mobilization of female subjects away from the home, which she sees as a vacating of female subjectivity itself.

Van Vorst divides her section of *The Woman Who Toils* into three chapters, according to her investigation of the working-girl in different geographic locations. This matter-of-fact organization of the text unfolds, however, as a spiritual topography of America that is both classed and gendered. This spiritual topography mediates between various spatial tropes that function throughout the narrative as building blocks in Van Vorst's reform-oriented reconstruction of woman's place in an increasingly urbanized nation. The interior and the exterior body, the Old World and the New, the city and the countryside, the home and the factory, all are incorporated into Van Vorst's text. Moreover, this spatial organization is intersected by the temporal ordering of the text, a seasonal progression that promises readers a spiritual story of death and renewal that is instead disrupted by the American female subject's drive toward an unnatural destiny.

Arriving in Pittsburgh, her first destination, in the middle of winter, Van Vorst describes the city in the language of death, a common representation of the season, but this death-like environment has unnatural causes. Industrialization defines the environment, overwhelming home and social life, and disrupting the aesthetic pleasures of winter. The factories' black walls darken the streets with shadows that block the white light of winter and their constant output of smoke covers the snow with soot "like a mantle of perpetual mourning" (12). This soot, moreover, is a funereal ash representing the end result of the industrial process that passes bodies through to be consumed and vanish into "waving arms of smoke and steam . . . sparks that shine an instant against the dark sky and are spent forever" (21). The vision of bodies evaporating into the air becomes a ritual in which workers' bodies are offered up as a sacrifice for the benefit of the "feudal lords" and "worshippers of gain" whose material demands must be met. The author images the Americanization process of the primarily immigrant working population in the language of sacrifice and regeneration: "The stagnant scum of other countries floats hither to be purified in the fierce bouillon of live opportunity" (12). The "altar" of the industrial machine replaces the "hearth" of the "united domestic group" and absorbs its members into the urban environment, leaving the home vacant.

Woman's body, according to Van Vorst, is most threatened by this industrialized environment, since her family and social life have been absorbed into the factory, dissipating the home that provides her natural, legal, and social protection. If the factory is a shrine to "worshippers of gain," it is the working-girl who serves as the chief sacrifice. Van Vorst describes her soul as trapped in a grotesque body that has adapted not only to the brutality of machine labor, but to the material deprivation she experiences in the home:

“As our souls develop with the advantages of all that constitutes an ideal—an intellectual, esthetic and moral ideal—their souls diminish under the oppression of a constant physical effort to meet material demands” (20). The working-girl, then, appears different from Van Vorst’s middle-class readers; just as middle-class readers are free to place the “ideal” above the “material,” so must the working-girl sacrifice this “ideal” in order to meet the demands of life. At this juncture in the text, Van Vorst sees this sacrifice as a result of the brutal industrial conditions under which the working-girl labors. And it is this sacrifice that constitutes Van Vorst’s chief emotional appeal on behalf of the woman laborer.

In Van Vorst’s view the working-girl’s body is a prison that holds captive a being with the relative capacity for morals and emotions equal to that of her middle-class reader; the body—its physical demands and disfigurements—holds her soul captive. Industrial organization destroys the body, “but the harm done them is not the physical suffering their condition causes, but the moral and spiritual bondage in which it holds them” (19). However, her representation of the process of industrialized labor as a ritual sacrifice of the body, as a process of purification, also tropes the physical suffering of the working-girl as a necessary condition of moral and spiritual survival. Particularly suggestive of Van Vorst’s representation of factory labor’s brutality as a necessary sacrifice is her concluding image of the relation between the “worshippers of gain” and the working-girl:

. . . but their souls suffer nothing from working in squalor and sordidness. Certain acts of impulsive generosity, of disinterested kindness, of tender sacrifice, of loyalty and fortitude shone out in the poverty-stricken wretches I met on my way, as the sun shines glorious in iridescence on the rubbish heap that goes to fertilize some rich man’s fields. (160)

In this passage, Van Vorst means to undermine accusations that the physical brutality and sordidness of the environment in which the working-girl lives reflects her emotional and spiritual capacity: she wants to provide evidence of a working-class interiority that is inaccessible to her middle-class readership because of their position in the “other” world. However, the metaphor operates, in effect, to suggest the usefulness of that interiority primarily as a regenerative force for the very industrial powers that consign the working-girl to deprivation. Van Vorst naturalizes the working-girl’s body as sacrificial “waste” by comparing it explicitly to fertilizer, a disintegrating base that enriches the products of others. The process of vaporization through which

the female body passes in machine labor is no different than the life cycle that turns the “waste” of physical consumption, or the “stagnant scum” of the Old World, into a foundation for the New American subject.

When Van Vorst moves from Pittsburgh to Perry, an upstate New York milltown, she presents the town as a space of regenerative possibility, a place perhaps where the female body might be regenerated. Through generations of “common effort” the “bouillon” of “live opportunity” becomes the fertilizer that produces the “strong American cement” from which the native born working-girls of Perry derive their character; it is the manifestation of the purification process that occurs in the World Bazaar of Pittsburgh. Instead of being physically defeated by their work at the mill, the town’s young population is full of “gaiety”; “a possible touch of romance” hangs constantly in the air among this well-dressed and ambitious group. Whereas, generations separate New York society girls from the immigrant female workers of Pittsburgh, only “a few years of culture and training” separate these “wild rose[s]” from the “American beauty” [a cultivated hybrid rose] (69). Generations of “Americanization” have turned these native born females into women who closely resemble those of Van Vorst’s own class. Moreover, their semi-rural habitat causes Van Vorst to extend her metaphor of fertilization; employing the metaphor of cultivation to link the women with her own class, she suggests that the Pittsburgh female immigrant’s sacrifice produces both these young native born working-class women and the more cultivated women of Van Vorst’s class.

The workers so closely resemble the women of the author’s own class that Van Vorst can appear at Perry in a costume that has some semblance to her own clothing, delighted to be recognized as both a “mill-hand” and a “lady” by a countryman. This delight, however, quickly dissipates when Van Vorst realizes that it is the industrial possibilities of the landscape, and not its romantic ones, that attract the ladies to Perry. The same characteristics that bring “boys and girls” together in Perry threaten the regenerative forces that Van Vorst seeks:

There as everywhere in America, for an individual as for a place, the attraction was industrial possibilities. As Niagara has become more an industrial than a picturesque landscape, so Perry, in spite of the serene and beautiful surroundings, is a shrine to mechanical force in whose temple, the tall-chimneyed mill, a human sacrifice is made to the worshipers of gain. (74)

Niagara, the sublime destination of nineteenth-century Anglo-American culture has been marred by industry; its romantic possibilities have been harnessed to the power of the machine. The comparison between Niagara and Perry is not casual; this invocation of the honeymoon destination become

industrialized images Van Vorst's own perspective on Perry, where marriage and reproduction are subordinated to the work of industrialization and the adventure of independence.

Relinquishing her reproductive responsibilities for the independence and luxuries that the machine offers, the native-born woman has become an autocrat and a rival to the male. She ignores law, nature, and convention to fulfill her own desires and thus carries within her a moral sterility that threatens to manifest itself both in her body and within the American social body as a physical sterility. Concerned only with "dress and men," the women never discuss "domestic cares. The management of an interior, housekeeping, cooking, were things . . . never once . . . mentioned" (73). Seeking woman's home and social life, Van Vorst discovers church socials, dances, plays, and picnics, but, to her dismay, not one baby residing in the town. Not only does the Perry girl ignore the interior management of the home, she pays no heed to the management of her interior self, her reproductive and spiritual capacities.

The urban environment that defines the immigrant working culture of Pittsburgh threatens to mold the native-born girl of Perry in its own industrialized—and masculine—image. According to Van Vorst, American society, where the individual is of more importance than family and state, where the competition and strife of industrialism dominates, puts woman at a disadvantage, since "nature disarms her for th[is] struggle" (80). Nature, in this sense, is both woman's inferior physical strength and her reproductive capabilities. Nature, law, and social convention provide for woman's protection, but industrial organization drives woman toward a "destiny that is not normal": spinsterhood (80). The "attractions of machine labor" are meant only for the woman who must act as breadwinner—not for the "materially independent" woman who is "protected" by the sacrifices of the female breadwinner and the protection of the male breadwinner from the masculinizing machine labor of industrial America. The working-girl's adventurous mobility, however, is only material, precipitating a "downward" spiral into moral, physical and aesthetic sterility that can only be reversed through the returning of woman to the home. In order to accomplish this, Van Vorst attempts to reorganize woman's relation to the urban environment through further differentiation of woman as a classed subject. She divides wage-earning women into three distinct groups: the breadwinner, the semi-breadwinner, and the girl who works for luxuries. Van Vorst imagines that the native-born girl of Perry works only for luxuries, independence, and adventure. Whereas Van Vorst images the immigrant working woman as a necessary sacrifice to the spiritual enrichment of others, she imagines that the native-born girl heedlessly

sacrifices herself to an immigrant working culture for her own enrichment. The native-born girl who works for luxuries is the “industrial unit” complicating the urban landscape, the criminal of Van Vorst’s investigation.⁵ The native-born woman of Perry has gone astray she argues, precisely because she has become *too* American: ego-driven, independent, adventurous. A product of generations of immigrant mixing, along with the regenerative spirit that makes her “American,” she has absorbed the masculine character of industrialism.

If the native-born female subject absorbs the industrial character of America to her detriment, then the machine around which the American character is organized responds only to the superior force of the male who is perfected, completed by the machine. Van Vorst depicts men as united in common effort—across distinctions in class—in the role of breadwinner. The male subject’s moral and spiritual capacity is assured through his assumption of the common masculine identity of breadwinner: work ensures that he always shares a like identity with other men, and with the environment he inhabits: “The men formed a united class. They had a purpose in common. The women were in a class with boys and with children. They had nothing in common but their physical inferiority to man” (160). It is not merely that Van Vorst ignores male class relations or gender relations among the working-class, but rather that her figuring of women’s spatial placement depends on masculinity as a defining background, a unified category of stability against which the adventuring American female subject enters into the “attractions” (74) of machine labor, as opposed to the “attractions” of reproduction and the home.

It is not surprising, then, that Van Vorst’s concern with the U.S.-born female subject’s neglect of the home should manifest itself in a sentimentalizing of “poor couples of the older generation” (105), farming couples dislocated by industrialization who keep boarders and lodgers in Perry and Chicago. Their devotion to one another is figured in light of those “ideals” that define her own class. And in that devotion Van Vorst locates the regeneration she seeks at the mill-town, ending the Perry section with a description of one such couple: “His glance traveled back over a long vista of years seen to them as their eyes met, invisible to those about—years that had glorified confidence in this life as it passed and *transfigured* it into the promise of another life to come” (98). The author’s description of this transcendent domestic unity ends the Perry section with a “promise” of spiritual transformation through a shared partnership between man and woman, and reiterates, and is reiterated again in the narrative, through Van Vorst’s use of italics in her description of men and women “falling” (90, 127) together, images

of the united domestic group that the native born female subject has abandoned. If Perry represents a pivotal space where feminine America might turn toward regeneration, Chicago represents the straying female subject's final, erring, destination. Van Vorst's arrival in Chicago inverts this promise of renewal—indicating how far from the “ideal” that makes transfiguration possible is the urban culture in which she finds herself. Chicago represents a spiritual death beyond the physical sacrifice dramatized in Pittsburgh: a living hell of “miserable, overcrowded tenement houses” where children “cluster in the gutter,” and the “blocks and blocks and tenements” are like “prison walls.” From her tenement lodgings Van Vorst describes the city as a “hot, human multitude” saturated with “[t]he breath of the black, sweet night . . . fetid, heavy with the odour of death as it bl[ows] across the stockyards” (108). Chicago represents the move away from a feminine America based on “old world” spiritual and aesthetic values. And, if in Perry Van Vorst is most concerned with industrialization's perversion of the female subject's drive toward reproduction, then, in Chicago, it is the disordered aesthetics of the city that seem to collude in not only the working-girl's perversion, but to represent a threat to the women of Vorst's own class as well.

In Chicago, Van Vorst's employments are symptomatic of her increasing preoccupation with the aesthetics of the urban. She works as a handsewer in a theatrical costume shop; as a framer in an art manufactory; and, finally, as a press operator in a print shop. Working in places of the mass reproduction of culture—the cheap art production warehouse, the morally debilitating and unclean hand sewing factory, the dangerous press machine churning out reams of cheap advertisement flyers—Van Vorst finds herself on the production side of the urban aesthetic that imitates, inverts, and threatens to debase the American home. Van Vorst's narrative plotting unravels as she travels through the city taking on jobs that have taken over woman's cultural labor in the American landscape; the purpose of her journey into the “other” world seems to be forgotten. Whereas she began her journey hoping to help the working-girl, she now appears increasingly threatened by both the urban environment that surrounds her and the women who inhabit that environment.

And, as the author searches for a job amidst the clamor of industrialism, an image similar to the one of Niagara Falls demonstrates how threatening the urban environment is, not merely to the notion of the middle-class home defined by reproduction, but to the female body itself:

The address took me to a more fashionable side of the city, near the lake; a wide expanse of pale, shimmering water, it lay a refreshing horizon for

eyes long used to poverty's quarters. . . . Free from man's disfiguring touch, pure, immaculate, it appeared bridelike through a veil of morning mist. And at its very brink are the turmoil and confusion of America's giant industries. (129)

This passage represents industrialism as overwhelmingly "disfiguring" to the spiritual, aesthetic, and physical purity that Van Vorst's associates with the ideal woman.

Increasingly, Van Vorst draws a parallel between the disordered aesthetics of the city and the disordered interiority of the female subject: "Pawnshops and undertakers, bakeries and soda-water fountains were ranged side by side on this highway, as the necessity for them is ranged with incongruous proximity in the existence of those who live pell-mell in moral and material disorder after the manner of the poor" (143). This disorder of the urban environment manifests itself in the incongruity between the female subject's exterior and her inner body/self. Watching a group of office workers, who wear their "showy" costumes with the "air of manikins," nibble on cakes at lunch, the author declaims against this class that "idolizes" the material to the detriment of their health:

They were self-supporting women—independent; they could use their money as they liked. . . . they each spent a prinking five minutes before the mirror, adjusting the trash with which they had bedecked themselves *exteriorly* while their poor hard-working systems went ungarnished and hungry *within*. . . . What sort of women are those who sacrifice all on the altar of luxury. . . . What harmony can there be between the elaborate get-up of those young women and the miserable homes where they live? (my italics; 112–13)

Van Vorst establishes parallels between the exterior female body and the urban environment and the inner body and the home in this passage. The female consumer and the female worker become one in a disastrous disharmony of exterior and interior. Vanity consumes the office worker just as the "shrine" of the factory consumes the body of the working-girls in Pittsburgh and Perry, but this is a feeding from within, a wasting of the body at the expense of health and the social environment in which they live. Here, the working-girl is both worshiper of gain, and consumer of her own body. The female subject appears as a manikin, a moral vacancy cheaply imitative of an "ideal" that creates an incongruence between her appearance in the city and the home Van Vorst assumes she should represent. Van Vorst desires to bring

order to the disordered female, to reestablish the domestic hearth that has been absorbed, along with its members, into the industrialized city. More to the point, she desires to fill the moral vacancy within the female subject with the spiritual aesthetic and reproductive values of the home, so that woman's interiority is evidenced—once again—according to her ability to exteriorize the home that “fills” her.

The author's text, then, is consumed by the disharmony—figured now as an aesthetic wasting equated with the moral and physical sterility of the female body—that urbanization creates between the home environment and the woman who represents it. Van Vorst's concern with the moral entrapment that the brutalized body suffers leads her back to the female body as a site of “waste” in the city. The girl who works for luxuries is a perverted inversion of both the imprisoning body of the female who must work and the urban environment in which she lives: vacant within she absorbs the trash of the streets, becoming the very embodiment of waste. Whereas in Pittsburgh the brutalized female breadwinner wastes her body for the regeneration of the American spirit, here, the female subject is merely, only, waste.

As a corrective to this wasting of the inner female self, Van Vorst argues that the female breadwinner and nonbreadwinner must be spatially segregated from one another. In particular, the nonbreadwinner should be “lifted” from the “slavish, brutalizing machines . . . ignorant of anything better” and “placed by education and by cultivation in positions of comparative freedom—freedom of thought, taste, and personality. . . . forming a new, higher, superior class of industrial art labourers” who can perform their labor in the home (162). This solution is an import from the Old World, an idea modeled on the work of the Empress of Russia and Queen Margherita of Italy. This new class of female laborers would make items to beautify the American home, items that the middle-class consumer must now import from abroad. Van Vorst's narrative progression, however, draws a metaphorical relation between the “goods” that middle-class consumers “are obliged to send to Europe for when we wish to beautify our homes” (156) and the failure of her own classes' “ideal” to purify the “stagnant scum” that it imports to fill its factories, the failure of the purification process to act as a foundation for “feminine America.”

According to Van Vorst, the generational process of Americanization that churns out native-born females with too much American (masculine) spirit is inverted in the disordered aesthetics of the urban environment—so that the immigrant woman takes on the appearance of the “ideal.” This aesthetic inversion—in which the immigrant woman takes on the appearance of the “ideal” American female—emerges in two images of the immigrant

female subject as an object of transformation in the city. The first is a display window manikin that Van Vorst describes immigrant women as admiring with envious eyes: "From the store window wax figures of the *ideal* woman, clad in the latest Parisian garb. . . . Did she not plainly say to them, 'For \$17 you can look as I do?'" (my italics; 144). The second image, however, is an inversion of the first as Van Vorst examines a group of female Italian immigrants, not merely as they stand before her but as they once appeared to Van Vorst in her travels through Italy: "In becoming prosperous Americans, animated by the desire for material possession which is the strength and the weakness of our countrymen, they lost the character that pleases us, *the beauty we must go abroad to find*" (my italics; 145). This phrase connects the Old World, as a symbol of the production of aesthetic goods that Americans must import, and the "stagnant scum" that comes from the Old World to be purified. At this point in the narrative, the roles of Old and New have been inverted: the aesthetic objects of the Old World are made impure by their immersion in the consumer environment of the urban neighborhood. The ritual of purification through which the immigrant working-girl body becomes American has not transfigured her into an "American beauty" which can be cultivated but into a spectacle of disfigurement that represents, finally, a mockery of Van Vorst's own ideal self.

The stagnant scum have not been purified through the sacrifice of the body, but have merely borrowed the raiments of the "ideal" so that they mimic Van Vorst's own class. Arraigned in their cheap imitations of Van Vorst's "good" clothing (11), they collapse the distance between the "old" world, immigrant woman and the "woman of the world." For it is as "a woman of the world" (11) that Van Vorst makes the comparison between the immigrant's position as spectator and mimic of her own "ideal" self and her position as a spectacle against which she can measure her own mobility as a female subject of the "fortunate class." Whereas, as she moves about the world, the immigrant's "picturesque" qualities define Van Vorst's own mobility, her ability to move freely in the world, now she sees them moving freely in her world, while her own "ideal" self occupies the position of spectacle as the manikin in the window. In this disordered aesthetic of the urban environment distinctions between the world of the "ideal" and the "other" world are difficult to maintain, destabilizing and threatening the middle-class woman's place within American culture.

The "desperate reality" that Van Vorst claims for her experience may be nothing more than the horror of mingling her own body with those determined to "mirror" her in form, if not substance, at seeing the artwork "framed" on her own walls cheaply reproduced for the consumption of

others, her own desire to be in print mocked by the cheap advertisements and handbills copiously churned out for indiscriminate readers; her own “ideal” self window displayed and integrated into the pell-mell aesthetics of immigrant breadwinners and independent office workers mingling in the urban environment.

Whereas at the beginning of the narrative, Van Vorst feels that the distance between herself and the working-girl is so great as to require the metaphor of two worlds, at this point in the narrative Van Vorst must distinguish herself from these women who appear as distorted images of her exterior self. She takes particular pains to tell her readers about a fellow boarder who studies music on “borrowed money.” Van Vorst sarcastically refers to her as the “mundane” of the house, and scorns her luxurious dress, and social and cultural pretensions. The oddness of Van Vorst’s complaint against the woman, however, is revealed only by Van Vorst’s assumption of the working-girl voice, as if she, herself, were not passing: “It was evident from my wretched clothes and poor grammar that I was not accustomed to ladies of her type” (125). There is no narrative intervention from Van Vorst that might turn the irony of her position relative to the “mundane” into a comedy of inversion or a moment of self-recognition that would lead readers to understand how Van Vorst as a female subject locates herself in relation to the “mundane.” Van Vorst’s passing is acceptable as a form of physical disguise that does not disrupt her own world; the “mundane” ’s passing, however, is dangerous precisely because only Van Vorst sees the young woman as passing; others do not perceive her as a cheap and imitative version of the real woman of the world, Van Vorst.

Van Vorst is able, ironically, to preserve and present her interior self for the reader only by retreating completely into her working-girl guise; if the “real” working-girl refuses to conform to Van Vorst’s sentimental vision of interiority, then Van Vorst will perform that injured role herself, her “wretched clothes” and “poor grammar” manifesting her ideal of how the working-girl should appear. This denunciation of the non-ideal working-girl is also an attempt to recover the middle-class female subject’s difference—the interiority that lifts her above, and makes it possible for her to know, the working-girl.

Van Vorst implicitly asks how to make manifest the ideal interior self that defines the middle class woman in this urban environment where the home no longer represents a stable and distinguishing reference point for the exteriorization of the female self. Describing herself as a “woman of the world” at the beginning of her journey and representative of that class in which the “ideal” supersedes consideration of the demands of the material, it is the

distorted appropriation of her own self image within the urban environment that finally manifests how the tendencies of this “new” society affect the women of Van Vorst’s own class. The author who initially receives so much pleasure from being recognized as both a lady and a mill-hand ultimately represents the urban environment as threatening precisely because it offers such a dual identity to the working-girl: if the “mundane” has assumed, within the urban environment, the appearance of the “ideal,” how does the elite female subject exteriorize that interior self that marks her difference? If it is only the elite female subject who can perceive the disharmony between the female subject’s appearance and the home that she should represent, then, how does the woman of the world establish her differentiated place within the urban environment?

The untouched interiority of the middle-class female maintains itself through the ironic assumption of a cultural authority and mobility that Van Vorst would deny her class of adopted industrial art laborers. Van Vorst explicitly figures her investigation as an inhabitation of the other’s body in the opening pages of the text, when she encounters the gateman at the train station:

I get no farther than the depot when I observe that I am being treated as though I were ignorant and lacking in experience. As a rule the gateman says a respectful “To the right” or “To the left,” and trusts to his well-dressed hearer’s intelligence. . . . [but] I had divested myself of a certain authority along with my good clothes, and I had become one of a class which, as the gateman had found out, *and as I found out later myself*, are devoid of all knowledge of the world and, aside from their manual training, ignorant of all subjects. (my italics; 12)

Although Van Vorst’s insistence on her eventual confirmation of the gateman’s perspective may be seen as giving away the ending, it also assures the reader that Van Vorst will return, not merely redressed in the “good clothes” that designate her as a female member of the “fortunate” class, but with the added cultural authority of the gateman. The “gateman,” as a mediator of direction, helps others reach their correct destination. And, thus, he acts as a figure for the author herself, who hopes to point both the working-girl and the middle-class reader toward their (spiritual and biological) destinations. In the process, she manages to create a third world, an intermediate world that further distances her body and the body of those who might resemble her from the “brutalizing machine labor,” and the “imitation” ideals that suffuse the urban streets. However, simultaneously, the “destination” that Van

Vorst maps as the female subject's destiny—based on her desire to save the biological body for reproduction and the “esthetic improvement of the country” (158)—forecloses the possibility of this class sharing her authority, since it requires them to withdraw from the urban environment and become the regenerative material for her own work: the spiritual, aesthetic, and reproductive reclamation of the middle-class home.

The cultural authority that Van Vorst assumes is the middle-class woman's authority as social mediator, but Van Vorst's insistence on reiterating the middle-class woman's difference through interiority suggests the extent to which she feels this power has been vacated, the extent to which the deserted hearth of the urban environment is a metaphor for the cultural displacement of traditional middle-class female subjectivity. Her narrative reclaims this authority for the charting of identity precisely through its performance of this distinction—between herself and the working-girl—and the dangers of relinquishing such distinctions.

This is one of the reasons that Van Vorst insists on the novelty of her journey/narrative as that which “has never been done.” By claiming to do what “has never been done,” Van Vorst reauthorizes the middle-class woman, truncating the very anxiety that her narrative displays about the female subject's meaning in urban culture. The “meaning” of female subjectivity is to give “meaning”—spiritual and aesthetic—to those who cannot articulate or discern the meaning of their own lives; in this sense, her doing “what has never been done” reclaims for the middle-class subject her particularity, her difference from those subjects who mechanically reproduce and follow the trajectory of urbanization. Her performance is not merely an investigation of how to help the working-girl, but an intervention in the downwardly mobile trajectory of the “American” female subject, who is originally always already middle class. Her reemergence at the end of the narrative, morally and physically intact, and able to describe the “meaning of it all” for her middle-class readers, presents the middle-class woman as the heroine who can read the urban environment, and therefore, transcend the dangers it represents. And, perhaps just as importantly, this middle-class heroine is able to redirect the American female subject back toward the home that represents her destiny. And, therefore, to save her from those forces that would turn her into a masculine individual, destroying the home as a viable social location for a feminine redefinition of culture.

However, Van Vorst's insistence on the novelty of her project is not, in representational terms, correct. Middle-class women writers of popular storybooks of the era had been imagining similar journeys—with similar geographical appropriations—at least since the late 1880s. Her deliberate

eschewing of these narratives as a context for her own voluntary journey indicates Van Vorst's desire to ignore or dismiss the possibility that nevertheless underlies her narrative: the possibility that such downward mobility may be involuntary, that the middle-class subject might actually "fall" into the world of the "unfortunate." It is this prior representational history of the trope of downward mobility that Dorothy Richardson uses as the cultural context through which she writes her own story of urban social reform for the working-girl and attempts to imagine new forms of subjectivity for both working-class and middle-class female subjects. In the process, Richardson is able to recontextualize how the home might—must—function differently for the independent female subject in the urban environment. From the beginning of her novel, Richardson draws on this popular trope as a context for her narrator/heroine. Richardson's narrator undertakes her journey from country to city because she identifies with stories that she has to read of rural girls who journey to the city in search of work and adventure. Early in the text she twice refers to the "story-books" and "magazine stories" in which "it is always so alluring—this coming to a great city to seek one's fortune . . ." (30). Once in the city, she finds herself alone and searching for affordable lodging and employment before she becomes homeless, and she cannot but help compare her own isolation and poverty to the "stories about girls who lived in hall bedrooms . . . of what good times they had, or seemed to have" (80). Richardson's narrator thus provides a cultural context for her journey that is lacking in Van Vorst's text. This cultural context makes explicit what is merely implied in Van Vorst's narrative: the journeying of the middle-class female investigator into the "other" world is itself a cultural trope for exploring the middle-class female subject's sense of displacement and alienation in the urban environment. In Richardson's novel, then, the social reformer is a working-girl who performs this cultural narrative (of the urban as a site of downward mobility for the middle-class female subject) in order to rewrite its ending.⁶

The beginning of this narrative is the journey from the familial home that offers a stable identity into an urban environment represented as a space of destabilizing migrancy. The narrator's sense of disorientation is immediate, and, as in Van Vorst's narrative, the urban is defined by its lack of a domestic environment. The physical spaces that the unnamed narrator inhabits are places "now *called* home" that provide neither the security nor the identity for which the narrator searches when she enters the city, but are merely provisional places of inhabitation. Whereas Vorst is able to maintain her sense of identity against the urban environment that threatens her, Richardson's narrator is not. Rather, it is the search for a new identity,

and new identifications through which to represent female subjectivity, that inform the narrator's journey into the city.

And, yet, contemporary critics tend to stabilize both narrator and narrative identity in the novel by reading it as a social problem text, and viewing the narrator as simply Richardson herself. Critics have tended to linger over the historical accuracies or inaccuracies of Richardson's novel.⁷ Her ability to record the working-girl and the urban environment in which she lives with vivid detail arouses critics' admiration, even as they tend to dismiss the novel as transparently representing the "middle-class bias" of its author. Blanche Gelfant seems to define subsequent critical approaches to the novel when she argues that Richardson's novel should not be considered a city novel but a social problem text. Comparing it to Dreiser's *Sister Carrie*, she argues that *Sister Carrie* "is concerned with a total way of life . . . it interprets city life as a social structure, while the problem novel records, in a more photographic manner, only the symptoms of a particular urban disorder" (8). And, yet, Richardson and Dreiser access the urban through the same "symptom" of disorder: the native-born rural girl, newly arrived in the city. This accessing of the urban environment through the same figure suggests that the canonical urban novel and the social problem text are themselves contiguous products of a similar cultural organization of space—one that, as in Vorst's text, pushes forward the working-girl as a manifestation of the "tendencies" of urbanization.

Furthermore, Richardson, if not her narrator, seems quite aware that her autobiographical subject is a cultural "type" familiar to U.S. readers, and useful precisely because of her recognizability. Dreiser's *Sister Carrie* is referenced sardonically early in Richardson's text when the novice narrator is hailed as "Carrie" by an experienced hand at the factory. This hailing of Richardson's first person narrator as the fictional greenhorn country-girl of Dreiser's novel signifies both Richardson's recognition of her narrator as a figure already written into the culture as a type, and the significance of reading in the text. The author articulates the "reality" of her narrator's experience precisely by invoking its resemblances to the texts of popular culture that constitute the female subject's library. Richardson's novel is saturated with moments such as these that foreground the relation between fictional representations of the native-born female subject's entrance into the urban environment and her autobiographical-reformist narrative. I argue that Richardson's cross-genre narrativizing offers a context for understanding how social reform narratives such as Van Vorst's, canonical novels such as Dreiser's, and mass-marketed romances share a common spatial troping of the relation between class, gender, and the urban that understands the urban

working-girl as a “fallen” native middle-class subject rather than as a subject emerging from specific historical and social conditions.

The narrator’s first job, after arriving in New York from rural Pennsylvania, is at a box-making factory. Here, she and her new coworkers carry on a lengthy discussion of their tastes in books. This scene has been glossed over by critics as merely an example of Richardson’s middle-class snobbishness toward the “Laura Jean Libbey School” of fiction that her fellow workers love to read. However, this extended scene is more complex than it first appears, particularly when read in the context of the mass-marketed fiction that it references.

Mass produced storybooks of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century were popular with working-class and middle-class women. Drawing upon both the gothic and sentimental traditions of the previous era, they featured late adolescent heroines who repeatedly found themselves in physical and moral peril. As in the genres they incorporate these heroines are usually imaged as orphaned, but storybook heroines are repeatedly orphaned: not only do they lose one or both parents in infancy or childhood, but as young women they often lose guardians to death, or are abandoned and rejected by those to whose care they have been entrusted. Raised in country villas, mansions, or farms they find themselves alone in the world—forced to the city in search of work or guardianship. Contemporary critics recognize the romance heroine’s privileged origins. And, yet, despite their recognition that these heroines usually do not work and are not from working-class backgrounds, they continue to read these novels as working-girl fiction, suggesting that working women must have identified with the heroine’s eventual marriage to a wealthy and handsome suitor and fantasized about their chances of experiencing this romantic upward mobility.⁸ But as my summary of their plots indicate these books do not image upwardly mobile marriage, but merely return the heroine to her rightful place. The wrong of her displacement is corrected in the novel’s happy ending. The popular storybook resembles the texts of the reformers examined here: the urban environment represents the middle-class female subject’s displacement from the protections and privileges promised by a culture based on inheritance and secured through the female subject’s cultural identification with the home.

These novels trope the female subject’s family and class displacement as a geographic trajectory ending in her alienated position within the urban environment. This function of the novels is underscored by Libbey’s extravagance in bestowing upon her heroines a respectable and often wealthy birthright that is returned to her before her marriage to her male equivalent. One of Libbey’s books makes this geographic trajectory explicit. In *The Alphabet*

of *Love* (1892) the heroine's stepmother pays two criminals from the city to claim the villa-bred Southern heroine as their long lost daughter. Libbey describes at great length, and repeatedly, the incomprehensible distance between the "ill-bred" and "coarse" impostors and the gentile heroine who appear to inhabit "two different worlds" (94). So the urban environment stands in for the middle-and/or- upper class female subject's displacement from the protections guaranteed by her birthplace on the farm or in the villa; if, eventually, she is returned to her rightful place as heiress, wife, and mistress of her own home, the plot outlines not the rise of the working-girl, but the middle and upper class female's replacement within the family/class identity (and one is nothing without the other) that makes her marriage possible.

The authors of the storybook romance give their fairy-tale plots cultural relevancy when they incorporate urbanization into their plot as a manifestation of the female subject's displacement from the home. Similarly, when Richardson incorporates other texts into her narrator's experience of the city she both signifies the cultural context within which her own journey occurs, and points to the importance of reading in the middle-class female's experience of the urban environment. In Van Vorst's text industrialization organizes the female subject's place in the city. In Richardson's story, it is stories themselves that plot the female subject's position. The competing narratives of the box-making factory are a manifestation of the differing cultural expectations of the narrator and her fellow workers. These differences are understood as geographic, playing on the narrator's rural innocence. That these differences are also aligned with class and, often, ethnicity may be elided by the geographic metaphor. However, this also makes difference available to the reader in a way that it is not available to a reader of Van Vorst's text. Van Vorst does not present how the working-girls perceive the author's difference from themselves. The very lack of interiority that Van Vorst perceives—and fears—in her journey is reflected in her inability to narrate the very difference she seeks to define. However, in *The Long Day*, the journey into the city, the closing of the physical distance between rural narrator and the urban female subject, is not enough to transform Richardson into a working-girl; she is consistently troped as different from the working-girls she meets. According to her coworkers, the narrator talks, walks, and reads in "funny" ways.

When Mrs. Smith and her friend Phoebe discover that the unnamed narrator has never read any of their favorite storybooks, Mrs. Smith launches into a detailed description of the plot of her favorite, *Little Rosebud's Lovers*. This plot, related in the context of the country narrator's own greenhorn position in the city, is significant for two reasons. At the suggestion of her coworker Henrietta Manners, the narrator will assume the storybook name

Rose Fortune the next day—the only name by which the reader will ever know her. And, the plot of this novel consistently resembles a typical storybook plot, except for the fatal ending that befalls the heroine. The plot of *Little Rosebud's Lovers*, and the discussion that follows its telling, questions both contemporary critics' reading of this fiction and the narrator's reading practices. Rosebud's ending deviates dramatically from that of most storybooks. After a harrowing flight to the city in search of her aunt, the disowned Rosebud dies from fright while trying to escape the villain of the book; she never sees her lover, her country mansion, or her fortune again. The story functions, not as a fulfillment of the middle-class female subject's desire to return to the security of her cultural place, to find virtue rewarded, and at the end of the perilous journey into the city, to reemerge morally and physically intact, but rather as a warning to those subjects who identify with such heroines. The narrator, of course, has come to the city because she identifies with the heroines in her reading; but the fatal ending of "Little Rosebud" mocks her romantic and homebound expectations.

However, her working-class counterparts do not read through a structure of identification; they do not take storybook heroines for "true." Our narrator follows up this startling rehearsal of Rosebud's decline with her recital of the plot of one of her favorite books, *Little Women*. Her coworkers respond by questioning the appropriateness of Alcott's selection of material, insisting that Alcott probably knew all the people in the book, and merely wrote about what happened to them. To the box-factory workers *Little Women* is no story at all, but merely a record of "everyday happenings" (86). Later, the narrator scoffs at her coworkers' reading of storybook romances because, "they have not sufficient imagination to invest their hard-working, sweat-grimed sweethearts with any halo of romance" (73). Our narrator, like contemporary critics, misreads the purposes of reading for her coworkers. While our narrator—soon to be author—obviously identifies with the heroine Jo March, her coworkers do not identify with their heroines, at least not in the same manner. More obviously, the narrator ignores the dangers of identification inherent in the unhappy ending of Little Rosebud's story when she suggests that her coworkers should endow their male counterparts with the romance of the storybook hero. Both the reliability of the narrator's way of reading and the dangers of misreading the urban environment, of taking "fairy" stories for "true," are immediately plotted in the episode that follows, what we might call the book's undermining of the storybook plot, even as it insists on the narrator's very living of that plot through her own orphaned and perilous experience of the city.

Finding herself homeless, the narrator accepts fellow worker Henrietta Manner's offer to share her room. Hardworking Henrietta tells the narrator her own tragic story of disinheritance, orphaning, and, finally, her expulsion from

the ancestral home and into the workplace. And she encourages our narrator to ditch her own ugly name and call herself Rose Fortune, after a storybook heroine. This renaming of our narrator in effect turns her into just such a heroine, writes her into a cultural plot that she does not control, and indicates her sense of disempowerment within the urban environment.

Henrietta's life story mimics the storybook heroine's tale. But the narrator's acceptance of the story as true questions the reliability of the middle-class female's negotiation of the urban environment. If Van Vorst insists on the importance of distinguishing between "a woman of the world" and the "passing mundane," this narrator reveals how difficult it is to make this distinction. Moreover, the same structure of identification that causes Van Vorst to see and fear herself as the object of mimicry, structures our narrator's willingness to believe Henrietta. At first glance, Henrietta appears more like herself than the other workers in the factory: Henrietta's tale of downward mobility is an exaggerated version of the narrator's own story. So, Rose, despite her increasing fears, follows Henrietta to her new home.

Through increasingly "dark, devious paths" the narrator follows Henrietta to the "most wretched of all the wretched houses" and into her small and dilapidated room (121–22). The room is a spatial manifestation of the female subject's displacement as imaged in the storybook:

The heavily carved woodwork hinted of the fact that it had once been a lady's bedchamber in the bygone days when this was a fashionable quarter of New York, and its fireplace. . . . [was] surmounted by a mantel of Italian marble sculptured with the story of Prometheus's boon to mankind, and supported on either end by caryatids in the shape of vestal virgins bearing flaming brands in their hands. (124)

The vestal virgins, "once spotless" but "now sadly soiled," support not only the rows of perfume bottles that Henrietta's lover brings her, but also the illegal drugs that she takes. The ancestral home on the wall that Henrietta claims for her own is an easily recognizable mass produced picture of a castle on the Rhine. Not only does the room represent the female subject's downward mobility in its shrinking confinement and degradation, it also represents that downfall as imaged in the storybook as counterfeit, a cheaply circulated fantasy, like Henrietta's claim to an ancestral home and the "romances of the Laura Jean Libbey school of fiction" (140) that sit upon her bookshelf. However, it also indicates Richardson's desire to retell the story of this fall—through the narrator—as a reality: as the motivation for the social reform narrative. This moment mirrors, then, the moment in Van Vorst's text when she feels her own identity threatened

as she sees her own self “falsely” mimicked in the streets and in the Chicago boardinghouse. Only the narrator does not see this as a mimicry of self, of an already culturally written, and therefore suspect, story, but as a mimicry of the fantasies of the storybook.

“Rose”’s downfall occurs because of that of which she accuses her coworkers: poor reading. Taking storybook fantasy for “true,” too late she realizes the falseness of Henrietta’s claims to a gentrified background. Her imagination invests Henrietta with the “halo of romance.” Because she identifies with Henrietta’s story of downward mobility, she not only misreads Henrietta, but her own place—as a “good” reader—within the urban environment. She is not, as Van Vorst presents herself, a reader capable of distinguishing one class of women from another; she is more akin to the storybook heroine whose failure to read the urban environment results in her moral and physical peril. Moreover, the narrator’s encounter with Henrietta, since it is contextualized within the “truth” of the reformer’s autobiographical narrative, takes on the aura of everyday happenings and confronts the middle-class reader with her own failed ability to read the urban environment she now inhabits. When the narrator takes the storybook tale for “true,” she becomes the kind of heroine she earlier mocked.

The narrator, however, in much the same way that Van Vorst uses her narrative to perform the middle-class female subject’s difference from the working-girl, interjects her future “reading” of Henrietta into this episode. As Henrietta and the narrator are walking to Henrietta’s squalid room, the future reformer and author feels it necessary to both excuse her gullibility in going home with Henrietta, and reinterpret Henrietta from her more educated present:

In the light of knowledge gained in later years, I can now see in that long, slouching shuffling figure, in that tallow-colored face with the bloodless, loose lips and the wandering, mystic eyes. . . . a congenital failure; a female creature doomed from her mother’s womb—physically, mentally, and morally doomed.

I was, however, on this memorable Easter Eve most happily innocent of my Lombroso and my Mantagazza, else I had not been walking home with Henrietta Manners, in all the confidence of an unsophisticated country-girl. (120–21)

Henrietta has been characterized by the author both as a romantic heroine, and her fallen counterpart—a gothic anti-heroine that steers the displaced heroine toward moral and physical peril. And yet, while persisting in this representation of Henrietta, the author must also put her into a “proper

perspective;” with the help of scientific reading she places Henrietta into a reformist context that can both explain Henrietta and her own misreading of the girl’s character. Rose distances herself from the experience of her own identification with Henrietta and her identification with the romantic fictions of the storybook heroine, but she can do so only through the perspective of a future reader who has located other texts for understanding the female working-girl.

The narrator continues to incorporate the structures of the storybook plot into her narrative, even as she gestures toward the falseness of their ability to act as a context for the working-girl’s story; the storybooks that have brought her to the city become a counterpoint to the reality of the author’s narrative. When her friend Eunice, a fallen woman who has lost the desire to live, slips away into the dark night, Rose admonishes her readers not to expect to discover Eunice’s fate: “It is only in stories that such things are made clear, usually, and this was only an incident in real life” (228). And, later, a young man tells the narrator and her friend that the woman he chooses for a wife need not be pretty: “‘Them things don’t make much difference only in story papers’” (255). This insistence on the difference between her own narrative and fictional stories is a way of distancing “Rose” from “Rosebud” and of separating the romance plot from the author’s attempt to redefine the female subject as a worker. The narrator could be writing of herself when she claims in her Epilogue that “[g]irls fed upon such mental trash are bound to have distorted and false views of everything” (300). Similarly, she insists that educators must pander to the “very primitive feminine liking for identity” by providing them with stories “not too far removed from the real and the actual” if they wish to compete for working-girls’ literary attention (301). But are stories of the “real and the actual” stories like *Little Women* of “everyday happenings,” or stories like those of little Rosebud, the fantastic stories that Phoebe, Mrs. Smith, and Henrietta read? The “primitive feminine liking for identity” that the narrator argues underlies women’s reading practices describes her own reading practices, and not those of her coworkers. Side-stepping the issue of class differences in reading and the question of which class to whom she is addressing herself, the author’s own narrative strategies are designed to incorporate both types of stories in order to produce a new female reader.

In short, the narrator seems to suggest that educators should provide reading such as *The Long Day*: urban narratives in which the reform plot and the storybook plot are neatly interwoven in order to produce a different kind of female reader, a different kind of female subject. The shaping of

experience into the reform narrative is much like the guidelines for working-girls' reading. The appropriation of the storybook romance lays a foundation for identification with the narrator as a heroine, while the author's redirecting of its stereotypical plot allows her to reposition that identification for the middle-class reader. The reform narrative's aim is to rewrite the powerless plotting of the downwardly mobile romance heroine and her ending in domesticity or in Rosebud's case, death.

The restructuring of identification, however, is much more difficult than it appears. The middle-class subject must descend into a space of non-identity before she can experience the depths of her downward mobility as a working-girl. In the end, Rose finds herself forced into the most degraded work of the city, working as a mangle in a steam laundry. This environment represents, once again, the detrimental positioning of the female subject in the industrial city. Just as Chicago represents a kind of aesthetic hell for Van Vorst, the steam laundry has a similar function in *The Long Day*. The female body is deformed by the mechanization of traditionally female labor, but she is also subject to physical and moral degradation within the closely confined space of the laundry. The women discard their shoes and outerclotting in the thick heat, while shirtless and shoeless black men sweat over their work, and the "queen bee," the Boss's lover and a glistening blonde whose beauty is heightened by the steam of the laundry, manages everything. The only men who work in the laundry—with the exception of the foreman—are black men. And the narrator's overtly sexual description of these men, as well as her indignation that white men refuse to work in the place, signifies her understanding of this enforced association as a mark of her sexual and economic degradation as a white woman. However, it is not the black men who represent a problem for the narrator, but the white boss who assumes that the narrator will exchange sexual favors for a promotion. This sexual threat seems to form a sort of narrative wall for Richardson. The narrator will not—cannot—explore the overt sexual content of the working-girl's story. As in the storybook heroine's tale, this is the narrative turning point; the heroine must succumb to the villain, commit suicide, or—as is usually the case—be saved so she can return to her rightful place, marry, and leave the city.

The narrator flees when she discovers that the Boss's attentions are sexual and not related to her superior efficiency in the workroom. The middle-class identity with which she began her narrative has been shattered by the degradation of the laundry, represented, finally, by the sexual threat of both her surroundings and her employer: ". . . I walked on, all unconscious of where I was going, or of my own identity" (264). This, as Richardson describes it in the epilogue, is the general state of the working women of the

city: they work on, apathetic toward their fate and their surroundings; unconscious of themselves as workers they are worked as machines are worked. This reduction of the working-girl/middle-class subject to a machine without identity opens up a narrative space, however, for Richardson's rewriting of the urban female subject.

Richardson attempts to pander both to the "very primitive feminine liking for identity" that defines middle-class women's reading by providing a heroine that resembles themselves and to use that identification to create a new subject position for the female subject and for herself. Rather than follow the romantic plot that replaces the heroine in the social order, Richardson suggests new modes of identification for both the working-girl and the middle-class female subject. In her epilogue, Richardson tells her readers that no book has had more effect upon her thinking than Booker T. Washington's *Up from Slavery*. And it is an identification, she says, with the Afro-American worker that will turn the female subject into an urban worker worthy of her economic rights:

. . . she is as new to the idea of what it really means to work as is the Afro-American citizen. The comparison may not be flattering to our vanity, but after a reading of Booker Washington's various expositions of the industrial abilities of the negro, I cannot but be convinced that the white working woman is in a corresponding process of evolution. . . . (279)

Richardson saves this identification, however, until the end of her story precisely because it represents a new kind of identification for her and for white wage-earning women. She turns the forced racial-gendered segregation of the laundry, which previously angered her, into a tentative identification that she knows her readers will find offensive, and that previously she herself saw as a measure of her debasement. The author's reference to "our vanity" is one of the few instances in the epilogue in which she includes herself among working women.⁹

The race and gender segregation of the workplace forces the narrator into a position of proximity with the African-American male worker. However, it is the textual separation of self and other that allows the narrator to make meaning of the experience, and to make an identification across race that might alienate her white readers: ". . . with the appearance of the first fruits of authorship—part of the horror and loathing of that unhappy period of servitude fell away from me; the sordid suffering, the hurt to pride, the ineffaceable scar on heart and soul I felt had not been in vain" (273). In

Van Vorst's and Richardson's texts the reformist model is dependent upon an aesthetic sense of the female subject as capable of defining herself in relation to being able to giving meaning to experience. The reformist narrative allows both to reposition themselves as artists in an environment that prefers the counterfeit—the “mundane,” Henrietta Manners—to the “everyday happenings” that represent the interiority of the female subject. Van Vorst does that “which had never been done before” and makes a claim for aesthetics produced in the home as beyond the imitable cheapness of the mechanically produced. Richardson's narrator survives the kind of displacement and disorientation that the storybook heroine experiences only to refute the domestic destiny that those books plot for the middle-class subject and to write herself as worker.

Richardson rejects the domestic destiny that both Van Vorst and the storybook authors' plot for the middle-class female subject, but the narrator of *The Long Day* is also clearly dissatisfied with those places that she is asked to “now call home” within the city. She does not reject the notion of home as a defining site of female subjectivity, but, rather, wants to locate a home for working women who must, or choose to, live outside the familial home. In the end, Richardson is not able to provide her heroine with both a new identity as a worker and a home that accommodates that identity. When the narrator escapes from the moral and physical peril of Henrietta's room, just as any good Libbey heroine would, she descends further into homelessness. Rose ends up at The Working Girls' Home, a site of the home's institutionalization—such that Richardson often puts home in quotation marks—and, thus, a step further down from the deteriorating confines of Henrietta's lodgings. The entrance into “The Home” is troped as a kind of death for the female subject. The door has “the gruesome suggestion of a coffin set on end” (157) and the women's gray cots are laid out end to end like graves. Here, Rose enters as an “inmate” and meets the young girls who grow up under the auspices of the “home”: “They came as little children, and they went away as women. For them the home was practically a prison” (173). Furthermore, these minor inmates are exploited as child laborers under the guise of philanthropy before being turned out into the city to be further exploited in the streets. The home is based on the idea that only “espionage and isolation” (219) can ensure the physical and moral safety of the inmates and has a rigid set of rules that inhibit intimacy between the lodgers. In her epilogue, Richardson claims that most working-girls “seemed never to have lived in homes at all” (282).

Richardson's main concern, then, is not the domestic familial home whose vacancy Van Vorst laments, but rather the home of the independent

female in the city: the lodging and boarding homes and girls' homes in which the working-girl lives alone. The narrator finds permanency and intimacy only when her friend Minnie Plympton rescues her from the street as she flees the laundry. She and Minnie enjoy a "happy domestic partnership" (268) which ends only when Minnie marries, has a baby and moves to "a pretty cottage in a peaceful suburb" (266). Minnie enjoys the happy domestic ending that the author rejects for herself, insisting that she will always, must always, be a wage earner. This insistence on her own status as worker motivates her analysis of the needs of working-girls' domestic environment. Specifically, she finds the "coercive morality" (287) hidden behind the "semblance of charity" to be a sign of working women's inequality that is both classed and gendered, noting that neither men nor upper class women are held to the same constraints on their conduct. Her female friend, Minnie, pursues a middle-class family life in a suburban cottage, suggesting to the middle-class reader that the domestic home can represent a space safe from the inequalities, at home and at work, which define the urban working-girl's life. Richardson's narrative plotting within the context of the storybook heroine's tale limits her ability to examine the relation between the domestic sphere and the social and economic sites of the urban environment. However, Clara Laughlin uses a fragmented narrative technique that allows her to bring to the foreground the connections between the female's place within the industrial organization of the city and her place within the home. Laughlin, Richardson, and Van Vorst agree: the middle-class home does not hold a central place in an early twentieth century U.S. culture defined by urbanization. Richardson views the middle-class home as an originating point of departure for the storybook heroine, whereas Van Vorst sees this as a destination point for the native born female subject. Yet, neither writer examines the relation between the gendered ideology of the home and the urban structures which apparently displace it. Laughlin, however, shows that the gendered structures that define the home have not been displaced, but have merely been appropriated away from the middle-class home and the middle-class female subject, and incorporated into the economic, social, and domestic environments of the city.

In *The Work-a-Day Girl* (1911), Clara Laughlin analyzes both the familial home and the single working woman's home. She addresses the gendered and classed inequality that working women experience through an analysis of the relation between the working-girl and the home. Whereas Richardson rejects the familial home and the institutional home as constraints upon women's full development as working subjects, she does not, as Laughlin does, argue that the conditions of women's domestic environments are directly related to her position within the urban environment. Laughlin

argues that if the city creates newly problematic conditions for women, then these conditions are extensions of unequal conditions already existing in the home, and that the commercial and industrial spaces of the city exploit this inequality for profit.

Laughlin's text is not a continuous narrative of experience, but a collection of essays that the author presents as journalistic in method and written in "semi-story" form. This method allows Laughlin to tell representative stories about different working-girls as dramatic illustrations of the need for specific reform measures. In her introduction, however, Laughlin gives a narrative context to the essays by claiming that their arrangement reflects an order of effects leading back to causes. Laughlin writes the history of the female subject's emergence into the urban environment and attempts to redirect her toward different "effects." However, through the trajectory of this history the working-girl reemerges at the end of the text into a transformed middle-class female subject. In this analysis, as in Vorst and Richardson, the journey into the urban environment is imagined as the middle-class woman's fall; in Laughlin's essays, this trajectory is narrated in reverse; so, not only does the reader understand the working-girl's unequal position in the urban environment, but Laughlin traces that inequality back into "the" female subject's home and shows how public and private collude in creating inequality for both the working-girl and her middle-class reader.

Given that the essays move back from effects to causes the female reader might be dismayed to learn that they begin in the Female Night Court, as Laughlin narrates the story of a young girl, Florence, picked up for prostitution while pretending to window shop on Broadway. This story introduces Laughlin's middle-class readership to the newly constituted New York night court for women. The Female Night Court represents an ironic form of progress for Laughlin, because it symbolizes the organizational effort to "salvage" the increasing number of young female offenders that the city produces. The end effect of the representative female subject's entrance into the urban environment is her emergence as an "erring" girl, for whom womanhood means entering the recently institutionalized spaces of a newly organized urban system of organizations to combat criminality, poverty, and immorality among the female population.

Whereas their male counterparts are usually brought up on property crimes, most of the females are brought into the court on charges of immorality. In her first two essays, however, Laughlin establishes two connections that propel the plot of her story: the relation between female immorality and property and the relation between working-girls and middle-class women. A middle-class woman appears briefly in the night court when she is brought

before the judge on charges of shoplifting. She is, Laughlin writes, probably “one of the many who are kept without pocket money by mean husbands” (30). Her “impassioned plea for secrecy” is granted by the reporters in the court who print her story without any clues to her identity. The middle-class defendant’s story of theft will not be presented as part of the overall conditions of the urban female subject; her presence in the night court is an aberration. Her crimes remain hidden from a general public examination. But Laughlin’s narration of her story suggests the relation between property and immorality connects the middle-class woman and the working-girl. In the second essay, she more clearly suggests to her middle-class female readers that they, too, are subject to the gendered relation between immorality and property. Men—like the “mean” husband—mediate women’s relation to property and that mediation threatens to plunge the middle-class woman into the public position of immorality that the working-girl occupies:

Some man, their relations with whom have the sanction of society, pays for their bridge and their finery and their motor-cars and their pink teas. Only God knows which of these women, if the sanctioned relationship were to fail, to become impossible of renewal, would forego the feathers, and which would forego the sanction. (40)

Female morality is an issue of economics not of character, in Laughlin’s analysis, and it is impossible to clearly delineate the character of the middle-class woman from that of the working-girl.

In this way, Laughlin connects the middle-class woman’s position in the home with the working-girl on Broadway. This connection is a place of identification for Laughlin and part of her narrative method for promoting reform. She presents realist stories accompanied by passionate defenses of their working-girl protagonists’ choices and then broadens the essay’s perspective, making direct appeals to her middle-class readership to make the reader’s inclusion in the narrative a part of the text’s transforming properties, necessary to changing the outcome of the working-girl’s story.

This connection is evidenced in contradictory ways, however. On the one hand, the middle-class female reader is asked to identify with the working-girl’s search for romance: “She is a young thing, palpitant with all that makes youth wonderful. There is almost nothing that she will not dare if her sensitive pulses are stirred. Nature made her that way, for her own purposes. Maternity calls for sublime daring. Nature takes care of that daring, jealously” (53–54). Nature does not recognize conventions of class or morality; and thus, not only is the working-girl’s desire for romance justified but

her attraction to the city becomes both desirable and inevitable: “. . . she wants to be where there are others like her, loving laughter, wistful for romance, ardent for adventure, eager to flaunt attractions” (53). If this seems a rather romantic vision of the working-girl, it also seems necessary to Laughlin: “The life these girls will enter upon when they marry is unromantic enough—full of toil and poverty and pain and renunciation. . . . The children of tomorrow ought not to have mothers who never knew Romance” (55–56). Laughlin asks her middle-class readers to understand the working-girl not as a female working-class subject, but as a younger version of their own—most probably married and maternal selves: but, also, to think of the “probable” mother that the working-girl will become. For, ironically, this same instinct toward romance leads to the marriage and motherhood that Laughlin perceives as a dismal, horrific, and even dangerous condition. This unflattering portrait of marriage and motherhood suggests that the “salvage” work of saving the young woman from falling into the public sphere as a criminal may consign her to a fate in the private sphere that is no less miserable.

On the other hand, the middle-class reader is asked to see the home—her domain—as that space most directly responsible for the working-girl’s entrance into the urban environment as a criminal. Laughlin makes it clear in the two essays that follow, “Where the Trouble Begins” and “The Indictment of the Home,” that the familial home threatens to turn out not only young mothers who “never knew Romance,” but also continually “disgorg[es] a stunted and misdirected output” (106). Laughlin triumphantly quotes government statistics on the relation between employment and crime and discovers that most female offenders come straight from the home, never having been employed. And she emphasizes the significance of these statistics by including the stories of delinquent girls of undetermined class origins in her narrative; they may or may not come from homes that resemble those of her middle-class readers.

As an example, in “The Indictment of the Home,” Laughlin reports the story of the sixteen-year-old Lily, her abusive father and cowering mother. Lily has been brought into the juvenile court because she has run away from home. She runs away to escape the father who has brought her into court because she is withholding her wages from him. Because she is not yet eighteen Lily is judged incapable of living on her own, despite being a wage earner. She is shunted off to The House of the Good Shepherd, a fate that arouses horror in Lily—and in courtroom spectators. Instead, however, of using this essay to question the wisdom of punishing Lily for her father’s brutality (although Laughlin does indicate that the law seems to care more

for her father's rights in Lily's wages than Lily herself) Laughlin is more interested in incorporating her middle-class female readership into the story as *citizens*.

Laughlin argues that Lily is merely representative of thousands of young girls brought up in homes where relationships are completely free from the laws and regulations that define even the most sordid workplace. The author urges her domestic-bound readers to investigate the "back-door world" of their own homes. This back-door world is imaged as a Social Settlement where the middle-class reader may prepare herself to become a suffrage holder:

Some of you are now voting. In a little while we shall all be voting. . . . The suffrages of this nation have too long been cast each in the self-interest of the voter. With your advent into law-making and law-enactment, will come either a tremendous new spirit or a tremendous impetus to an old one. And one of the first of the great problems to which you direct yourselves will concern Lily and her ma—millions of Lilys and their mas. (102)

The middle-class reader is being asked, not to reimagine the working-girl, but to reimagine her own relation to the urban environment at her doorstep—to see the city as laboratory for her own emergence as a citizen capable of making laws in the interest of others:

You can run a Social Settlement of your own, at your back-door. . . . You can learn what conditions are in your own bailiwick; and you can discover what remedial possibilities exist, what others must be created. . . . divest your mind of any lingering traces of the notion that Social Service consists in the giving away of things you don't want. It consists in helping people to know their rights and obligations and to get them; to know their obligations and to discharge them. (104)

The reader is asked to reimagine the social world juxtaposed to and intertwined with her home as a political realm subject to laws and law making, and more subtly to imagine the domestic realm she inhabits as equally subject to the rights and obligations of this political realm. If the household of Lily and her ma is subject to the "rights and obligations" of citizenship, then, so too must be the middle-class home of the reader.

Moreover, "The Indictment of the Home" acts as a transition essay in Laughlin's tracing of the cause of the female subject's decline. It takes readers

from the sites of the city—the court, the workplace, the rooming house, and the girls’ home—into the “family” home where the working-girl is daughter. In her text, Laughlin brings together the two environments that have been placed in opposition by Van Vorst and Richardson, claiming that the home and the factory are actually colluders in the working-girls’ erring ways; in Laughlin’s analysis home and work do not represent two different destinations, but two similarly structured sites of female subordination. While others blame girls going to work for the downfall of the female subject, Laughlin indicts the position that the girl holds across the spaces of workplace and home.

As Lily’s case demonstrates, the daughter does not escape the problems or expectations associated with the home merely by becoming a working-girl. The next essays detail the ways in which the home intrudes upon the working-girl in the city, both when she strikes out on her own and when she remains in the home. If the city’s wage earning opportunities and entertainments seem to offer a solution to the problems of the “daughter,” Laughlin argues that it only represents a tenuous foothold of independence from the demands of the home. She also seeks in this section of the text to dispel any myths about why girls go to work to earn a wage, to undo the storybook romance’s portrait of the suddenly displaced heroine. In “Her Daily Bread” and “The Girl Who Earns \$6 a Week,” Eugenia and Hazel travel from the country to the city to find work that they cannot get in their small towns. Eugenia does not “suddenly find herself obliged to seek a livelihood,” like the story-heroines of two and three decades ago” (107). Yet when she arrives in the city she finds that reformers, employers, and landladies are all of the same opinion: “the city is no place for girls without homes” (116). The city in Laughlin’s text is overflowing with girls who are unable to find work that will keep them. Employers refuse to hire girls who do not live at home or will hire them at a wage that will only allow them to live at home. If in Richardson’s text, as in the storybook, the working-girl is imagined as a heroine, in this story Laughlin makes it clear that the working-girl appears to the denizens of the city as a “cheap extra.”

And, yet, if readers expect Laughlin to romanticize the home as the place of return to safety, she does not, but illustrates how finding a home may merely lead to more difficulties. The story of Hazel narratively dramatizes the difficulties of the working-girl finding a “way out” (154) on her own. Hazel leaves her small-town middle-class family and follows her friend, Minnie, to the city seeking employment and a romance that will lead to a home of her own. However, even the temporary home that she makes with Minnie is disrupted by the gender inequalities brought to bear upon the female tenant. Hazel and Minnie are thrown out of the small room they share because

Minnie dares to entertain her boyfriend there. When they finally locate other affordable lodgings they are laid off, and Minnie decides she “can’t live on hopes and virtue” (154). Hazel sympathizes with Minnie’s decision, but refuses to relinquish her notions of a possible future that includes marriage and home. Their landlady, however, does not push the girls for their rent when they are laid off because “[I] was in your fix a lot o’times before I got married—that was why I took a chance on him. Good God! We’re in fer it, whichever way we turn—us women!” (153). Her sympathetic identification with the girls as younger versions of herself foreshadows only increasing difficulty for Hazel and Minnie. When the landlady’s abusive husband strikes Hazel down the stairs and kills her, as she runs to defend his wife, it is as if the future reaches out and prematurely destroys her, as if Hazel has been killed defending her own future self. Hazel’s defense of the ideal of home, as a site of security, precipitates her own fall down the stairs; the middle-class female subject as working-girl literally finds herself falling downward into an urban environment that has no place—at work or in the home—for her.

Laughlin’s next story explicitly indicts the family home. In “Mamie’s Deficit” the daughter lives at home, but is forced to turn most of her earnings over to her family even as she is turned out of the house by its overcrowded conditions. Finding herself pregnant and abandoned, rather than return to her home, she disappears with a man on the street who claims he will take care of her: “They [her mother and sister] could not realize that somewhere, somehow, little Mamie was in bondage—in bondage to threats, to force, or to persuasion that she was an outcast and in the kind of place where she would henceforth be tolerated” (197). These stories are not only about the dangers of the city or the difficulties that young girls have in finding housing, employment, or “safe” amusements; they are about the “deficit” that young girls pay because they are women, dependencies in the home and at work, whose wages are considered “‘common property’” in the home (281; Laughlin is quoting Cicely Hamilton). The daughter’s assumed dependence in the home provides employers with an excuse for paying lower wages to the young working-girl. But that assumption also ensures that the daughter must either stay in the home or attempt to compete for affordable lodgings with the male worker who earns more and supplement her income with various forms of prostitution, which Laughlin lumps together under the rubric of white slavery.

Laughlin concludes her essay on Mamie by reporting her attendance at a commission’s hearing on “. . . the connection, so repeatedly alleged, between low wages and vice” (198). The hearing has come about because of increasing reports of white slavery. Laughlin, however, invokes the rhetoric

of white slavery only to use it as a metaphor for the convergence of inequality that occurs in both the home and the workplace; she explicitly renames “white slavery” as that manner in which the working-girl pays the “deficit” represented by her own wages. White slavery, in this analysis, is not so much a pernicious assault on the morality of young girls of the city, but another site—like work and home—in which the working-girl is treated as “common property.” White slavery is merely an extension of the forces of home and work, a place to which the working-girl finds herself consigned—not unlike the House of the Good Shepherd—because of the private and public spaces that collude in her inequality. Laughlin uses the menace of white slavery to argue for a women’s minimum wage; white slavery, in this analysis, is a site produced through the collusion of public and private that keeps the working-girl unequal.

However, Laughlin’s concern for the economic conditions affecting working-girl morality does not take her analysis further into the workplace. Rather she uses the assumptions made about young women’s position in the home to shift her analysis to the daughter who is not forced by economic necessity to work outside the home. For it is the assumptions made about the daughter’s position in the home that create her inequality in the workplace. In other words, Laughlin shifts her analysis from one concerned mainly with the economic inequality of women in the workplace, to how economic and social inequality are gendered in the home across class, and, therefore, affect all women. Her analysis suggests that if Van Vorst had looked more closely into the conditions of the home, she might have better understood the attractions of the urban environment for those women who work for luxuries.

Thus, Laughlin begins to look toward the middle-class ideal of home as the “cause” of the “effects”—the working-girl’s unequal position in the urban environment—she has delineated. In order to do this, she shifts her attention from the urban environment to the gender dynamics in the middle-class home. As in both Richardson’s and Van Vorst’s analysis, the middle-class home is, in this section, troped as a separate world, existing prior to and apart from the urban environment. Laughlin begins her story, like the downwardly mobile narrator of Richardson’s text, in the country. Once again, the working-girl’s story has been transposed into the story of the middle-class female subject’s removal from the rural environment and into the “fallen” space of the city. “Forced Out” takes the reader out of the city, and into the rural home of a prosperous but increasingly obsolete farming family. The title seems to refer to the independent farm family “forced out” of their comfortable rural existence and their labor functions in the home and into the urban environment. Instead, however, it is the daughter in this essay, and in the

next, that Laughlin understands as being “forced out”: the family’s upward mobility, represented by their move to the city, also represents the appropriation of the daughter’s labor. She is forced into idleness and encouraged to see the small amount of labor she performs in the home as trivial, expected but not valued. The father and industrialism collude to appropriate female labor, and, thus, to make her into a dependent: a dependency represented by her isolation in a home that is no more than a lodging place for the family. It is permissible for the daughter to work at home or to leave the home to marry, but not to assume employment for the purposes of economic independence or self-respect. The middle-class daughter struggles, like the working-girls of Laughlin’s earlier essays, to establish employment and a home that will incorporate them into the urban life that surrounds them. If they do not, she argues, then woman “must become wholly dependent on her sexual function alone” in an urban environment that represents the “decay” of the female subject (285). This, of course, is what the middle-class woman and the working-girl of the Night Court have in common: both are dependent upon their sexual function.

In her final essay, Laughlin retraces this story of cause and effect, of the female subject’s appearance in the city as unequal, through the story of one archetypal female subject. This essay, “The Woman of It,” is Sarah’s story: “typifying and epitomizing woman’s upward struggle through the ages of human history” (316). Sarah lives in an isolated mining town with her father. His death forces her into marriage for economic and moral security. When she becomes a mother and feels her husband wandering away from the home, she decides she must adapt herself to her new condition for her children’s sake. This means tying herself more thoroughly to her husband, making her indispensable to his comforts. However, when they arrive in the urban environment she finds that her labors have been appropriated; the social, educational, and domestic services that she provides are now offered through the economic, social, and educational structures of the city. The structure of Laughlin’s text leads back from the “effect”: the exploitation of the working-girl at home and at work and the appropriation of her labor. Then, she analyzes the single-dependent woman of the urban environment reduced to common property; and finally, she traces this effect back to its cause in the home where she finds the middle-class mother, mistress of a vacant domain: “There stood the housemother—undisputed director of a home which was no more than a lodging-place to her mate and their brood. . . . and who now feels herself mistress of an empire whose glory has now departed?” (319–20). In this analysis, the mother’s success at adaptation, ironically, ends in her own obsolescence. Man, in the form of

industrialization, has commercialized the labors of the home, leaving her with no labor to perform that will make her necessary to the members of her household, much less to the social and political environment of the city. Sarah learns to adapt again, however, by involving her husband, and thus herself, in the civic and political evolution of the urban environment. This adaptation to her environment is just that, another attempt at survival on the part of the female subject; but Laughlin believes that such adaptation within the urban environment can lead to a transformation of the female subject into a citizen and prevent the Lilies of the world from emerging into urban space as wards of the court.

At the beginning of Laughlin's text, the working-girl emerges into public space as a criminal, while the middle-class wife's similar emergence remains marginalized as an untold private story of domestic "meanness." Throughout the text, however, Laughlin works to reveal the relation between the public story of the working-girl as criminal and the private story of the middle-class woman. By bringing the private story of domestic "meanness" into public view, Laughlin dramatizes how the working-girl emerges into the urban environment as an unequal subject, the "effect" of the private subordination of the mother within the middle-class household. For if the daughter is the "effect," then it is motherhood and Nature that Laughlin identifies as the cause of the daughter's appearance in the Female Night Court. In the final essay, then, it is not the working-girl who emerges rewritten as a "new" female subject, but the middle-class mother.

From Laughlin's perspective, as Sarah's story demonstrates, reproduction is the originary cause of woman's loss of control of the production of her own environment. Industrialization is merely an extension of these conditions. This analysis seems to be different from Van Vorst's understanding of urbanization as in opposition to reproduction. However, the underlying argument about the relation of industrialization and reproduction in both women's texts is similar in its effects: industrialization makes motherhood an impossibility, even as it reduces the female subject to her biological and economic functions.

Both authors plot similarly deevolutionary narratives of the female subject. In both texts, masculinity is an unchanging force that creates the environment that increasingly defines the female subject according to her biological and economic functions. In Laughlin's analysis, however, woman does not vacate the home voluntarily, but, rather, because she must; whereas Van Vorst sees the home as a destiny that will "lift" the female subject up and allow her to fulfill her reproductive, moral, and aesthetic functions, Laughlin sees this a site of confinement and obsolescence. But whereas Van Vorst imagines that the displaced female subject can reassert her primacy through her relocation to the

home, Laughlin, like Richardson, sees this as the female subject's opportunity to reemerge into the urban environment as a transformed subject.

If urbanization marginalizes the middle-class woman, and thus, makes home a moral vacancy that produces the erring-girl, then the securing of woman's place in the urban world through the social settlement is the means through which the erring female subject comes home once again and emerges from the night court as a middle-class female subject transformed into a social and political citizen. What emerges from each of these texts is a new middle-class female subject. Placing the working-girl within the context of urbanization not only reveals the gendered implications of urbanization for the working-girl, but also reemplots those implications for the middle-class woman. In this sense, the working-girl subject is imagined as a manifestation of urban processes, because she is imagined as representing the downward trajectory of the female subject as she is displaced from the domestic sphere. She emerges into the public spaces of the urban environment as an "erring" subject and criminal who threatens the regeneration of American society, and as a "cultural type," but each of these authors attempt to intervene in this "fall" of the female subject into the urban environment. Only Laughlin, however, sees a reanalysis of the female subject's place in the home as crucial to reimagining the female subject's place within the city.

Laughlin's analysis of the urban home differs from Van Vorst and Richardson's incorporation of the domestic into their analysis of the conditions of working-girl's environment. Her notion that the home is responsible for the working-girl's problems does not necessarily contradict Van Vorst's desire to see the female subject reappropriate women's labor back into the home. Instead, her concern with the mother's "captivity" in the home reinterprets Van Vorst's fear of the working-girl's supposed desertion of the home as an anxiety about the middle-class female woman's isolation within an increasingly irrelevant realm. Similarly, Laughlin's text offers a new understanding of Richardson's narrator's identification with the storybook heroine's orphaning: the fantasy of being without the home is safely performed in the storybook romance for the middle-class reader. And although this remains a subtext of "Rose"'s story, it also may be read as the pretext for the both the storybook's plot and *The Long Day*.

II. URBAN DOMESTICITIES: THE GENDERED POLITICS OF THE PARLOR

Oddly enough, Van Vorst's abstract sentimentalizing of the home as a defining space of female subjectivity causes the home—as an urban object of reform—to hold only a marginal place in her text. It is the ideal of the

home as a site of “family togetherness” and feminine aesthetics that haunts her story, but, because Van Vorst only recognizes this traditional ideal of home, her concerns are predicated on its demise. However, both Laughlin and Richardson are concerned with the urban transformation of the home and the implications this transformation has for the female subject. Richardson’s and Laughlin’s descriptions of the working-girl’s experience in the working-girls’ home and the lodging place represent an urban environment in which she is treated as a “criminal” to be spied upon and isolated for her own protection and as a dependent who is entitled to work but has no rights in housing. Laughlin specifically represents the male subject as appropriating female labor out of the home and into the city for industrialization and commercialization; she argues that where labor goes so too does the social life of the home, leaving the middle-class mother an isolated captive. And, contrary to Van Vorst’s depiction, the cultural space of the home still defines both the working-girl and her middle-class counterpart, even as urbanization transformed both the traditional form of that home and the gendered configurations of its interior spaces.

In this section, I want to shift my analysis from the ways in which middle-class reformers imagined urbanization’s gendered implications, to recontextualize Richardson’s and Laughlin’s claims about the home within the broader cultural framework of changes in forms of U.S. housing in the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. I focus particularly on the shift from the parlor, representative room of Victorian U.S. culture, to the living room as the main room of the middle-class home in the suburbs of the city. I argue that the parlor was not only a middle-class space, representative of middle-class women, but a gendered space that was significant to women across boundaries of class, and, perhaps, more important to working-girls living in the city. Women writers’ interest in securing parlors for urban working-girls and women indicates the continued significance of this space for female subjects across class, but also points to middle-class women’s dissatisfaction with suburban ideologies of the family, and the living room which represented them.

Urbanization brought a series of changes in housing conditions that are continuously represented as socially and culturally transformative of the families of all classes.¹⁰ Among these transformations was the introduction of the tenement and apartment building, homes for working women living apart from the family, and suburbanization of the middle classes. As early as the 1880s William D. Howells, in *A Hazard of New Fortunes*, represents urban forms of housing, both the impoverished tenement and the comfortable apartment, as a destruction of home life. The middle-class protagonist of Howell’s novel, Basil March, tells his wife,

“Of course no child born and brought up in such a place [the tenement] could have any conception of home. [But] Think of a baby in a [middle-class] flat! . . . the flat is the negation of motherhood. The flat means society life. . . . I don’t object to the conveniences, but none of these flats have a living-room. . . . they have no room where the family can all come together and feel the sweetness of being a family. . . . Why, those tenements are better and humaner than those flats! There the whole family lives in the kitchen, and has its consciousness of being; but the flat abolishes the family consciousness.” (55)

the gendered implications of different forms of housing. However, the passage foregoes gender analysis to discuss how different forms of housing affect the family. I argue that this move from a gendered analysis of the household to a focus on “family consciousness” replicates transformations in turn-of-the-century U.S. housing: this concern for the “family” effectively worked to mask continue gendered inequalities within U.S. homes.

This focus on the “family consciousness” is described by Margaret Marsh, in “From Separation to Togetherness in the Suburbs,” as the new domestic ideal of “togetherness”: “city life had eroded ‘family unity’ by encouraging all family members to become too individualistic” (514). The ideal of togetherness “reorganized domesticity to make it independent of the notion of separate masculine and feminine spheres” and emphasized the suburbs, as opposed to the city, as the ideal site of that domesticity (510). It manifested itself in the plan of the housing interior as well. An open informal living room, represented as a place of family togetherness, replaced the parlor as the most significant room in the house. Whereas the parlor was a formal place for the reception and entertainment of guests, and traditionally associated with the feminine sphere, the living room was designated as a space of family activity that included guests as well. No longer were guests sectioned off from the family’s space, and the living room’s close proximity to the kitchen made even the preparations of entertainment available to visitors. The public and private spaces of the home were no longer clearly demarcated.¹¹ Marsh suggests that this ideal actually manifested itself not only in the ideals of space and place, but in gender relations as well, arguing that men and women in the suburbs enjoyed a newly shared social life represented by their shared leisure pursuits and community involvement. Similarly, Daphne Spain argues, in *Gendered Spaces*, that the living room that dominated the suburban home represented and encouraged gender equality in the turn-of-the-century home. Spain, summarizing the arguments of Gwendolyn Wright, contends that “[s]patial and social relations mutually

reinforce one another, and if status differences are engendered within the home, they are likely to be expressed outside it also" (Spain 111).

However, Elizabeth Wilson questions this idealization of the suburb as site of familial "togetherness" and equality. She notes that in a 1909 *Good Housekeeping* article, Gail Godwin was already lamenting the isolation of the suburbs; "suburban life exiled women to 'lonelyville': 'The busy men leave on early trains, and at once plunged into the rush of their accustomed life among their usual associates,' she wrote, 'but the young wife was left behind, 'standing behind the struggling young vines of her broad new piazza'" (Wilson 107). While the suburbs might offer a spatial segregation that provided class stabilization for middle-class women, it also hindered physical and cultural mobility since these women were now even further removed from political, cultural, and economic sites of the city.

The reform texts of Laughlin and Richardson challenge Spain and Marsh's notions as well. While writing ostensibly about the working-girl in the urban environment, they also express middle-class women's desire to emerge into an increasingly urbanized world as something other than mothers. This desire to emerge into the city as a new kind of female subject is a subplot of the reform narrative; the suburban home with its living room is the isolating background to which she has been marginalized. Far from advocating the kind of "togetherness" that Howell's text seems to suggest is represented in the living room house and the tenement kitchen, Laughlin sees the home as a "vacant domain" where the middle-class mother is isolated from urban activities and the tenement mother exists confined in toil and poverty. The removal to the suburbs only accentuates the middle-class female subject's marginalization from the urban processes that increasingly define U.S. culture and from the processes that define the lives of young working women. Richardson emphasizes the difference between herself and her married friend, Minnie Plympton, by removing her to the suburbs where she is happy and successful, but no longer significant: her story is over while that of the middle-class female author, as worker, continues.

A significant part of the female worker's story is the urban parlor. Long after the parlor disappeared from the suburbs, it continued to play a culturally significant role in urban housing, and that role was gendered. Richardson's lengthy discussion of working-girl's housing explicitly remarks on the lack of parlors in working-girls' housing:

The most important necessity of the model working woman's hotel or lodging-house would be, not a luxurious table, not a dainty sleeping-room, but a parlor! The number of young girls who go wrong in a great

city like this for want of the various necessities of a parlor must make the angels of heaven weep. The houses where the poorly paid girl lives have no accommodations for the entertainment of her male friends. (Richardson 287)

Richardson writes that the working woman must either carry out her relationships “on the stoop,” in the street, or in the privacy of her room, causing public scandal no matter which option she chooses. Richardson’s exclamatory assertions indicate her anger at women’s spatial restriction in the city. Her remarks emphasize the extent to which working women experience both social confinement and surveillance within the city. Her comments also focus on the relation between women’s sexuality and spatiality in a manner similar to Laughlin’s analysis of the relation between women’s inequality in the home and their treatment in the workplace. The parlor functions here as a space of sociality that is nonthreatening because it acts as a buffer zone between the surveillance and dangers of the street and the omnipresent family consciousness or the sexuality of the hall bedroom. Thus, the urban parlor represents a space capable of “saving” the working-girl from the twin plots that Laughlin has attempted to write her out of—white slavery and motherhood.

In three different essays in Laughlin’s text the parlor emerges as a significant site. In “The Effort to Save Girls” Laughlin tells her readers about young Katie who lives in an overcrowded tenement with her family. Having met a man at the store where she works, Katie is confronted with the dilemma of where to take him: “Katie couldn’t ask him to her home. There was no place there to entertain a fellow. The family had four rooms, and one of them was nominally a parlor, but it had divers uses also and it was never available for the exclusive use of one member of the family” (48). Neither is Katie sure that her father will allow her to entertain men at home. Katie finally ends up meeting her young man at a hotel in order to continue participating in the amusements of the city that his superior wages allow her to enjoy. Mamie in “Mamie’s Deficit” confronts the same problem; her mother is sympathetic to Mamie’s desire to have the parlor as a space of entertainment for her friends: “I used to have dreams of a sittin’-room, an all that goes with it; but I’ve giv’em up, long ago” (187). But the parlor must be rented to a lodger, and the kitchen is given over to her father and his friends, so that her father will not spend his earnings. Mamie takes her amusements away from the home, and since she gives her family most of her earnings becomes dependent on men to gain access to the commercial sites of the city. She ends up pregnant and abandoned. When she disappears with a stranger her mother and sister search fruitlessly for her. The lost dream of the parlor

as a “saving” place bonded mother and daughter, and the loss of the parlor translates into the lost daughter for the tenement mother.

Similarly, Minnie and Hazel are refused the use of the parlor at their lodging house, only to be thrown out of their room when Minnie entertains her boyfriend there. Minnie tells her landlady that her rent should buy her access to the use of the parlor, and, if not, she should at least be granted the freedom to entertain in the room for which she pays rent. The landlady, however, responds as both property owner and parent, “Not in *my* house!” (138). The surveillance of the home extends to the institution and the lodging house. But not only surveillance is at issue, here. Women’s wages do not represent any rights of spatial use; she is treated as a dependent here as well, asked to confine and isolate herself from sociality or to confine that sociality to the street and commercial places of entertainment.

In effect Minnie’s rebellion against the landlady’s surveillance is also a rebellion against the prerogatives of ownership. Minnie’s revolt reflects less the individualistic desires of urban consumer culture than it does a defense of her wages as entitling her to more than the confined space of her shared room. Unable to attain this on her own she entertains her boyfriend in her room, and confirming Richardson’s fears, she becomes “kept.” Minnie’s entertainment of her boyfriend in her room is not read as a sign of sexual desire or independence, but of economic failure. And each text that references the parlor suggests that sexual desire cannot be represented in these stories—not until the female subject emerges from the spatial and economic inequalities of the colluding home and workplace. The removal to the lodging house, not only doesn’t provide the working-girl with independence, it merely emphasizes the extent to which she is represented culturally as a dependent.

These texts suggest that the parlor operated as a space where women could access a social life apart from the omnipresent “family consciousness.” More importantly, it acts as an imaginary space for women’s expression of their dissatisfaction with women’s confinement to the suburbs, the tenement kitchen, the working-girls’ dormitory, the street, and the bondage of white slavery. If women’s earnings are “common property,” then, so, too, are they asked to share the spaces of others in a false relation of dependency. It is specifically a safe space of heterosexuality that fends off, as it were, the threats of white slavery on the one hand and motherhood on the other. So, not only does it act as a buffer zone, but also as a space of deferral securing the working-girl from public and private confinements that present themselves as the only “way out” of her unequal position in the home and workplace.

The parlor is specifically coded as a female desire not only in reform narratives, but in other contexts as well. In Edith Wharton’s *The House of*

Mirth, published the same year as Richardson's *The Long Day*, Lily Bart longs for her own drawing room and the lack of that space represents her economic defeat; her desire for a drawing room of her own may only be attained through her acquiescence to a mercenary marriage with Sim Rose-dale. And the parlor represents security for the "fallen" working-girl Nettie Struthers. She tells Lily in their last meeting: "'We've got a parlour too,' she explained with pardonable pride" (244). Lily prefers to stay, however, in the working-class kitchen, experiencing here the family consciousness that she, like Basil March, sees as lacking in the drawing rooms of the elite urban houses she flits through. Her sentimentalizing of Nettie's little nest ignores the long hours of labor—at work and home—that Nettie performs to secure the parlor. It is only, however, her marriage that makes it possible, throwing an ironic light on Laughlin and Richardson's representation of the parlor as a space of deferment; only marriage and motherhood offer the working-girl the opportunity to have a parlor. And this, as Laughlin argues, is a precarious promise at best.

The parlor represents a significant site of gendered identity in other texts as well, and well into the 1920s.¹² The parlor's cultural relevancy to working-class women may attest to something more than an imposition of middle-class women's values upon the working woman, as Judith Fryer argues in her reading of Anzia Yeziarska's short story, "The Lost 'Beautifulness.'" In this story the impoverished Jewish immigrant mother Henneh Hayyeh tries "to shine up my kitchen like a parlor" (35). Henneh does manage to paint her kitchen like a parlor only to have the landlord raise the rent. Henneh's dream of a party for her employer and neighbors, of her son bringing his friends home to entertain, is lost when the landlord evicts her. She is unable to manage the hidden cost of attaining her parlor: the loss of what she has earned because she does not own it. Henneh's and Nettie's desire to have a space that represents sociality rather than labor, a parlor instead of a kitchen, represents the female subject's desire to be seen as something other than domestic worker or an assumed part of the "family consciousness." And if Richardson and Laughlin desire to redefine the female subject as something other than mother, these texts suggest that the authors also desire to redefine the space she inhabits as a place to express a gendered sociality within the confines of family and work. Neither the suburb nor its representative space, the living room, offers that to the urban woman.

As I noted earlier, in her book *Gendered Spaces*, Daphne Spain argues that the living room represents gendered equality. According to Spain, the integration of female and male social space within the home reflects the burgeoning equality of women in the early twentieth century. However, the

texts of that era seem to belie Spain's assumption that spatial integration, the knocking down of the wall between male and female domestic spaces, is necessarily a sign of equality. Rather, these texts prove that gendered spatial relations are more complex than the presence or absence of walls between men and women. Placing the politics of the parlor within the context of urbanization reveals the female subject's struggle to make visible the social and economic inequalities of home and work. And the placing of these politics within the context of urban reform narratives about the working-girl provides a crucial means for understanding the various ways in which public and private ideologies can be mutually constitutive.

If these middle-class reformers imagined themselves as mediating between the social space of the middle-class home and the process of urbanization, then in the working-girl they found a figure to express their own sense of marginality and inequality. Operating within the dominant ideology of the public and private binary, employers, landlords, families, and men were able to use this dichotomy to deny the working-girl not only her economic equality, but also her social equality. Carving up the spaces of the city to reflect their own vision of the relation between private and public, these constituencies colluded to force the working-girl to be a different kind of mediator between home and work, one reflecting the inequality of that mutuality. Van Vorst, Richardson, and Laughlin offer varying responses to this inequality, but each attempts to reconfigure the relation between the public/private binary, according to her own reconstructive vision of women's social, economic, and political place. In the next chapter, Ellen Glasgow's attempt to use a masculine version of the public/private binary to meet feminist ends points to the necessity of constructing a feminist vision of the divide that does not reproduce the narrow focus of masculine ideologies of the binary in its exclusion of race, class, and female embodiment.

Chapter Three

The Secret Properties of Southern Regionalism

I. REGIONALISM'S FEMINIST AND NOT SO FEMINIST TURNS

The subject of regionalism has once again become a central preoccupation of cultural criticism. What is noteworthy about this resurgence of the critical interest in regionalism is its feminist turn. In the late 1980s, feminist theorists began to recover the importance of a regionalist framework to U.S. women's writing. Collections of literary and historical essays, such as *Breaking Boundaries: New Perspectives on Women's Regional Writing* (1997), *The Female Tradition in Southern Literature* (1993), and *Writing the Range: Race, Class and Culture in the Women's West* (1991) began to appear in earnest in the 1990s.¹ In this chapter, I build on this work, but I am also interested in a specific analysis of how southern regionalism, specifically agrarianism, formulates the relation between private and public as gendered, how that gendered relation informs the southern regionalist paradigm, and how the writer Ellen Glasgow reveals in her work the marginalization of female labor and reproduction that is constitutive of this paradigm.

Of course, the study of the South as a cultural region has had a long institutional history in the U.S. But feminist literary critics working in the field of southern culture have recently begun challenging traditional methods of reading the southern renaissance of the interwar years. At the same time, cultural critics have rediscovered the interdisciplinary and cross-regional contexts of that renaissance. But it becomes exasperatingly clear that these two critical gestures—the one an opening up of the “literary” to a broader cultural context, and the second, a reconsideration of, as Anne Goodwyn Jones terms it, “the work of gender” in a regionalist framework—don't often overlap. The work of women writers, and the importance of gender, to any formulation of the cultural claims about regionalism is often suppressed, excluded, or marginalized when critics approach the subject using the

interdisciplinary methodologies of modernist, U.S., or cultural studies. Robert Dorman's recent contribution to American studies is a good example. In *Revolt of the Provinces*, Dorman considers the writing of southern regional sociologists, writers, historians, and documentarians as part of the general regionalist movement of the 20s and 30s. Dorman's study is replete with details on the ideological and aesthetic commitments of regionalism. But, while Dorman discusses the western writing of Mary Austin, Willa Cather, and Mari Sandoz, as well as the activities of Mabel Dodge Luhan and early female historians, he does not discuss how early 20th-century feminism may have influenced regionalist aesthetics or ideologies nor the role that gender politics may have played in some of the underlying assumptions of the movement and its outcome.

Another example of the marginalization of southern women writers and the work of gender in studies of interwar southern regionalism can be found in Richard King's *A Southern Renaissance: The Cultural Awakening of the American South, 1930–1955* (1980). Traditionally, the work of the fugitive-agrarians—along with Faulkner's writing—has dominated discussions of the southern renaissance. However, King makes the significant point that the renaissance was a movement that stretched across disciplines, and thus, he includes in his study historians, sociologists, and journalists, as well as well-known literary figures. King's framework for understanding is what he calls the "Southern family romance," a rebellion against the generation of fathers preceding the authors (thus the interest in the grandfather in many southern novels); from this rebellion emerges a southern historical consciousness "fraught with ambivalence and ambiguity" about the relation between past and present (7). In defending his selection of texts, King states,

Black writers are not taken up because for them the Southern family was hardly problematic. . . . Their great theme was the attempt (literally) to escape the white South which had historically oppressed their people. The case with women writers is more difficult, but my reading of them indicates that whatever the merits of their work . . . they were not concerned primarily with the larger cultural, racial, and political themes that I take as my focus. For whatever reasons—and the one woman I do treat, Lillian Smith, urged women to address themselves to these larger themes—they did not place the region at the center of their imaginative visions. (9)

King's argument merely reproduces the elisions made by the white, male southern writers themselves by insisting on this paradox: the southern family

romance could not possibly have any interest for black southern authors concerned with (public) racial oppression; but southern (white) women authors are not included precisely because of the private concerns of their writing. The paradox that informs King's claim about southern regionalist writing is exactly where feminist literary criticism must enter the regionalist debate.² Rather than taking the position that the "private" emphasis of southern women's writing is a gendered representation of regionalism, I approach the problem of the regional as a framework for discussing gender ideology.

King's study suggests that regionalism exists in a liminal negotiation between the private and the public. This allows critics to make the simultaneous claims that white women's writing is too personal and black writers' concerns are too public. A number of feminist critics point to, and argue against, the kind of limited perspective that King brings to his study.³ The purpose of my own work is to recontextualize the work of one of the authors that King does not include in his list of authors excluded from his study: Ellen Glasgow. I discuss how Glasgow theorizes regionalism from a gendered perspective, not merely how her concerns can be revealed as public or how she engages southern politics through the representation of the private, but how her texts bring forth the race and gender implications of regionalism's negotiation between the private and public. Marjorie Pryse argues that one of the reasons women's "local color" fiction has had a subordinate position in the U.S. literary canon is because these writers did not theorize their writing in the way that writers of realism did. Glasgow was not so silent about her relation to the South or the meaning of her fictional work, but still she has been marginalized in studies of the renaissance. Although much of her private correspondence and nonfiction writing suggests that she was always engaged in central debates about regionalism occurring in the major institutional centers of the South, critics have been slow to situate the Glasgow in relation to the regionalist paradigms of the interwar years.

One recent essay does situate the work of Glasgow in relation to this paradigm. However, by leaving the gender and racial politics of regionalism behind, the writer seems to assume the basic compatibility of Glasgow's writing with the tenets of the fugitive-agrarians. Ellen Caldwell argues that Glasgow's 1930s correspondence with Allen Tate and her later novels are evidence of the writer's move toward the principles of agrarianism. In "Ellen Glasgow and the Southern Agrarians," Caldwell argues that Glasgow's later novels are about characters "struggling to recover a regional identity" (207). The content of this regional identity is only vaguely defined as an anti-industrial "celebration of Southern values and tradition" that recognizes "the

‘presentness’ of the past” and the importance of a “common heritage” that exudes a stoical identification with the land. Caldwell relies rather heavily on Glasgow’s 1930s correspondence with Allen Tate to explain Glasgow’s agrarian transformation. But as Ritchie Watson indicates, the correspondence between the two is “vague and diffuse” and focuses more upon their professional support of each other than any aesthetic or political discussion of southern culture (Watson 39). Caldwell does not examine the writings of the agrarians or note that the regional identity figured in their writings is implicitly masculine. In this chapter, I reexamine Caldwell’s claims by analyzing where and how gender and regionalism intersect in the writings of the agrarians and in Glasgow’s novels *Barren Ground* and *Vein of Iron*. Even critics sensitive to the “work of gender” in the Southern regionalist movement of the interwar years tend to simplify her female characters’ relation to the land and their commitment to a regional identity. I argue, on the contrary, that Glasgow’s texts evidence the author’s struggle—not to recover an ungendered regional identity—but to recover from the margins the female labor that makes a regionalist aesthetic possible.

While I am sympathetic to the desire to reclaim Glasgow as a member of the primary movement of southern regionalism in the interwar years, a more complete understanding of what regionalist culture signified for the agrarians, and the particular problems that Glasgow encountered working in a regionalist framework, is needed. What can the recovery of a regional identity possibly mean for Glasgow? In the following chapter, I begin with a reading of the agrarian construction of the regional, and then I examine the late writings of Glasgow within this context. I argue that the regionalist framework depends upon the suppression of the female body, its productive and reproductive labor, as its determining aesthetic. The negotiation between the public and private that informs the regionalist aesthetic effects this suppression through its investment in property as the defining form through which the private becomes public.

II. “‘RARIN’ AROUND WITH THE BOYS”’: REGIONAL CULTURE AND THE WORK OF GENDER IN GLASGOW’S LATER NOVELS

The agrarians produced one major work, *I’ll Take My Stand* (1930), an interdisciplinary collection of essays to which twelve writers from various disciplines contributed. My reading of the southern tenets of interwar regionalism will focus on this collection. The essays of *I’ll Take My Stand* do not necessarily constitute a unified vision, but there are patterns of representation that persist through many of those essays—and it is possible to discern within

them a particular ideology of gender relations and culture. Many contemporary southern scholars are still drawn to the agrarian manifesto, because of its cogent and timely polemic against capitalist versions of progress; the agrarians point to the displacements and alienations engendered by imperialist, industrial, and urban impositions upon a primarily agricultural people. But although the agrarians' critique of modernity often echoes Marxist analyses, the essays ultimately provide a very different perspective on culture.

The major figures which form the locus of southern regionalism are the yeoman farmer, the aristocratic planter, and the regional artist. These three figures reoccur again and again as social agents of a common agrarian culture. What unites these three figures (ideally) is a commitment to the cyclical routines of cultivation as against the time-oriented culture of industrialism. For example, Andrew Nelson Lytle asserts in "The Hind Tit":

This will be the most difficult task industrialism has undertaken, and on this rock its effort to urbanize the farm will probably split—to convince the farmer that it is time, not space, which has value. It will be difficult because the farmer knows that he cannot control time, whereas he can wrestle with space, or at least with that particular part which is his orbit. (212)

This notion that the farmer's difference depends on his adherence to the value of, and his exemption from, any time but that of the cyclical movements of nature dovetails nicely with Allen Tate's theoretical definition of regionalism. According to Tate, regionalism "is that consciousness or that habit of men in a given locality which influences them to certain patterns of thought and conduct handed to them by their ancestors. Regionalism is thus limited in space but not in time" (539).⁴ The artist and the farmer both value space over time, since it is through space that the cyclical movements of nature, the only time that concerns the farmer, manifest themselves as inheritable properties. The regionalist aesthetic unites farmer and artist; both remain within their own orbits, concerning themselves with the inherited "properties" that define the material and aesthetic limits within which they "wrestle;" property as form provides the shaping mechanism that makes it possible to reproduce culture. And property is the medium through which the regionalist figure expresses his character:

The kind of property that sustains the traditional society is not only not hostile to a unified moral code; it is positively the basis of it. Moreover, it is the medium, just as canvas is the medium of the painter, through

which that code is passed to the next generation. For traditional property in land was the primary medium through which man expressed his moral nature; and our task is to restore it or get its equivalent today. (Tate 556–57)

This canvas functions also as a mirror, however, because it gives man a profound image of himself as reflected in the generation preceding him. But the South has never managed to express this ideal social organism, because of slavery, then tenancy, and most recently, the encroachment of industrialism. Taking the hierarchical religious unity of feudalism as his model, Tate is not concerned with the exploitative, oppressive nature of slavery, but rather with the black man's alien presence on the soil as a "barrier" to southern white culture's vision of itself. Tate claims that the purely economic status of these workers cannot provide the planter with an image of himself; instead the black agricultural worker in slavery (and today) acts as a barrier between the regionalist figure and the soil. Both Tate and Ransom object to the urban worker as a similar barrier to cultural production. Reduced to a purely economic function, the black worker in the South and the urban worker in the North are "anonymous" and "alien," receiving no image from and giving no image back to the propertied.

Given the centrality of cultivation of the land to regionalist thinking, it is surprising that the authors place more emphasis upon leisure as a unifying category of white masculinity than they place upon work. The regionalist figure, wrestling only with that space which is his, saves himself from the time-laden culture of industrialism, and gives up the "uncertain" physical pleasures offered by capitalism for the certain mental satisfaction of life on the land. The limitations put on physical work by nature allow the farmer-planter-artist to participate in a robust masculine culture of conversation, hunting and fishing, or, as Lytle puts it, a general "rarin' around with [the] boys" (213). Leisure springs naturally from a man's relation to the soil and unites white masculinity across class and time: like land as property ensuring a homogeneous tradition throughout time, land as a space of leisure ensures the reproduction of southern culture when its forms are passed from father to son. This ideology of culture, however, excludes the possibility of the propertyless acting as agents of culture, of regional identity; they can only act as mirrors of, or barriers to (like the urban worker, the southern tenant, or the slave of the Old South) the landowners' cultural relation to the soil.

Whereas this masculine mirroring of white identity assumes a cross-class vested interest among the yeoman, planter, and artist for the promotion of a regional culture, in its focus on the farmer's "wrestling with space" the

regionalist aesthetic subsumes all female members under the rubric of the household economy. If men are defined by their relation to the land and united in their leisure (the same social culture operating at different levels of society), the female subject of southern regionalism is relegated to the margins of *I'll Take My Stand*, appearing here and there as an agent of the consumerism and sexuality associated with northern urbanism. Within the household economy she functions as a part of the structure of agrarianism, but once she steps outside the boundaries of that economy, she, like the tenant or the slave, becomes a barrier to the reproduction of southern identity.

Gender and sexuality come only obliquely into play in the agrarians' representation of southern culture. Sexuality is generally subsumed under fears about the consumerism that comes with an industrial economy and the decline of the family. In the book's most extended discussion of gender, Lytle describes the process of dairying—central, of course, to Glasgow's *Barren Ground*—that forms the bulk of women's work, and laments the introduction of labor-saving machinery into the farm woman's household. While recognizing the labor involved in maintaining a farm household, he nevertheless regrets the introduction of a farm generator to the household: "The farmer's wife now becomes a drudge. As the mainstay of the structure she was content to bear the greatest burden, but now she grows restive. She has changed from a creator in a fixed culture to an assistant to machines" (237). This restiveness manifests itself in the desire for leisures offered in the marketplace—going to town, the movies, wanting a car, and listening to the radio. Or, conversely, offering herself in the marketplace to pay for these pleasures.⁵ And this restiveness threatens a regional identity rooted in the passing down from father to son of material and cultural forms of inheritance that depend upon limited and fixed relations of gender in order to secure its leisure and its property.

Since the female subject rarely makes a central appearance in *I'll Take My Stand*, I want to focus on a later passage in Lytle's essay, a passage in which women do appear, and that I see as an extended metaphor for how gender functions in the agrarian model of culture. Lytle describes in detail a traditional game played in the South called "Hog Drovers." One young man plays the father-farmer and sits with his "daughter" upon his lap; another fellow plays the nomadic hog drover and comes looking for lodging and permission to court the farmer's daughter. The father struggles between his desire for the potential lodger's money and his desire to save his "daughter's virtue." Finally, he relents, but only on the condition that the hog drover will "put another one" in her place (231). This the hog drover proceeds to do by selecting a woman from the sidelines to sit on the father's lap, and this goes

on until all of the game's participants are paired. The game may be simply read as men performing an exchange of women common in patriarchal cultures. But what I find significant about the game is the father's insistence that the hog drover produce another daughter to replace the one he takes; there is no mother in this game, not at the level of exchange of the daughter, nor apparently at the level of the daughter's reproduction. Not only is the daughter replaceable, she is also—like the culture in which the game is played—a product of male-to-male cultural reproduction. This traditional regional game mimics the aesthetics of regional culture itself: where men effectively produce their relation to one another through inherited forms of property and tradition, thus repressing women's productive and reproductive role in that culture. It is within this framework that regionalist female writers, such as Glasgow, may productively be reread, for if, as contemporary critics claim, she was invested in recovering a regional identity, the gendered nature of that identity must be reconstructed from the margins of the agrarian paradigm.

The struggle that defines Ellen Glasgow's later work is not so much a struggle to recover a regional identity for her female characters, but to bring from the margins of regionalist space the female subject whose productive and reproductive labor make the regionalist aesthetic possible. Two passages from Glasgow's *A Certain Measure* illustrate how far—at least in theory—her vision of southern culture differs from the agrarian perspective. In the preface to *The Miller of Old Church*, Glasgow writes of the pre-Civil War South:

Soil, scenery, all the colour and animation of the external world, tempted a convivial race to an endless festival of the seasons. . . . Life, for the ruling class at least, was genial, urbane, and amusing. . . . Even slavery, a depressing spectacle at best, was a slight impediment to the faith that had been trained to enjoy the fruits of rather than to examine the character of peculiar institutions. (134)

This vision of the pre-Civil War culture veers from the assertion that environment encourages a culture of leisure to the revelation of the labor, "the depressing spectacle," upon which this culture rests. In another passage from *A Certain Measure*, Glasgow uses conventional agrarian images of cultivation to reverse and reinterpret its conception of white women's cultural production: "Women have been too much occupied with the serious business of life, with planning, contriving, scheming to outwit an adverse fortune, and tilling the fertile soil of man's vanity, to bother about so primitive a science as mythology" (225). Leisure cannot be connected to common cross-gender vested interest; rather it is a part of that agrarian (and masculine) "mythology"

that marginalizes female labor. Instead, for Glasgow, the prime product of southern cultivation is white masculinity. Nor does Glasgow's metaphor tend toward an understanding of working the soil as a means toward the creation of a leisured folk culture. Both passages enact reversals in the agrarian code of cultivation by placing the labors of caste/class and gender at the center of her regional vision.

However, the use of landscape imagery in these passages differs from the perspective articulated in the opening pages of *Barren Ground*, where, in her description of Pedlar's Mill, the narrator maps the country from an avowedly agrarian perspective. The narrator depicts the environment as an agent in the poverty of its inhabitants, the general character of failure that permeates the air, but, also, as a victim of the Civil War and the "swarming" tenants who occupy the land in its aftermath. Its inhabitants are defined by their relation to the land as the narrative voice moves deliberately from the use of a naturalistic imagery to describe the landscape and those who work upon the land to an ironic exposition of the specific "good people" whose farms remain intact: "The tenant farmers, who had flocked after the ruin of war as buzzards after a carcass, had immediately picked the featureless landscape as clean as a skeleton. When the swarm was over only three larger farms remained undivided in the hands of their original owners" (4–5). Here, the narrator describes the nameless tenants in both grimly pastoral and animalistic imagery. In a later passage, the narrator uses a more organic metaphor to describe the propertyless tenants as a "shallow wash of broomsedge" who threaten the "native pines" (the Scotch-Irish farmers) that rise naturally in the soil. They represent the undifferentiated, fragmented landscape that threatens to engulf the few cultivated fields of those farmers that have managed to retain their land. In each instance the tenants are imaged as parasites upon the land, waiting to engulf the remains of the lands' rightful inhabitants. As in the regionalists' imaging of culture, those who cannot claim ownership to the land appear as aliens who threaten its natural proprietors.

Continuing the recognizable agrarian narrative, the narrator glides from this generalized sweep of the landscape and its inhabitants into a particularized narrative that focuses on the history of those "stalwart" farmers who have preserved their farms. Finally, she singles out the heroic story of John Calvin Abernathy, founder of Old Farm, a religious and economic patriarch whose female relations—his wife and daughter-in-law—are completely eclipsed in the narrator's family history in favor of a short narrative history of how this "good family"'s fortunes have been mixed with those of the "poor white." The narrator's framing of the family in terms of its paternal lineage and the

patriarch's shaping of the land, and her increasingly narrow and individualized focus, sets up a conventional agrarian expectation that the end product of this individualized representation will be the yeoman/artist son. Instead the narrator's gaze, and thus the reader's, comes to rest on Dorinda Oakley, and to access the landscape through her eyes. Bringing the female subject from the margins of agrarianism, the narrator signals her intention to represent the landscape of regionalism from its female inhabitant's perspective.

Accordingly, it is Dorinda's experience of the land that critics have focused on as the chief source of agrarian feeling in the novel. Initially, however, it is Dorinda's desire to *escape* Pedlar's Mill that defines her relation to the land. She is represented as being held captive within the landscape, as both isolated and menaced by the "relentless tyranny of the soil" (48). Seen through her eyes the land is "neglected, monotonous, abandoned to solitude" (12). She dreams of meeting a stranger from the train and disappearing with him "into the something different beyond the misty edge of the horizon" (12). Only after she meets Jason Greylock does Dorinda experience the landscape as responding to her desires for "something different," rather than as threatening to engulf her in sameness. Jason's appearance is like an "April flush" passing over "the waste places" of the deadened, barren fields of Pedlar's Mill in winter (13). The broomsedge that previously threatened to engulf her in isolation is suddenly "shot through with romance" (58). This presentation of the female subject's relation to the land is subjective, romantic, and rooted in the cycles of cultivation. Her sexual awakening comes with the plantings of spring. Her expected marriage to Jason is to occur in the fall, during the harvest time. This symbolic relating of the stages of romance to the cycles of cultivation naturalizes the labor of agriculture. The romantic plot and the agrarian plot find their image in one another: the land acts as canvas and mirror for Dorinda's newly awakened sexuality, providing her with a sense of agency. But the work of gender that this experience of the landscape conceals is revealed in Dorinda's locating of her agency, not within a shaping of the land itself, but within the private realm of domesticity and reproduction.

Before she imagined "something different" as existing outside the boundaries of Pedlar's Mill. However, because of her relationship with Jason, she now experiences the landscape itself as a possible site for transformation and imagines herself as enabled to make a difference within her surroundings. When she takes a shortcut across Five Oaks' property and sees the domestic disorder and decay of the yard and house where Jason lives with his father, she thinks, "When I get the chance, it won't take me long to make things look different" (145). Not only does the coming of spring

to Pedlar's Mill mirror her own awakening, then, but Dorinda translates this awakening into a gendered ordering of that space given over to the female subject. However, the disruption of Dorinda's relationship with Jason reveals to the reader how interdependent the romance and the agrarian plots are. Dorinda's desire to marry outside her class represents a trespassing against the agrarian economics that sustain her romantic experience of the land. When Dorinda cuts across the Greylock property this physical trespass represents her social trespass against the designs of the male propertyholders of Pedlar's Mill. At Five Oaks, she learns from Dr. Greylock, Jason's father, that Jason has married the prosperous Geneva Ellgood, and that her own pregnancy is, therefore, illegitimate, and her domestic and sexual agency delegitimized as a trespass upon the social order.

Thus, the male discussions about farming that Dorinda has previously ignored as "impersonal" (75) and commonplace are revealed to be personal, to be implicated in Dorinda's ability to realize even a gendered agency within the domestic space of Five Oaks. Behind Dorinda's romantic plotting of the landscape is a constant dialogue about farming and the general poverty of Pedlar's Mill. Both Nathan and Jason emerge as regionalist tutors in this early section of the novel, missionaries to the land who believe that the tenant system is to blame for the poor crops: "No man will work himself to death over somebody else's land" (31), Jason tells Dorinda. This perspective is echoed by Dorinda's father. But Matthew Fairlamb tells Dorinda that if Jason wants to farm Five Oaks and make it a success, ". . . he'll need either a pile of money or a hard workin' wife" (16). This impersonal discussion suggests the substitutability and exchangeability of the "wife" as an economic factor in the agrarian household economy. But Dorinda only comes to understand this when she hears of Jason's marriage to Geneva Ellgood, a "pile of money." Her relation to the land, her experience of being mirrored in its forms, depends upon her ability to access that landscape through the male subject, Jason; it depends on her ability to access the "impersonal" structure of the land as a form of cultural and economic inheritance that reproduces masculinity. And Jason—however reluctantly—represents that structure.

Jason's marriage disrupts Dorinda's relation to the rhythmic cycles of the land. Dorinda's first reaction to Dr. Greylock's news of the marriage is an experience of being drowned within the stagnant air of the house (152). She believes that in escaping the house she will be able to reconstruct her place within the landscape. But as she waits in the woods for Jason and Geneva to return she experiences both the land around her and her inner self as a "vacancy." This sense of the loss of self is reiterated as an immolation of subjectivity. Dorinda feels as if she is "drowning in vacancy" and that "she [is]

outside time and space" (159) and plunged into an "abyss" of "nothingness" (159). This disintegration of the paralleling of the romantic and agrarian plotting of the landscape is imaged in the interior space of the self and the exterior space of the environment as the barrenness of the broomsedge: "The area of feeling within her soul was parched and blackened, like an abandoned field after the broomsedge is destroyed" (173). The female subject's emotional relation to the land is imaged once again through the metaphor of the broomsedge, but this is not the broomsedge as a symbol of Dorinda's awakening inner life, but the broomsedge associated with the tenants of the narrator's opening. The broomsedge as a symbol of female sexuality has been eradicated and along with it Dorinda's feeling of being "rooted" within the landscape. The agrarian relation to the land as a mirror that produces common culture produces only a vacating of Dorinda's subjectivity. She discovers herself, like the tenants, outside the boundaries of that economy, since a culture based on property requires legitimate reproduction to insure the integrity of property as a form of cultural and economic inheritance.

The female subject's illegitimate reproduction threatens the integrity of property, since the illegitimate child is already dispossessed of that form of inheritance upon which the culture depends. Dorinda's illegitimate pregnancy and illicit sexuality might connect her to the similarly situated Idabella, the mulatto mistress of Dr. Greylock and mother to his nameless mulatto offspring who also live at Five Oaks. But the small domestic conceit that she can make a difference at Five Oaks has been based on Dorinda's perception of her difference from Idabella. During her relationship with Jason she imagines Idabella and her children as barriers to her future with Jason: "Would Jason be able to rid the house of this half-breed swarm and their mother, a handsome, slatternly yellow woman, with a figure that had grown heavy and shapeless, and a smouldering resentful gaze?" (63). The uncleanness attached to Five Oaks is mirrored in the illegitimate relations that Dr. Greylock has with the "slatternly" Idabella and the "half-breed swarm" who are a product of their union. So, when Dorinda imagines cleaning up Five Oaks, she implicitly imagines getting rid of Idabella and her children, ejecting them from their *home*. Dorinda cannot imagine that Idabella may not be "slatternly," but merely "resentful" that she and her children have no claim to Dr. Greylock's farm; Idabella does not apply herself to the domestic ordering of Five Oaks, because she, and her children, are imaged, like the tenants the narrator describes in the opening section of the novel, as a "swarm" who threaten, theoretically, the "native"'s relation to the soil. As the narrator states of the tenants in the opening section of the text: they are an "anonymous brood," receiving no reflection from the land and leaving none for the future.

The description of Idabella's children as a "half-breed swarm" transforms the metaphor of tenancy into a racial one. As Susan Lurie indicates, the racial implications of this metaphorical connection supersede any gendered identification between Dorinda and Idabella.⁶ And it is the collapse of this metaphorical bridge between the two women that represents Dorinda's submergence of a female perspective in favor of the masculine regionalist plot. This connection between Idabella and Dorinda, based on their similarly illegitimate relations with the Greylocks, remains repressed within the text, and this repression signals Dorinda's transformation into a property holder complicit with the regionalist aesthetic that makes property the defining space of the relation between public and private. However, this is not the only gendered connection in the text that is repressed when located within the regional aesthetic of the land as property.

Dorinda's inability to recognize that she and Idabella are similarly situated, because of their relation of dependency in the structure of cultural and economic inheritance, is related to her racialization of those emotions that threaten her "individual will" to agency. In two instances, Dorinda feels her emotions overwhelming her and describes these "unconscious" impulses as a "buried jungle," "a stirring of primitive impulses," where "thoughts had never penetrated" (152, 239). Similarly, when Dorinda loses Jason and decides to leave Pedlar's Mill, she ponders the estrangement between herself and her mother, Eudora, in explicitly racial terms: "For twenty years they had not spent a night apart, and all the time her mother had dreamed of coral strands and palm trees, while she herself had grown into a thing as strange and far away as Africa" (185). This image recalls Eudora's plans as a young woman to marry a missionary and save souls in the Congo; when the missionary dies, Eudora remains trapped in Pedlar's Mill and becomes obsessed with overcoming the dissipation of dirt and poverty that threatens her. Her admission to her daughter that she still dreams of Africa, and of "black babies thrown to crocodiles," emerges in Dorinda as the racialization of her own "lost" female self (174).

This passage represents two forms of self-imagining for Dorinda. On the one hand, in comparing herself to Africa, Dorinda racializes her sexuality and names herself as "foreign" both to her mother and to the land that has defined Eudora's waking life. So, in comparing herself to "Africa," Dorinda imagines herself as the site of her mother's unrealized desires, an imagined place where Eudora thought she could make a "difference;" but by identifying herself with this place of unrealized desires, Dorinda also becomes a "thing" alien to her mother, outside the agrarian plot which limits Eudora's ability to nurture her children. In other words, Dorinda, herself, is out of

her mother's reach, alienated from the land, and as lost to her mother as the lost babies of the Congo. Dorinda's illicit love affair and her illegitimate pregnancy are experienced, not merely as an estrangement from the land, but from her mother as well, and the image of defeated motherhood that Eudora represents. And when Dorinda uses the image of Africa to represent her illicit sexuality, she acquiesces to the politics of a southern regional cultural form that accepts the dispossession of "black babies" as part of its structural inheritance.⁷ When she identifies herself as "foreign" to the land, and to her mother, she acquiesces to the agrarian perspective that defines the black worker, the tenant farmer, and, implicitly, the woman who reproduces outside the boundaries of inheritance, as "alien" barriers to the propertyholder's relation to the soil, barriers to the reproduction of "native" culture.

But the passage also unearths Eudora's frustrated desire to break through the agrarian narrative and reveal its suppression of the gendered economy of unfulfilling reproduction and labor that has defined her life. If throughout the text, Jason has imagined himself as an agrarian "missionary" to the farmers at Pedlar's Mill, then Eudora can only imagine work as a spiritual missionary among "foreign fields" as the way to "escape from . . . endless captivity" (105). Significantly, Eudora imagines a landscape aesthetic much like the agrarian one: a beautiful setting (blue skies, golden sands) that conceals the horrors of infanticide, specifically the throwing away of black babies, babies that Eudora cannot save. And these nightmares of the Congo begin with the births of her younger children, "while she was looking ahead . . . to a peaceful middle age unhampered by childbearing" (39). Eudora's inability to overcome the agrarian plot that has entrapped her bursts forth in the image of wasted life that haunts her dreams. This "maternal helplessness" (Matthews 163) is displaced onto the babies of the Congo and represents Eudora's inability to prevent her family from sliding into the same decay and uncleanness found at Five Oaks. Although she works compulsively, "there [is] nothing to show for her struggle" (39). If Dorinda rejects her sexuality through its racialization, then, she also rejects motherhood itself as an untenable position within agrarianism. Strangely, this is what Eudora and Idabella have in common: both are symbols of inefficacy.⁸

This recognition of the untenability of motherhood is foreshadowed, early in the novel, when the narrator interrupts the flow of Dorinda's conversation with the dying Rose Emily, and Dorinda's daydreams about Jason, to focus on "born mother" Minnie May and the other Pedlar children playing dolls on the rug:

They had made a doll's house out of a cracker box, with the frayed corners of the rug for a garden. "Now Mrs. Brown has lost her little girl,

and she is going to Mrs. Smith's to look for her. . . . And Mrs. Brown found that her little girl had been run over in the road and killed in the middle of the road . . . So she decided that all she could do for her was to have a handsome funeral and spend the ten dollars she's saved from her chicken money." (23)

The straying of Mrs. Brown's little girl evokes Dorinda's own straying through the property of Five Oaks, her desire to step outside the boundaries that enclose her life. This allusion to the daughter in the middle of the road also presages Dorinda's emotional death by the side of the road where she learns of Jason's marriage, and her miscarriage in New York when she steps off a curb and is hit by a car. Told within the context of invalid Rose Emily's abdication, because of her illness, of her maternal and domestic responsibilities to her small daughter, the passage references once again maternal helplessness; the mother is unable to save her daughter, all she can do is bury her—with the meager resources allotted to the female subject: the excess products of reproduction that represent female inheritance within the agrarian household.

Dorinda, however, steps outside this female economy—not, as the agrarians would have it, to break away from the agrarian narrative but to attempt to secure her place within it—in her desire to please Jason. Early in the text, when Dorinda decides to spend the money she has saved from her work in Nathan's store on a blue dress, instead of a dairy cow for the family farm, she disrupts this gendered economy. The dress, of course, represents Dorinda's desire to please Jason, and her rejection of her role in a family economy that requires both the wages of her labor and the suppression of her desires. But Dorinda's guilt about the cow is directed toward her mother who goes without butter so that her son Rufus may consume all that he wants.⁹ It is expected that Dorinda will sacrifice for the family, turning her wages over to her mother so that Eudora can provide nurture for the family, without sacrificing her own health. Eudora's willingness to do without the butter is a form of maternal nurturance that makes possible the production of masculinity and its reproduction of the landscape of regionalism. Dorinda's failed attempt to locate a space of agency for herself within the gendered economy of regionalism requires not that she betray the family, but the female economy that exists within, and helps sustain, the agrarian economy. When she exchanges the cow for the dress, she attempts to escape from the maternal sacrifices Eudora makes only to further enclose Eudora within that narrative, since the mother is the one who suffers from this exchange. The fact that the male subjects of *Barren Ground*, who profit from Eudora's

sacrifice, fail in their ability to sustain the economic structure that makes possible the regional aesthetic matters only to the extent that it creates a void through which Dorinda, the female subject, is later enabled to inherit the family farm.¹⁰ Dorinda's exclusion from the masculine propertied structure of inheritance makes her similar to Idabella.

However, it is the original trespass against the mother—the exchange of a gendered identification with the female labor that supports the land for an identification with the male propertyholders who benefit from that labor—that informs Dorinda's decision to return to Old Farm and start the dairy. The exchange of the cow for the dress is reversed in this decision as Dorinda externalizes Eudora's sexual and reproductive entrapment in the agrarian narrative into the “impersonal” structure of production that gives her the agency to return the land to its previous profundity.

This exchange of the cow for the dress, which Dorinda experiences as a trespass against her mother, forms a subtext through which the gendered plot of *Barren Ground* emerges. When Dorinda escapes to New York and experiences a miscarriage, this trading of the cow for the dress reemerges in her memory as wrong done to her mother:

What surprised her, when she was not too tired to think of it, was that the ever-present sense of sin . . . was entirely absent from her reflections. She was very sorry about the blue dress; she felt remorse because of the cow her mother might have had; but everything else that had happened was embraced in the elastic doctrine of predestination. (202)

Later, while packing to move to the Faradays,' she repeats this sentiment: “If I hadn't bought this dress, perhaps he wouldn't have fallen in love with me, and then I should still be living at Old Farm, and Ma would have her cow . . . ” (228). And while she presents her desire to return to Old Farm as the land “calling her back,” her mother keeps emerging into her thoughts and into her conversations with others. It is not an experience of the landscape that draws her back, but a desire to make amends to the mother for the poor trade—cow for dress—that she made and for which her mother suffers. Dorinda's discussion of her mother with Dr. Burch gives rise to her desire to start a dairy at Old Farm; however, this discussion of the dairy farm is connected to Dorinda's moment of identification with her mother:

‘Poor Ma!’—She corrected herself: ‘Poor Mother, the farm has eaten away her life. It caught her when she was young, and she was never able to get free. . . . I sometimes think she hates it, but I know it would

kill her to leave it. It is like a bad heart. You may suffer from it, but it is your life, and it would kill you to lose it.' She broke off, pondered deeply for few moments, and then added impulsively, 'If I had the money, I'd go back and start a dairy farm there.' (243)

This discussion about her mother occurs in the context of Dorinda's sexual response to the concert she and Dr. Burch attend. Her responsiveness to the music impresses the doctor who can only experience the music as an "intellectual exercise" because he has mastered it as a science; Dorinda's desire to "master the chemistry of agriculture," then, functions as a mastery of her sexuality, a distancing of herself both from the doctor's advances and from the sexual images of the landscape that the music arouses and that are associated with Jason. But it is also a desire not to "have her life eaten" away by the farm as her mother's life has been. Dorinda sees Eudora's devotion to the land as a form of captivity; the mother can neither escape nor make a difference in the land that she inhabits. In this context, however, the land also eats away at the mother's body; like Rufus, it is pictured as an ungrateful child whose own lack of production becomes the pitiful sign of Eudora's maternal inefficacy. Thus, Dorinda's desire to transform Old Farm into a dairy farm acts as both a connecting link between mother and daughter, and a displacement of Dorinda's identification with Eudora as a symbol of female subjectivity trapped within the agrarian narrative.

Dorinda reiterates her desire to start a dairy farm as she watches Mrs. Faraday nurse her baby; she tells her, "I wouldn't let anyone touch the milk and butter except mother and myself" (246). The maternal scene of nurturing is transposed into the impersonal discussion of the dairy. Discussing the dairy farm, Dorinda is able to avoid Mrs. Faraday's encouragement to marry and have her own children with Dr. Burch. And, within the context of the dairy, Dorinda is able to reimagine her relation with her mother. Earlier in the novel, Rufus received his share of Eudora's butter and Dorinda went without, because she had traded the cow for the dress. But this image of "mother and myself" being the only ones to touch the milk and butter, in the context of Mrs. Faraday's breast feeding, reimagines the scene of mother and daughter estrangement as the possibility of an externalized fulfillment within the impersonal structure of the agrarian plot. For although she constructs her return to Pedlar's Mill as a desire to reclaim the land, in the same conversation with Dr. Burch in which she speaks of the farm eating away her mother's life, she tells him, "Old Farm must be made to pay" (246). This mission to reclaim Old Farm, then, appears secondary to her desire to extract some form of retribution from the land that has cheated her mother of nurturance

and her ability to nurture her own daughter. The land has cheated Dorinda of her maternal possibilities as well, inasmuch as it is Dr. Greylock's concern for Five Oaks that thwarts her marriage to Jason, leading to her own eventual miscarriage—and her refusal to consider a future that includes motherhood.

In order to reclaim Old Farm, Dorinda must repress her sexuality and remain silent about her miscarriage, because both her illicit sexuality and illegitimate pregnancy are trespasses against the agrarian order. And the consequence of articulating either is vividly illustrated within the text through the story of Geneva Ellgood. The miscarriage and the gendered identity that she has buried in order to compete with Jason “man to man” (401) is made manifest in the story of Geneva Ellgood. She is connected to Dorinda through her assumption of Dorinda's place as Jason's wife, but she also emerges into the text as the bearer of Dorinda's repressed feelings about her miscarriage. She appears in a swathe of blue (Dorinda's color) on Nathan and Dorinda's wedding day; this is also the day that she drowns herself in the old mill-pond which is referenced earlier in the text when Dorinda looks into Bob Ellgood's eyes and sees herself as “clearly as if her features were *mirrored* in the old mill-pond” (my italics; 292). This reference connects Dorinda to both brother and sister, since what she sees in Bob's eyes is herself reflected impersonally “as if she had been a man.” Dorinda's refusal to speak of the personal past that connects her to the Ellgoods and Jason must be spoken by Geneva, who runs through the countryside claiming that Jason has killed her child. Geneva, of course, is punished with confinement and self-destruction for making this claim that no one believes; representing the female reproductive self that Dorinda has buried within her commitment to a masculinized and agrarian relation to the land, Geneva manifests Dorinda's inability to articulate her own feelings of loss and victimization. The “mirror” of the regionalist aesthetic is a mirror of death for the female subject, literally in the case of Geneva, but for Dorinda as well, in as much as she now sees herself mirrored in the landscape as an agrarian, as a masculine subject.

Other critics have noted that Glasgow uses a discussion about the breeding of dairy cows as a metaphor for Dorinda's own suppressed thoughts about both her sexuality and her miscarriage.¹¹ However, critics—looking toward Dorinda's relation to, and shaping of, the land—have failed to see how this metaphor operates to bring together the agrarian and romantic plots of the novel. Nor have they noted that it is the dairy that supports and makes possible the reclamation of the land at Old Farm, and eventually, Dorinda's acquisition of Five Oaks. Dorinda refuses to sell any of the pines at Old Farm. Instead she markets the aesthetic and sentimental quality of

the harp-shaped pine that fills her father's gaze as he is dying by placing its image upon the butter she sells. Saving the pine from becoming a material object of exchange she uses its properties as a symbol of the South to market her butter as a regional product. And, thus, she trades on the marketplace's desire to consume southern rurality. This structural exchange in which the aesthetic symbol of the land is saved by trading on the reproductive products of female labor, the milk and butter, reveals what Dorinda herself cannot articulate within the structure of agrarianism: that the regional aesthetic is sustained by the labor of the female body.

The double displacement of female reproduction—the suppression of the female body and the extraction of its labor—makes possible Dorinda's reclamation of the land, both as property and as a symbol of her victory over Jason. But the recognition, of how female labor and reproduction support the “impersonal” structures of agrarianism, requires articulation in the text through structures of displacement precisely because Dorinda must access her triumph through the canvas of landed property—a canvas that unifies men from generation to generation but, in which, the female subject may be—and apparently is—drowned and consumed. This may be one reason that *Barren Ground's* plot seems increasingly static—Dorinda's increasingly narrowed perspective relegates the gendered dilemmas of agrarianism to the elusive and suggestive margins of the text. Reproduction is confined to secrecy, metaphor, the racial other, and the mentally ill.

This narrowing of Dorinda's perspective is directly related to her fear of tenancy, of being subject to the gendered and raced economics that define, and confine, female reproduction within the boundaries of property. In effect, this fear is told through Jason's failure. His descent into the poorhouse is articulated in the same terms that are used to describe Dorinda as she waits by the side of the road listening for the carriage that carries Jason and Geneva. As Jason, having been taken in by Dorinda, waits to die, his glance across the horizon is described as if he were “scarred and burned out by an innerfire” (514) and Dorinda realizes she cannot reach him, because she “could make no impression on vacancy” (514). Having been caught by the broomsedge against which Dorinda has struggled since her return to Pedlar's Mill, Jason's silence acts as a mirror of her own inability to articulate her continued personal sense of “expectancy” (413, 466). Dorinda has reclaimed Old Farm and Five Oaks, but neither of these acts produces within Dorinda the “freedom from expectancy” that she desires. Dorinda appears to be waiting for the (re)birth of an emotional subjectivity that has been confined to the racial metaphors of the narrative. Moreover, earlier in the text, when Dorinda arrives at the poorhouse to retrieve the impoverished and ill

Jason, a narrative gloss disrupts her perspective, explaining what Dorinda's property-structured vision cannot see:

Withdrawn from the road, behind the fallen planks which had once made a fence, the poorhouse sprawled there, in the midst of the life-everlasting, like the sun-bleached skeleton of an animal which buzzards had picked clean of flesh . . . Dorinda, however, perceived none of the varied blessings attendant upon orderless destitution. All she saw was the ramshackle building and the whitewashed cedars, which reminded her vaguely of missionary stories of the fences of dry bones surrounding the huts of Ethiopian kings. (498–499)

This description of the poorhouse expresses a narrative vision at odds with Dorinda's perspective; it repeats the metaphor used to describe the land at the novel's beginning. This is tenancy represented as freedom, freedom from the boundaries that determine property; the poorhouse needs no "fence" and "sprawls" amidst nonproductivity. And Dorinda associates this image of tenancy with Africa, projecting onto Jason—and the one indigent mother who also occupies the poorhouse—and this environment of "orderless destitution" and "liberty" the image of her own younger self, and once again she racializes that image. This racialization of the propertyless is a rejection of the boundaryless freedom represented in the poorhouse, and the female subject that reproduces outside the boundaries of property. Just as once she imagined herself as a "thing" as foreign and faraway as Africa, now she projects that alienness onto those who are outside the legitimating structures of inheritance.

Dorinda instead continues to look toward the land as property to provide her with the difference that she desired as a young woman. Earlier in the novel, Dorinda looks across the horizon from Old Farm and yearns to complete her vision of ownership by possessing Five Oaks: "As far as she could see, east, north, west, the land belonged to her. Only toward the south there were the pale green willows of Gooseneck Creek, and beyond the feathery edge she saw the red chimneys of Five Oaks. But for those chimneys she would have felt that the whole horizon was hers!" (362). And yet, once she has gained Five Oaks, she discovers "the horizon of her freedom still farther away" (413). This "freedom" Dorinda desires is nothing more than the desire that originally structured her vision of the land, and that continues, despite her successful transformation of the land: to transform the land into something different. However, Dorinda can only transform that "narrow vista" that defines the space she owns. For example, she is unable, or unwilling,

to step outside the perspective of the landowner to transform the “public roads.” The roads at Pedlar Mill “are still impassable,” because, Dorinda tells John Abner, the tenant farmers are “indisposed” to doing their share of the work (438). Similarly, after the war Dorinda is unable to find “negroes” willing to work to keep the roads repaired so that she can move her butter and the products of the fields. Public roads are like illegitimate children, they threaten to disrupt the integrity of a culture that makes the land as property an inheritable form of culture; they belong to no one. To “stray” into the public roads is to occupy that space outside the inherited structures of agrarianism, to occupy the space of tenancy, of Idabella, to occupy that space which Dorinda herself once inhabited.

Dorinda’s perspective as a property owner considers the labor of others only in terms of that space with which she “wrestles.” Locating her own identity within the reclamation of the land, she has little patience with the propertyless ‘happiness-hunters’ that threaten that identity by their refusal to labor for her. Her paternalism even extends to John Abner, the eventual inheritor of her property. She tells Nathan, “that she hoped [John Abner] would marry some girl she herself should select” (410). If her attitudes reflect the vision of the Ellgoods and the Greylocks that brought about her own earlier romantic break with the land, then it is this very vision that makes it possible for her to reclaim, in the end, her aesthetic vision of the land as a “natural” lover:

Yes, the land would stay by her. Her eyes wandered from far horizon to horizon. Again she felt the quickening of that sympathy which was deeper than all other emotions of her heart. . . . the living communion with the earth under her feet. While the soil endured, while the seasons bloomed and dropped, while the ancient, beneficent ritual of sowing and reaping moved in the fields, she knew that she could never despair of contentment. (525)

The land as an aesthetic space, here, represents a naturalized plenitude that suppresses the structure of labor and property that goes into maintaining Dorinda’s “integrity of vision” (525). This structure of feeling that makes possible an aestheticization of the return to the land as a cyclical space no longer needs to articulate the difference that gender makes. Having safely buried Jason, Dorinda safely buries the self whose illegitimate reproduction threatened to disrupt the boundaries of property, and its integrity as an inheritable form of culture. And yet, *Barren Ground*, as a text that trades on readers’ desires to see the regional aesthetic as sustained by a naturalized plenitude,

functions like Dorinda's butter, marked with the harp-shaped pine that represents Old Farm. It offers readers the satisfactions of a southern regionalism marked by the paternal symbol of the land, but it is female labor that they consume: the female labor, productive and reproductive, that makes the regional aesthetic possible. Both author and heroine produce regional cultural products that mimic regionalism's repression of the female body—its sexuality, reproduction, and labor. But that body continuously reemerges in the text—through Geneva, in Dorinda's dreams, and through the dairy's relation to the mother—to remind heroine and reader of its displacement.

Whereas Glasgow firmly situates the plot of *Barren Ground* within the cultural and economic framework of regional property, in *Vein of Iron* she more freely explores the notion of a regionalist female subjectivity emerging outside this framework. The similarities between the two novels suggest that Glasgow returns, in *Vein of Iron*, to the issue of how gender and the regional are mutually constituted, and attempts to rewrite Dorinda's story outside the limits imposed upon it by the agrarian narrative. Within this context, Glasgow experiments with a regionalist identity attached to place that does not depend on the land as a form of cultural inheritance, and, that might, therefore, allow for a discussion of female sexuality, reproduction, and labor as constitutive elements of regional culture. Thus, in *Vein of Iron*, the land as a site of regional identity acts not as a mirroring canvas for the reproduction of a seamless cultural identity, but instead, becomes a shifting context for Glasgow's reexamination of those southern spaces outside the aesthetic conventions of southern regionalism: the wilderness, the meadow, and the urban. Glasgow appropriates these spaces in order to challenge the gendered structures of agrarianism; nonetheless, at the end of the text, she reformulates the gendered structure of agrarianism through suburban ideologies. This reformulation, however, is as problematic as agrarianism itself, because it burdens the female subject with the reproduction of agrarian feeling, even as it reenclaves those feelings within a private space more detached from the public history of the South than the enclosed spaces of property in *Barren Ground*.

Set in the Shenandoah Mountains of Virginia, *Vein of Iron* relates the story of the Fincastle family from the turn of the century to the mid-1930s. While the narration often presents the story from John Fincastle's perspective, it is his daughter Ada who provides the dramatic impetus for the text's plot; and although the novel begins when she is ten years old, it is the adult Ada's romance with Ralph McBride that drives the narrative. Just as Dorinda loses Jason to Geneva, Ada must relinquish Ralph to another woman, Janet Rowan. The prosperous Rowans believe that Ralph is the father of Janet's

unborn child (she later miscarries) and force Ralph to marry Janet. Later, Ada and Ralph, now separated from Janet, unite and produce their own illegitimate child. With Ralph away fighting in World War I, Ada, her father, and Aunt Meggie take the baby to the city and away from the disapproving villagers of Ironside. In the city, Ada and Ralph are finally married. However, a series of personal and public disasters—Ralph’s paralyzing accident, the Depression, John Fincastle’s death—contrive to send the family back to Ironside in the novel’s closing pages. Here, however, it becomes apparent that the reproductive and sexual agency that Ada claims for herself in the text is dependent, not only on rejecting the strictures of property that define Dorinda’s subjectivity, but on an erasure of that history. This novel reveals how the domestic plot—which Dorinda escapes—may function as an erasure of the relation between private and public history that critics find it difficult to incorporate into the southern regionalist paradigm, and yet that manages to define regionalism’s legitimate boundaries: the history of land as a form of inheritance that legitimates certain subjects and marginalizes others. In this sense, Glasgow finds it equally difficult to incorporate that relation into the novel’s end. Ada’s devotion to the familial past as a narrative that transcends the historical structures that define the city, the village, and the wilderness can function only through a dismissal of how the agrarians’ cultural organization of property effectively organizes the present.

Vein of Iron is set in the village of Ironside in Shut-In Valley. As its name suggests, the valley is surrounded by mountains, physically and culturally secluded from the traffic of civilization. However, it is not the inhabitants of the village, but those that exist on its margins that form the narrative’s center. Glasgow provides not a description of the village itself, but instead narrates its boundaries through the perspective of ten-year-old Ada Fincastle. On each side of the village, with the church between, are homes that represent its physical and spiritual boundaries. On the one side is the Fincastle place, the Old Manse, “slightly withdrawn from the village” (5). The manse is more a part of the village’s frontier past than representative of its present: “During the hours between dusk and daybreak the manse seemed to separate itself from the village, to shed the covering of communal life, and to slip back into the wilderness” (106). It connects Ironside to its origins in the wilderness—both the pioneer past of warfare with the Shawnees who originally inhabited the mountains, and the inbred enclaves of Panther’s Gap, a grotesque caricature of the “shut-in” valley below. The Fincastles settled Ironside, but John Fincastle’s philosophical break with the doctrine of predestination has made the manse a place where only “profane learning” may be taught and cost him the church where his father, and his father before him, was minister.

On the other side of the church is Murderer's Grave where Mrs. Waters, a former prostitute, lives with her idiot boy, Toby, in a hovel surrounded by pigs. Murderer's Grave is the burial place of a man who was hanged for killing his adulterous wife. If the manse represents the spiritual and pioneer past of a people committed to their faith, then Murderer's Grave represents the cost of both imposing those strictures upon the village's inhabitants and of breaking the tenets of that faith. Toby and Mrs. Waters live on the economic, social, and geographic margins of the village, and yet, they act as a physical embodiment of a transgressive and violent past that the village cannot fully incorporate into its history. This geographical tension between the two homes, which are so different and yet similarly situated in relation to the village, is made more dramatic through the connections the text makes between Ada and the Waters. Though it recalls the suppressed identification between Idabella and Dorinda in *Barren Ground*, an identification suppressed because of its racial implications, here, Glasgow has removed the racial barrier, making possible a more direct connection between Ada and Mrs. Waters, who like Idabella, lives beyond the "social shadow line."¹²

Ada, herself, prefers not to look at Mrs. Waters, because she feels "as if a bodily disfigurement had been thrust before her eyes" (71). Mrs. Waters' is a "bad woman" and that badness is visited upon Toby, whose idiocy represents the marginal "worst" of existence for Ada; his physical disfigurement belies the inner innocence that structures his relations with others, making him the village children's prey. The novel opens with the children of Ironside chasing Toby across the fields toward the barren ravine where his home sits. Ada experiences a sudden shifting of subjectivity in which she becomes the pursued, and begs the others to stop: "In a flash of vision it seemed to her that she and Toby had changed places, that they were chasing her over the fields into that filthy hovel" (4). This feeling of being both pursued and pursuer dramatically defines Ada's position in the text, and it is Ada's experience of this double subjectivity that provides a means of understanding how Glasgow's erasure of the regional's framework of race and property makes possible a more explicit identification between the former prostitute and Ada.

This identification remains problematic, however, because it is filtered through Toby and complicated by the identification that the text seems to make between Mrs. Waters and the despised female subject of the text who threatens Ada's happiness. Mrs. Waters most often appears in the text when Ada feels threatened by Janet Rowen, the more sophisticated and beautiful daughter of the town's most prosperous business owner. When Ada and

Ralph fight at a barnyard dance, she goes home, and he takes off to be with Janet. While Ada stands at the window contemplating the strange triangle between herself, Janet, and Ralph, only the single light from Mrs. Waters' hovel illuminates the darkness. It burns so late that Ada believes there must be something wrong at the house. This single light from across the fields only mirrors Ada's own late night vigil and the troubles associated with Janet and Ralph that preoccupy her. Standing at the window, Ada fretfully asks herself, "What is it about Janet?" (189). But she is unable to articulate the sexual transgressiveness that Janet represents; only through the vision of Mrs. Waters' home, as a representative site of female illicit sexuality, does the book allow Ada's question to be answered. However, it is Ada who finds herself alienated, like the Waters, from the village and her family, because of the night's events. The light that shines from the hovel "like a vindictive eye" falls upon Ada rather than the sexually transgressive Janet (190).

Janet's accusation against Ralph costs Ada the future she has carefully planned: a middle-class home in the city of Queenborough, a life of domestic order and upward mobility, in which she would live something of the genteel and romantic life that her mother relinquished when she married John Fincastle. Although Janet's father is not a farmer, it is his position as a male propertyholder that makes the coercion of the poor and fatherless Ralph—the most likely father of the baby is a wealthy farmer's son from another village—acceptable to the rest of the community. The community believes Janet's story because they must believe it; paradoxically, however, no one really believes that the "fibber" Janet is telling the truth. Even the Fincastles, so often out of step with the village, agree that Ralph must marry Janet, even if Janet is lying, and even if it means the sacrifice of Ada's happiness. Ironically, since the chivalric code of the South demands that the (white, upper class) woman must be believed, she is never fully believed. Glasgow reveals how damning the South's gendered code of chivalry, based also on class and race, is to both women's expression of sexual desire and their ability to represent themselves through their own narratives. Janet's social and economic position prevents her open expression of sexual desire, and curtails Ada's sexual relationship with Ralph. On the other hand, Ada—and by extension the reader is asked to do the same—chooses Ralph and damns Janet because of her reputation. This moment of romantic loss, then, has both feminist and antifeminist implications. Whereas Janet assumes a position of wayward female sexuality, becoming, like Mrs. Waters, a "bad woman," this is also the moment at which Ada breaks free from the gendered codes of property and inheritance that define the community's insistence on Janet and Ralph's marriage. At this moment in the text, while Janet's sexuality is paralleled to that

of Mrs. Waters,' it is Ada who finds herself physically and emotionally drawn to the social and spatial position occupied by the woman and her son.

Ada's experience of this betrayal produces a scene similar to the one in which Dorinda learns of Jason's marriage to Geneva. Her sense of alienation from the family and community is imaged through her relationship to the land:

Until this moment of anguish, she had felt that she was a part of the Valley, of its religion, its traditions, its unspoken laws, as well as of its fields and streams and friendly mountains. But now her heart was torn up from its place, mangled and bleeding. Only a jagged scar was left in the spot where her life had been rooted. (140)

This "jagged scar in the earth" has sexual connotations that are difficult to ignore, representing Ada's introduction to sexuality and reproduction. Although her body maintains its innocence, her spiritual and emotional self is violated by the gendered social codes that protect Janet, the same codes that reject Mrs. Waters and herself. Murderer's Grave—where Toby and his mother live—is itself described as a "scar on the landscape" (142). And Ada feels driven to Murderer's Grave after her final meeting with Ralph: "Pain had thrust her out of the smiling meadow into this unhealed wound in the earth" (141). The metaphor in which a jagged scar represents her displacement from the pastoral innocence of the meadow—where in good pastoral fashion the sheep graze—to a place of exile associated with transgressive female sexuality, once more collapses the distance between Ada and Toby, as she finds the young man crawling across the ravine toward her, confronting her with his repulsiveness. Toby and Ada (not to mention the murderer) are both products of "bad women"; their broken lives are the manifestations of the sins of others. Toby's idiocy is not his fault, anymore than the sacrifice of Ada's happiness by the village and her family is the result of her own transgressions. Nevertheless, both are the victims of the community. And just as Ada imagines that the barren ravine—a scar upon the earth where nothing grows—represents the murderer's "revenge" upon the community that hanged him, so is Toby a kind of revenge upon the community that has abandoned his mother. It is not, then, Mrs. Waters with whom Ada identifies at this moment in the text, but with the outcast Toby.

However, the text does identify Ada with another woman who transgresses the boundaries of the village. The other woman's story most relevant to the plot of Ada's romance with Ralph is the story of Great-great-grandmother Tod, who is taken captive by the Shawnees as a young girl. In the

wilderness, she marries a member of the tribe and bears a child before being returned to the village. After her return, although safely married to a settler with whom she has several children, she is known to get a look of “wildness” in her eyes and retreat into the mountains. The wilderness represents a place of captivity for Grandmother Tod, but later becomes a symbol of her “wildness,” and the village becomes a place of captivity. The story of Grandmother Tod vividly illustrates how the meanings of place shift within the text. This shifting has been a somewhat problematic concept for critics to grasp, because it means that places signify differently across time, and according to the subject’s placement within a broader geography of power. This shifting is most obvious in the Fincastles’ varied relation to the wilderness; whereas, in *Barren Ground*, the investment in the land, as a site of cultivation and inheritance, provides the background for Dorinda’s narrative, it is this shifting relation to the wilderness that defines Ada’s experience.

The space that informs *Vein of Iron*, is not the farm, but the wilderness. The manse’s past is shown to be a complex history of negotiation between the settlement that the Fincastles help produce, and the wilderness that often represents their difference from that settlement. The concept of wilderness has a long history in United States culture.¹³ It is not, however, generally considered a defining landscape in southern regionalism of the interwar years. Nor, with a few notable exceptions, does the Indian generally appear as a cultural signifier within Southern literature of the period.¹⁴ Its use in Glasgow can be seen as a deliberate appropriation that seeks to undo the land as inherited property/culture that informs the regionalist paradigm. Therefore, before addressing the problems that this appropriation presents, I want to address how Glasgow’s paradigm shift makes possible a reposing of the problematic place of female sexuality and reproduction within agrarianism.

The pioneer Fincastles settle in the wilderness, motivated by their desire to practice their religion outside the sectarian arguments that inform the already settled communities. But the first John Fincastle is also chasing a very typical dream: “John Fincastle thrust out toward the frontier. The mood of the wilderness flowed into him and ebbed back again. He was pursuing the dream of a free country, the dream of a country so vast that each man would have room to bury his dead on his own land” (18). However, it is the Fincastles’ difference from the other settlers that makes the land as a site of property an elusive dream. The first John Fincastle forges a relationship with the Indians that surround the settlement; he is defined as both “trespasser” and “friend and protector” (19). He risks his own life for the Cherokee, pitting himself against the community: “It was told of old John, the pioneer, that he was strung up and half choked by a party of hunters

because he refused to give away the hiding-place of some Cherokees who had trusted him. . . . Roaming white men, he wrote down somewhere, were his abomination. . . ." (122–3). Eventually, he returns to the mountains as a missionary, carrying only a bible and book of "profane learning," a text of Eastern philosophy.

His history is reflected in Great-great grandmother Tod's story, and in Ada's grandmother's continuing ministrations to the families of Panther Gap, who live deep into the mountains. According to her son, they represent ". . . a stalwart breed, the true American Highlanders. In pioneer days their forefathers had fled from the strict settlements, some because they could breathe only in freedom, and others to escape the laws of the Tidewater" (15). John Fincastle, Ada's father, does not venture into the wilderness physically, but exists in the spiritual wilderness of religious exile. His mother believes that he has inherited the "wildness" of Grandmother Tod in a different form. And it is this spiritual wildness that has cost the Fincastles the dream of the land as property: the manse has been mortgaged, because of John's loss of his position in the church. So, the text is clear in its association of the wilderness with that which represents otherness to the villagers: spiritually, culturally, and economically. Inasmuch, as the manse is said to slip back into the wilderness, it threatens to slip out of the agrarian narrative and into a prior mode of living undefined by the kind of ownership that defined the first Fincastle's relation to the land. The cultural inheritance handed down from father to son of the position of pastor to the village has already been broken. So, although, John Fincastle may be said to nominally represent that regional artist/yeoman who is as comfortable with a hoe as he is with his books, he has broken faith with the village and with its past.

Ada, too, slips back into the "wilderness" when she rebels against the village's conventional codes of gender and sexuality, and decides to take her chance at happiness with Ralph. Grandmother Tod's "wildness" is also connected to Ada's meeting with Ralph on the old Indian Trail. Ralph returns to Ada before leaving to fight in France. Janet has decided to divorce him, and he and Ada decide to begin again. They do not wait until the divorce, however, to consummate their relationship. Instead, they retreat to a mountain cabin at the end of the old Indian Trail. The mountains emerge as a place of "unlawful love" and freedom from the judgment of the villagers and the Fincastles (200). They are, Ralph claims, "escaping from worse things than Indians" (192). The village is seen as a site of entrapment, while the wilderness exists as a place outside those structures that seek to separate them from one another. Despite the bloody history of the place, Ada experiences "a new sense of security" and "permanence" and feels "as if time were going by and

leaving [them] alone on an island of happiness" (186). Ironically, however, the village has made the wilderness this safe place of retreat; the settlers' earlier trespass upon the land makes it a place where Ada and Ralph can play at being Indians without encountering any. And, it is this disturbing notion of the "wilderness" that informs, and mars, Glasgow's attempts to rethink the female subject's place within the agrarian narrative—to undo the codes of gendered sexuality and cultural inheritance that structure female sexuality and make motherhood an untenable narrative for the female southern subject.

Beyond the realm of the regional as property is the wilderness as a place where the female subject may experience herself as a subject free of the constraints that define her within the terms of southern cultivation.¹⁵ Ada's identification with the wilderness as a space outside the historical construction of property that limits Dorinda's vision in *Barren Ground* allows the romantic plotting of the wilderness to surface as an escape from the restrictions imposed on the female subject by the structure of regional culture. The wilderness supposedly belongs to no one—and, of course, it is the Shawnee's nonpropertied concept of the land that makes it possible for the settlers to possess it as their own; unfenced and uncultivated, possession is made possible in the experience of space itself and the subjective meaning—as divine place, as terrifyingly godless, as a sanctuary, or, as a site of leisure and solitude—that is placed upon it. Wilderness is a space where contestation is made possible, because ownership is not visibly defined; it is not "shut-in" by the conventional codes of property and gender that define the village. This freedom, however, can be recovered by Ada, only because the emptiness of the wilderness, as much as its freedom, is part of her own regional, cultural inheritance as well. This may be why it is not within the context of the wilderness, of her "island of happiness," that Ada reexperiences her identification with the land. It is in the meadow, that "middle landscape" of the pastoral tradition, that she experiences her strongest relationship to the wilderness as an ahistorical space outside the inherited structures of Southern culture.¹⁶

At this point in the text, Ada is pregnant with Ralph's child, and has exiled herself—on the advice of the minister and her father—from the village. She has refused to repent her time with Ralph, and her grandmother, in turn, refuses to acknowledge Ada's presence in the home they share. She fears the judgment of her grandmother and the villagers, and ruminates on the hardships of the pioneers' wilderness past in light of her current troubles. She wishes she could give birth to her child in the wilderness, just as Grandmother Tod gave birth to her firstborn among the Indians. The

wilderness, once again, appears first as a place of hardship, and then, a place of refuge from the kind of censure under which Mrs. Waters lives: better to be a part of the wilderness than to exist in exile on the social boundaries of the community. Ada's contemplation of this desire to escape, leads to an epiphany that she expresses only when coming to gaze upon her father and Tommy, a young member of the only black family in the village: "Side by side,' she exclaimed, 'and it doesn't make the slightest difference to the earth that one is a philosopher and the other a piccaninny!'" (218) This is a startling proclamation, particularly since it transmutes Ada's thoughts about her illegitimate pregnancy into an understanding of racial difference as historically constructed.

Ada's epiphany seems to suggest that women's sexuality and the notion of illegitimacy—based on Grandmother Tod's reproduction with a heathen—are historical constructions that make no difference to the "earth." The epiphany about female reproduction leads to a similar articulation about race. However, the historical construction of race does make a difference, a difference implied in Glasgow's description of Tommy as a "small colored urchin" and in Ada's admonition to her father to send Tommy home, and John Fincastle's prompt command for the boy to "run home." (218–9). The language that Ada uses to express this revelation represents, in and of itself, the inadequacy of Ada's construction of the earth's indifference to the historical structures that define race, gender, and reproduction and the wilderness itself. Also, Ada's pastoral revelation has little effect upon subsequent events that occur in the novel. Because Ada's time in the meadow, as well as her time in the wilderness, engages space as an ahistorical construct, the earth, it allows for a replotting of the romantic vision of the landscape, a vision similar to the one that defines Dorinda's after she meets Jason. At this moment in the text, Glasgow reveals how the land as property, as a form of cultural and economic inheritance, is transformed into a regionalist aesthetic: an aesthetic that promises the freedom from the differences, and thus, the inequalities of history, through its very indifference to the constraints of gender, class, and race. Ada's identification with the earth relies on a dismissal of how the history of property and gender constructs the wilderness and the meadow as contexts for this identification. However, Glasgow's investigation of this intersection, of how the romantic and agrarian plots mutually inform one another, lasts only as long as it takes for Ada to articulate her revelation within racist language, and only as long as it takes her to find herself once again face to face with Mrs. Waters.

Despite her pastoral meditation, Ada cannot help wondering whether her child, like Toby, will be born an idiot. As it turns out her son, Ranny, is not, but Ada does not escape punishment. When she ventures into the town

to fetch the doctor for her dying grandmother, she finds herself suddenly pursued by the village children:

. . . because she ran, flushed and frightened, they stopped play and pursued her toward the churchyard, as they so often in the past had pursued Toby Waters. . . . Half in malice, half in sport, the children were romping about her, pelting her with bits of red clay or tufts of weed with the roots still attached. . . . A lump of soft clay struck the back of her head; behind her the voices of children—or were they idiots?—were babbling. She had reached Murderer's Grave, her foot had almost touched the slippery edge, when the gate of the hovel burst open, and Mrs. Waters and Toby rushed, amid a swarm of pigs, along the rim of the ravine. Stopping with a hysterical laugh, Ada watched the woman fling the hogwash from her pail into the flock of tormentors. (230–1)

In a reversal of the novel's opening scene, Ada herself flees toward Murderer's Grave and finds herself defended by both Mrs. Waters and Toby. And yet, she flees from Mrs. Waters just as quickly, afraid of what the villagers will think if they see the two women together; she is also still repulsed by the lack of morality Mrs. Waters represents. In fact, Ada condemns herself in a like manner when she imagines, immediately after this incident, that her sexual sins have brought about her grandmother's death. Whatever identification between Ada and Mrs. Waters Glasgow seeks to establish, Ada, like Dorinda, remains separate from, different than, the bad woman of the text.

Glasgow undermines this identification in other scenes of the novel as well. Near the novel's end, as John Fincastle, sick to the point of death, makes his way back to the manse, he has a vision from his own childhood. He remembers traveling into the mountains with his own mother to visit a family in Panther's Gap:

While the sweat broke out on his skin, and every pore seemed dripping with fear, the family flocked from the cabin and began to dance round him, singing and jeering. And as soon as he saw them he knew what he had dreaded—for they were all idiots. His mother had brought him to one of the mountain families that had inbred until it was imbecile. Two generations of blank, grinning faces and staring eyes and driveling mouths danced and shouted round him as they pressed closer and closer. A world of idiots, he thought in his dream. To escape from them, to run away, he must break through not only a throng, but a whole world of idiots. . . . (399)

For John Fincastle the mountains are not as clearly a place of sanctuary as they are for Ada and Ralph. In these two passages it becomes apparent that the village and the wilderness produce equally “savage” children. And despite, John Fincastle’s earlier defense of the mountain people as “a stalwart breed, the true American Highlanders” (15), he also tells Ada and his mother, “That was the trouble of a village, . . . ‘All likes and dislikes are in-bred until they become like the half-wit families over in Panther’s Gap’” (63). According to Ada’s father, the physical inbreeding of Panther’s Gap merely represents the social and intellectual inbreeding of the village. The similarity of the two scenes has a further significance because Mrs. Waters comes from a family in Panther’s Gap. And although the novel appears to represent Toby as the result of Mrs. Waters’ illicit sexuality outside marriage, at least one critic has read Toby as the offspring of Mrs. Waters and her father (Harrison 38). Thus, Glasgow undermines, through this suggestion of incest and Ada’s son’s own healthiness, the initial suggestion that Toby is the result of illicit female sexuality. Toby, in this reading, is the result of “pioneer” inbreeding, of that place that is like the village in its rigid conformity to notions of cultural inheritance, only more so. At the same time that Glasgow frees Ada from the codes that would suppress female sexuality and reproduction outside marriage, she names incest—the father’s desire for the daughter—as the means through which Mrs. Waters becomes the prostitute, “the bad woman,” of the text: the desire to maintain land as a form of cultural inheritance, represented by the stalwart pioneers of Panther’s Gap, becomes a conduit through incest for the production of idiots and bad women. This suggests that the “stalwart pioneers” in Panther’s Gap and their spiritual and moral equivalents in the village produce bad women and idiots as part of their regional histories and not as transgressive deviations from that history. They are not illegitimate transgressions of regional culture, but products of the regional’s concern for a history founded in the land as culture.

However, these two similar episodes—Ada’s with the village children and her father’s with the children of Panther’s Gap—suggest that the Fincastles act as mediators between these two seemingly divergent places. If the Fincastles’ mediating position between the wilderness and the village seeks to reveal how they are mutually constitutive of one another, then, this mediation collapses even as it is revealed: Ada’s fear of becoming the pursued, the very quality that makes her identify with Toby Waters and convinces her to go with Ralph into the mountains, also reinforces her desire to escape from Mrs. Waters and any identification that the villagers might make between herself and the woman. Her grandmother’s death conveniently allows the family to move to Queenborough, so that Ada can escape from these conflicted feelings: represented

not only in her conviction that she will not repent her “cardinal sin,” but, also, that her actions are punished by her grandmother’s death, that she has “killed” her grandmother. In other words, her grandmother’s death both frees Ada from occupying a position in which she must represent the relation between the incestual idiocy of Panther’s Gap and the village’s obsession with women’s legitimate reproduction, and forecloses a narrative that might reveal the ways in which Mrs. Waters already represents this position from her hovel on the other side of the village.

The family abandons its untenable position between the wilderness and the village when they escape to Queenborough. As in *Barren Ground*, the city becomes the means through which the regionalist narrative can be reconstructed from a distance. However, the sexual politics that emerge from *Vein of Iron*’s sojourn in the urban environment are clearly different from those of the former novel. In effect, when Glasgow severs the connections made between Ada and Mrs. Waters, she appears also to abandon any attempt at reexamining how gender functions within the regionalist paradigm. She seems more interested in differentiating Ada from those women who challenge the sexual and labor conventions of regionalism than making an identification between Ada’s sojourn in the wilderness and what Glasgow terms the “contagion of wildness” that seems to have overtaken the women of the city. The city, in this analysis, represents that wilderness that has not been emptied of its dangers; if the old Indian Trail represents a wilderness space capable of acting as a refuge for female desire, then the city is a “wilderness” whose inhabitants are as dangerous as the Shawnees once appeared to the pioneers of Ironside.

In the city, a new kind of regionalist formulation is established within Ada’s consciousness between those who are “civilized” and those who are “nomads”(241). Civilized people are peoples who stay put, who make a home of their surroundings, whether they own them or not. And the most civilized women are women like Ada’s mother, her grandmother, Aunt Meggie, and Ada herself. The dangerous women of the text, Janet and Minna, are nomads, revealed in the text as modern women who threaten, not only to take away Ada’s happiness (like Janet Rowan), but also to transform her into one of them:

In Shut-In Valley each separate individual had projected above, or aside from, the community. The bold outlines of the frontier had not flattened to a uniform level. But this mass movement of living seemed to threaten that precious identity she called her soul. . . . They were all alike. . . . especially the women—all wore that stare of bright

immaturity, all moved with flat bosoms, with narrow hips, with twisting ankles on French heels. . . . Hundreds of women—of women trying to look like boys and to fill the places of men! Would the swarm seize her at last and distort her outline into a caricature of male adolescence. (243)

Glasgow again uses the metaphor of the “swarm” to suggest an anonymous and alien presence that threatens regional culture. And in this passage, regional culture is being threatened inasmuch as Ada comes to represent that culture in the urban section of the novel. The narrative’s wholesale rejection of postwar modern womanhood represents a retreat from the examination of the place of female sexuality, reproduction, and labor in the agrarian narrative. Within the city, Ada takes up the mantle of the home, and it is this difference that denotes her superiority to the women around her: “Wherever she went she would carry her way of life with her, as the pioneers had carried their Bibles beside their flintlocks and their shot pouches” (264). Ralph refers to her as “the last home-lover,” (276) and as a “good sport.” Both breadwinner and homemaker, her devotion is likened to those pioneer women of the past—their ability to make a home where there is none—who are far superior to the “puny” breed of women that now surround her (272).

Thus, Ada finds herself, once again, in an untenable position; she cannot identify with the women of the city, nor can she, yet, face returning to the village where she has been treated so cruelly. Moreover, she finds the events of the village repeating themselves in the city. After several years of marriage, Ralph, now a car salesman, takes up with a young flapper, Minna, who lives next door. The two have an accident that leaves Ralph paralyzed. Ada is once more forced to defer her own desires because of Ralph’s relations with other women. Ralph’s illicit sexuality leads in this case to Ada’s inability to have the daughter she desires. It is as if, having made the point that the regionalist aesthetic makes motherhood untenable for the female subject in *Barren Ground*, Glasgow must reiterate this claim from a different perspective in *Vein of Iron*. Although this incident forces Ada to finally consider, “‘What had really happened with Janet?’,” she keeps her suspicions about Ralph’s truthfulness to herself. In this way, the woman who has lost her inheritance remains faithful to the agrarian ideal despite her dispossession. Whatever Ada learns from this repetition of the Janet incident, it cannot affect her actions: she may have been transplanted to the city, but as surely as Eudora Oakley remains trapped within the agrarian narrative, so too is Ada wedded to her notion of the romantic past she shares with Ralph, a romantic past that is defined by its transgression of the agrarian narrative. But it is also a transgression that

supports the very structures it defies, because it only enhances Ada's desire to reclaim her place within the romanticized past of her mother and father.

Although Ada challenges the sexual economics of agrarianism when she reproduces outside the boundaries of property, she continues to harbor a romantic desire to reclaim that past as her own. In *Barren Ground*, the land and the dairy represent Dorinda's unarticulated relations with Jason and her mother; in *Vein of Iron*, it is the Bland House, within the city, and the manse at Ironside that come to represent Ada's unspoken desire to reclaim the southern past for her own future. As in *Barren Ground*, Glasgow marginalizes issues of female sexuality, reproduction, and labor, displacing personal structures of identification onto the impersonal spatial structures that represent those desires. However, rather than serving as a critique of gender relations, as in *Barren Ground*, this displacement's avoidance of Ada's gendered position within the text serves to use her as a vehicle for the reclamation of an ahistorical past rooted in the imaginary significance of the Bland house and, later, the manse as a site of romantic renewal.

Having disconnected herself from her personal past in Ironside, having escaped from becoming a Mrs. Waters, Ada now dreams of reclaiming her mother's past as a member of Queenborough society; she even dreams of having the "manse as a summer home" (308). Ada's notions of romance are firmly rooted in the southern past, another example of her rejection of the urban present. She and her father share a similar passion: both find themselves drawn to the Bland house, the family house of Mary Evelyn, Ada's mother. The house represents for John Fincastle a specific, personal past; the romance that seems to cling to it emerges from his memories of meeting Mary Evelyn there. However, Ada sees the house as representing a romantic past that acts as a possible model for her future with Ralph and Ranny. The Bland House represents Ada's desire for a past that her mother relinquished when she married John Fincastle; but it also represents the "dignified" southern past, and is rendered as the site of "an ancient nobility that had fallen on vulgar times" (259). Ada wants to reclaim this past as her own, but when she turns to the Blands for help during the Depression she learns that this past is merely a "vanished illusion": the Blands, too, have lost everything. Although, at this moment, Ada loses her desire to reclaim the southern past as now inadequately represented by the Blands, she does not relinquish her desire to retreat from the urban environment and the "vulgar times" that continuously threaten the family's ability to make a home "in the wilderness."

Ada's father, however, represents an ethical position in the text that seeks to undo this romanticism. Even as he engages in a personal withdrawal into the past, he remains open to the future represented by the men—and

the women around him. Ironically, the Fincastles locate in the city a neighborhood community for themselves in which John finds a more secure place for himself than he ever experienced in the village. No one cares about John's doubts about predestination in the simple neighborhood where the Fincastles make their home. John is the only character within the text able to experience the present as more similar to than dissimilar from the past. The specter of a racial history that Ada seeks to ignore through her identification with the earth emerges into his consciousness as a reminder of the public history that forms a backdrop to her personal romanticizing of the Bland house. A speeding car filled with a careless group of young people hits a black fruit peddler, and they do not stop to help the old man. John begins to contemplate the recklessness of youth in the postwar era, but the episode ends with an image that suggests the hit-and-run is merely a historical repetition of the "roaming white men" who haunted the first John Fincastle. The episode causes him to alter his usual habits, instead of stopping, as usual, to gaze at the Bland house, ". . . he hurrie[s] on because the face of the old Negro floated before him in the shadows under the elms" (260). This image of a black face in the trees suggests a history of racism that makes the reckless white faces of the car appear as present day variations on a past that is far different from the romantic image that Ada has of it. John, however, is dying, and this sense of the relation of past and present is not passed onto Ada who remains firmly within her romantic conception of southern history. Although it is John's dying journey to the manse that necessitates the family's return to Ironside, it is Ada who decides that the family should stay. And, it is clear that Ada disregards her father's conception of history—his sense of the continuity between the violence of the village's wilderness past (its battle with the Shawnee, the settlement of Panther's Gap) and the reckless violence of the city—when she makes this decision.

Her return to Ironside can only be understood as a desire—that very closely resembles the agrarians'—to embrace a familial history that transcends both the political and personal differences that history makes, specifically those structured through ownership. Ironically, Ralph, whose instability blocks Ada's desires as much as the impersonal economic structure of the city and the cruel judgments of the village, is left to represent the historical past that Ada's perspective disregards. When Ada suggests they return to the manse to live, Ralph states, "It takes conviction to set out to despoil the wilderness, defraud Indians of their hunting-grounds, and start to build a new Jerusalem for predestinarians. . . ." Ada, however, replies "Don't be bitter, Ralph. It doesn't help to be bitter" (404). Thus, Ralph's historical perspective on the inheritance that Ada wants to claim is thrown aside as a marginal comment;

Ralph's alienation from the village is unimportant. There is no suggestion that this history—the violent wrenching of the land into a legitimate form of property, of cultural inheritance—can have a lasting affect upon the present. And Ada is willing to forego the relation between past and present if it interferes with her desire to reclaim her place within the village. That this same history structures her desire remains unexamined within the text. Glasgow seems to be claiming in the novel that female subjects function just as Lytle describes them in the “Hind Tit”—as the “mainstay of the structure” of agrarianism. In *Vein of Iron*, the removal of property as the primary canvas through which regional identity manifests itself reveals the female subject's position as a primary conduit of regional inheritance. This regional inheritance, however, is not framed primarily in agrarian terms; it is agrarian only in its belief that “feeling”—located in the familial place—has no relation to the history of which it is a part.

So, although Ada appears to occupy an agrarian position in the closing pages of the novel, this would be too simplistic a reading of the text's ending. Indeed, when the novel was published, Glasgow discouraged critics from seeing it as agrarian, but critics have—perhaps understandably—focused on this “feeling,” rather than the substance of the text's conclusion. The ending has, in many ways, been grievously misread by those who desire to see the family's return to Ironside as representative of her agrarian sympathies. In a letter to critic John Chamberlain, Glasgow corrects what she sees as his and others' misreading of *Vein of Iron*:

The life at Ironside was village life, and the farm, or farm life, is not treated anywhere in my novel. My characters do not ‘find a way out of economic difficulties by going back to the subsistence farming of our ancestors.’ . . . They go back to a simpler way of living; but their livelihood will depend, not only upon the good will of their neighbors, but upon the growing use of such industrial inventions as the motor car and the tractor plough in the valleys of the James and the Shenandoah. (200)

Yet critics continue to view the text as Glasgow's most agrarian novel. Most recently, Elizabeth Harrison argues that the novel is Glasgow's attempt to “envision [a] farm community where shared labor eliminates class, race, and gender hierarchy” (14). However, not only does the ending not suggest a return to nonspecialized gender, class, and race roles that define the city, it acts as a correction to the inversion of those roles that Ada experiences in the city.¹⁷ Here, she will be able to work in her own home, while Ralph returns

to work selling tractors to farmers. It seems to me that critics are overcome—like the agrarians—by the aesthetic of the return to the past, so they impose their own desires upon Glasgow's ending: to see the novel as an affirmation of nonhierarchical relations, of living off the land, and a rejection of the materialism and nomadism of urban culture. It is most particularly the latter that Glasgow's ending represents, but the return to the village assumes the shape of suburban desires—a return to traditional male and female labors and the desire to locate one's homelife away from the "wilderness" of the city and the economic history it represents—more than agrarian ones.

Whether she means to or not, Glasgow reveals in her ending, and critics reveal in their misreadings, how, as King terms it, the "Southern family romance" may function in the absence of land as a form of cultural inheritance as a cultural ideal that transcends the boundaries of its origins in physical property. This "feeling" that Ada has for the "earth" is more similar to Eudora Oakley's relation to the land, than it is Dorinda's (404). When Ralph warns her that they will be "peasants without land," Ada replies, "Nothing can make peasants of us but ourselves. Grandmother had less . . . but she wasn't a peasant. Living with the savages didn't turn Great-great-grandmother Tod into a savage" (404). In this sense, it is the familial history rooted in place that secures Ada's retreat from the "wilderness of machines," but, as Glasgow notes, it is agrarian only in its suggestion that this "feeling" can overcome the history that structures it. More accurately, this last scene reflects an imaginary construction cleansed of the need to examine hierarchies of race, gender, and culture, where such an examination is confined to the realm of bitterness or to an ethical philosophy, such as John Fincastle's, that has expired without leaving a mark upon the community that rejects it.¹⁸

The historical hierarchies here revealed are only seemingly independent of the land and of the gendered codes of southern regionalism that attend forms of cultural inheritance. Although the boundaries of agrarian regional properties are trespassed, they remain intact through the cultural distinction the novel's ending makes between nomads and the civilized. The manse, Dr. Updike claims, has been inhabited by a gypsy and his bear who have left the house's "air . . . tainted by that wild, roving smell" (402). Ralph, himself, represents a form of this nomadism, since he must continue to participate in the economic and cultural modes of the urban environment. However, while Ralph goes to work selling tractors in the valley, Ada will represent the civilized, will be the "rock" upon which he depends. Glasgow's "happy" ending reveals how suburban desires reflect and adapt the agrarian model of Southern culture. However, this suburban model, ironically, posits the

alienation of the male subject from the land, while the female subject assumes the burden of this cultural inheritance through “feeling.”

In *Barren Ground*, Glasgow’s assumption of the gendered and raced agrarian gaze reveals the costs of privatizing culture and of mistaking Dorinda’s assumption of that perspective as feminist. Dorinda must marginalize all that has gone on, that goes on in the “public” roads, as a manifestation of individual (female) aberration, and in order to escape such aberration she must definitively suppress that female self which represents the limits of the agrarian vision. When Dorinda goes to the poorhouse, she must ignore the illegitimate mother who occupies the house with Jason and the others, and focus only on the dispossessed agrarian son whose vision she has appropriated as her own. *Vein of Iron*, however, suggests that Glasgow was attempting to reincorporate the aberrant into an agrarian vision of culture that has room for a female figure, but she cannot imagine anyone but white women and the subordinate “social” figures of the village carrying out that work. In reasserting the dignity of the illegitimate female figure, Glasgow is unable to imagine a female agrarian vision that does not mimic the gendered ideologies of suburbanization. Ironically, Ada’s experience in the city mimics the experience of the urban working-girl, but her solution to the transformed South is to retreat from the complexities that such an experience represents, and reenclose the female figure in the private world of feeling,—as her mother did before her. Seeing in the complexities of the public/private dichotomy an economic and political process that can only subordinate women’s feelings, Ada retreats.

Ada retreats from the complexities of the public sphere, but the two authors I examine in the next chapter are engaged in exactly the opposite project. Turning from Glasgow’s privatized heroines, I turn once again to the issues raised in chapter one by the Representative Congress of Women and analyze the attempts of Zora Neale Hurston and Agnes Smedley to incorporate themselves into the public sphere as representative American citizens.

Chapter Four

Bitter Locations: Self-Representation, Gender, and Nation

Traditionally, autobiography has been seen as a genre closely allied with Western masculine and bourgeois constructions of the individual, a genre associated with the notion of a coherent self capable of truthfully narrating the development of that self as a representative individual. However, contemporary theorists of autobiography challenge this view of the genre. These critics work on two fronts: the rereading of canonical, traditional autobiography from a poststructuralist perspective that emphasizes the textuality of the genre, and the analysis of how autobiography functions as a mode of self-representation that authorizes and legitimates certain narratives and subjects and throws suspicion and doubt upon others. Feminist critics have been particularly interested in how the genre limits truth-telling in women's autobiography: how truth, self, and experience are defined through gendered cultural contexts that often limit subjects' ability to tell their story.¹

Despite autobiography's association with a particular kind of individual, in the United States autobiography has been particularly important as a genre capable of establishing its author as a American individual, a representative citizen. Lauren Berlant describes this process of becoming representative as crucial to the subject's ability to be heard and recognized: "it is always the autobiographer's task to negotiate her specificity into a spectacular interiority worthy of public notice" (457).² Therefore, it has been an important genre for U.S. authors of color (particularly African-Americans), immigrants, and white women. It is generally agreed, however, that these authors have had to negotiate differently the requirements of the genre—what critic Phillip Lejeune has called the autobiographical pact—in order to claim the truthfulness of their experience and authorize private identity within the public sphere of the nation. As Berlant suggests, there is an implicit contradiction in the attempt of a subordinate subject to articulate the representativeness of her interiority, to transform herself into the subject of experience, within the

same public sphere that depends for its cohesiveness on the marginalization of her experience.

Thus, as Leigh Gilmore notes, in *The Limits of Autobiography*, because autobiography is structured through “the interpenetration of the private and the public” (13), and, whereas this interpenetration may have—or have been read as—a coherent seamlessness for the traditional subject of autobiography, this interpenetration may produce problems for subjects who are not authorized to speak within the public sphere.

While some feminist studies of trauma have seen writing about gendered subordination in the private sphere as a means of empowerment, the formal expectations of autobiography may, in fact, prevent an author from transforming private subordination into feminist politics. The traditions of Western individualism may affect a female author’s ability to write the self out of the same master narrative that marginalizes her experience and rejects female embodiment, since both may question the coherent mastery of self that traditional forms of autobiography and citizenship require.

The autobiographical texts of Agnes Smedley and Zora Neale Hurston provide a context for examining how female subjects negotiate this public/private divide to present themselves as representative Americans, because both authors address issues central to the construction of the self as a citizen within American democracy. However, I argue that both authors are unable to incorporate their personal experience of gender into the public framework of citizenship. This inability is structured by the authors’ use of the frontier as a framework for understanding American character, and I argue that the use of the frontier as a location for representing the self ultimately undermines their ability to articulate the difference that gender makes in the construction of national identity.

As I discussed in chapter one, even as women speakers at the Columbian Exposition were attempting to articulate a feminist vision of citizenship, a vision articulated through the social interconnectedness of the individual, Frederick Jackson Turner was simultaneously announcing the “closing of the frontier.” This articulation of the frontier as a historical location determinant of the American character turned the mythology of the West into a geohistorical fact, an understanding of American character and American nation-making that was to remain largely unchallenged until the 1930s. The ascendancy of Turner’s version of the American citizen and the geographical understanding of those origins is nowhere more visible than in the texts of Smedley and Hurston. One of the challenges of this chapter is to attempt to understand why Smedley and Hurston each turn their back on the feminist vision of citizenship articulated at the Exposition. For

in their articulation of themselves as “frontier” subjects, the authors reveal the limits of the women speakers’ articulation of citizenship, uncovering the class and race based fissures that so many of the actors involved in the Exposition sought to gloss over.

The spaces that I examine in this chapter are more varied than in previous chapters. The primary spatial term that is relevant here, however, needs explanation and definition. The term “location” is more abstract and more resonant within feminist theory than in American studies, because it is primarily concerned with the subject’s position relative to an overlapping grid of spaces—from the physical to the ideological. For example, in feminist theory, it owes its origins to Adrienne Rich’s “politics of location” in which Rich defines location as “the geography closest in—the body,” but also as that site on the map through which identity is located, an epistemological standpoint that defines the subject’s position within other sites on the map.³ From this perspective, Smedley and Hurston appropriate the location of the frontier as a map for understanding their place within the nation, as they write themselves into national and international contexts. Each author engages with the frontier as a particularly American and masculine space that historically has provided a model for U.S. representativeness, however debatable the accuracy of that model may be, and their defining of themselves within this location determines how they come to represent gender within their texts.

In this chapter, I am concerned with how the female subject’s bodily experience of and positioning within the ideological space of public and private is formed by and informs her entrance into national space as an American citizen, as an explicitly political subject. I am particularly interested in the difficulties that attend the articulation of this position for the two writers I look at here. I argue that this conundrum of the explicitly gendered and political subject’s entrance into national space preoccupies both writers to the extent that both—in radically different ways—relinquish their attempts to contextualize their gendered experience within the public frame of citizenship.

In many ways, Hurston and Smedley’s texts anticipate contemporary feminist debates about the representation of female subjectivity in U.S. culture. The writers’ difficulties enact the tensions inherent in contemporary feminist politics between the claims of agency and self mastery that represent women’s full incorporation into citizenship and feminist desires to restructure what it means to be a citizen so that feminism does not reinforce a system of disembodied citizenship that universalizes elite white male experience as representative of the public sphere and treats feminist complaint as private aberration.

I. "LYIN' UP A NATION"

Hurston's autobiography, *Dust Tracks on a Road* (1942), occupies a controversial position within the Hurston canon. And, although a recently restored edition may represent Hurston's version of the book before her white publishers excised key passages that they felt were either libelous, politically problematic, or irrelevant to the story of Hurston's life, this restoration does not make the book any more coherent as autobiography—or fiction, or cultural commentary, for that matter. So, as Pierre Walker notes, despite the restored material, past criticisms of the text remain relevant to a reading of the work: "Three complaints recur most in critics' ambivalent response over the years to Hurston's autobiography, and they no doubt account for much of the book's relative scholarly neglect: its apparent unreliability, its inconsistency or fragmentary nature, and its seemingly assimilationist politics" (387). The poststructuralist response to these criticisms has been, as Walker does, to see "inconsistency" and incoherency as Hurston's "theme" (389), or to see the text's form and content as a deliberate ignoring of the "autobiographical pact" (Snyder). Feminist critics, however, have not generally taken this approach to the text. To the contrary, they have seen the text as an affirmation of black female identity, one that "affirms the significance of female bonding in women's search for their identities" and which represents black women who are "strong and powerful models of black female subjectivity" (McKay 62). Only Elizabeth Fox-Genovese expresses reservations about Hurston's construction of black female identity: "[Hurston's] identification with other black women remains shaky" (82). My own reading of gender in *Dust Tracks* emerges from a perspective similar to Fox-Genovese's, but I want to address issues of gender within the public/private dichotomy set up by the text, Hurston's deconstruction of the essentialism of race, and how both of these are informed by Hurston's attempt to rethink the nation.

I suggest that in part the formal incoherence of *Dust Tracks* has to do with the complex ways in which gender and race intersect for Hurston, and her attempt to appropriate a white, masculine model of democratic citizenship and make it serve her own ends. If this model authorizes the public Zora Neale Hurston, it is less applicable to the female subjects who inform Hurston's self-representation. In other words, Hurston's self-authorization requires a conceptual framework that marginalizes both gender as an analytic frame and black women themselves; nonetheless, I believe that this marginalization is not seamless, but actually creates the incoherence of the autobiography. Finally, I want to address the geocultural grid of the United States and

how it complicates and helps shape—in theoretically disabling ways—Hurston's notions of gender, race, and citizenship.

Hurston's text has generally been regarded as divided into two sections: the first eleven chapters seem rather traditionally autobiographical, detailing her early homelife in Eatonville, her years working as a maid and manicurist while attempting to obtain her education, her success in New York as a student of anthropology, her research in the field, and her career as a writer. The second section of the text is divided into five chapters on love, religion, race, politics, and friendship; there are also several appendixes restored to the text that were part of the original manuscript. The chapters are not necessarily tied to one another and could function quite easily as independent essays. However, like other critics, I attempt to read the two sections as related to one another. In fact, the two sections could be seen as divided into the private and the public: the first section an articulation of the domestic and social constructions of gender, race, and class within the Hurston household and within the community of Eatonville; the second details the public Zora Neale Hurston whose private life is contained within one section on love. Moreover, gender, so important in the first section of the text, is absent in the second section. In the first part of my argument, I examine the first section and explicate how central gender is to the formation of Hurston as a writer and to her narration of her childhood in Eatonville. Then, I turn to the second section of the text and discuss how gender becomes an essentialist category when she locates herself in the public, a category not subject to the same sort of political analysis as race and nation.

Although critics have emphasized the extent to which Eatonville informs Hurston's life and work, they have failed to address Hurston's representation of Eatonville as a frontier in *Dust Tracks*. Hurston, herself, points to the significance of location to the narration of the self in her opening section: ". . . you will have to know something about the time and place where I came from in order that you may interpret the incidents and direction of my life. I was born in a Negro town"(1). This is Hurston's first lie: Hurston was not born in Eatonville, but in Alabama. Later she narrates her birth in Eatonville, adding layer upon layer to this "fictitious" location of herself. The location of Eatonville as the place of origin thus becomes doubly significant. The lie and the stories that develop from this original mis-location of herself testify to Hurston's deep emotional and intellectual investment in what the town represents. The town is the first Negro community in America "to be incorporated, the first attempt at organized self-government on the part of Negroes in America" (1). Moreover, it is a frontier development, still wild

with its founders' restlessness, a "burly, boiling, hard-hitting, rugged-individualistic setting" (7). Three white men from the North come to settle in Southern Florida and found the town of Maitland; later they donate land for the African-American town of Eatonville. So Maitland, the white's settlement of "mostly Northerners" and Eatonville, filled with southern blacks looking for an improved life, form a complex settlement: "these wealthy homes, glittering carriages behind blooded horses and occupied by well-dressed folk, presented a curious spectacle in the swampy forests so dense that they are dark at high noon" (4). Eatonville reflects both this northern investment in the cause of African-American emancipation, including social and moral uplift as well as self-governance (the whites from Maitland donate a church, a library with books, and a general assembly hall) and this curious site at the edges of the "swampy forests." Thus, Eatonville represents a site that is neither South nor North, but partakes of both and of the spirit of the frontier as well.⁴ And it is the northern and frontier influences in Eatonville that have generally been overlooked in scholars' understanding of Hurston's representation of the town and its significance to her.⁵ But, before explicating this significance, it is important to understand how gender becomes constructed within the community and within the Hurston home. For it is the raced and gendered intersection of selfhood as she experiences it within the home and within the black community that helps produce Hurston's investment in the frontier.

Crucial to the construction of gender in the text is its construction within the Hurston household. Critics have tended to focus on Hurston's representation of her childhood as nostalgic or structured around her representation of the folk, but much of the first section of Hurston's text is fraught with the author's sense of rejection and alienation within her own household and within the community. In *Dust Tracks*, gender is with Hurston, as she tells it, from the moment of her birth: her femaleness is a "dirty trick" played upon a father who sees her as one girl too many. He unfavorably compares her with her older sister, Sara: "My older sister was meek and mild. She would always get along. Why couldn't I be like her" (14). And her father explicitly defines Zora's impudence as a sign of her difference: "you ain't white. . . . I don't know how you got in this family nohow. You ain't like none of de rest of my young'uns" (29). Hurston's father, John, attempts to silence his daughter, fearing what will befall her as an adult among whites if, as a child, her "sassy tongue" is not curbed. Hurston tells the reader, "Let me change a few words with him—and I am of the word-changing kind—and he was ready to change ends" (19). "Word changing" is likely to devolve into violence within the Hurston household,

because Zora cannot conform to her father's expectations of how a black female child should speak.

John Hurston also attempts to silence Hurston's mother. Instances of enforced silence saturate Hurston's narration of the home. When Lucy Hurston threatens to leave her husband, he threatens to kill her; when she takes too much pleasure in having a friend's husband escort her, he walks her home with a rifle pointed at her back, and Hurston says that later "the subject could never be mentioned before Papa" (10–11). Similarly, when Lucy Hurston appropriates an old folk saying to chastise her husband for not taking care of her and the children: "She definitely understood, before he got through carrying on, that the saying was not for her lips" (10). So, although Hurston later implies that her mother usually got the best of her father in verbal altercations and that her father never beat her mother, the implied threats in each of these episodes suggests that both Lucy Hurston and her daughter spoke within understood boundaries established by Hurston's father.

Hurston's mother is presented more sympathetically within the narrative; she encourages her children to "jump at de sun" (13), and stands between Zora and her father. But Lucy Hurston attempts to restrain her daughter's spirit in other ways. Hurston's mother hates her daughter's tendency—so much like her father's—to wander: "If she had her way, she meant to raise her children to stay at home. She said that there was no need for us to live like no-count negroes and poor white trash—too poor to sit in the house—come outdoors for any pleasure, or hang around somebody else's house" (13). This quote reveals Hurston's mother to represent that form of black bourgeois uplift that makes class—rather than race—the sign of difference; and Zora's mother expects her daughter to conform to the bourgeois conventions of both class and gender. When Zora discovers she is too strong to play rough with girls, she simply plays with boys, but "[t]he fly in the ointment there, was that in my family, it was not lady-like for girls to play with boys" (30). Zora's parents, then, attempt to restrain her. And, although critics have sometimes noted the gendered tension in Hurston's representation of the folk community (most particularly in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* and *Mules and Men*), they have not examined how the gender dynamics of the Hurston household are reflected within the dynamics of the community in *Dust Tracks*.

The silencing of women that Zora's father attempts to enforce within the household is also present within the gendered dynamics of the community, particularly on the store porch, "the heart and spring of the town" (45). As in *Mules and Men* and *Their Eyes Were Watching God*, the verbal arts of the store porch, the lying sessions held there, are a part of masculine culture that

women rarely enter into. Whereas men routinely gather on the store porch to tell tales, women have a different relation to the porch:

Men sat around the store on boxes and benches and passed this world and the next one through their mouths. The right and the wrong, the who, when, and why was passed on, and nobody doubted the conclusions. Women stood around there on Saturday nights and had it proven to the community that their husbands were good providers, put all of his money in his wife's hands and generally glorified her. Or right there before everybody it was revealed that he was keeping some other woman by the things the other woman was allowed to buy on his account. (45–46)

The economic and sexual basis of gender conflict within the community represented here has already been represented by Hurston in the story of her own family. She narrates similar stories about her mother and her Aunt Caroline. Critics have seized upon the portraits of Aunt Caroline and Lucy Hurston as resistant models of black female subjectivity, but, for a number of reasons, I read the repetitiveness of these stories more ambivalently. First, they indicate the extent to which the women speak out against and physically confront one another in public, but neither woman “speaks out” against her husband. The stories about Aunt Caroline and her mother are illustrative of a repetitive theme in the novel: the ways in which black women are constructed as rivals of one another in both sexual and economic terms.

Also, the difference between how Hurston presents Aunt Caroline's story and how she presents her mother's story is significant. The stories about Aunt Caroline are told to illustrate why her father never took Jim's advice to beat Lucy Hurston, as Jim beat his own wife. The first story is told from the perspective of the men on the store porch. Aunt Caroline sees her husband hiding a shoebox in the barn and assumes, correctly, that these shoes are meant for his current “light of love.” She follows him to her rival's house with an axe in her hand. The men on the store porch watch all of this with much amusement: “Cal'line had done so many side-splitting things to Jim's lights of love—all without a single comment from her—that they were on pins to see what happened next” (15). Aunt Caroline's ax may be indicative of a kind of strength, but it is from the perspective of the porch that the incident is narrated, as if the scene were performed for the men's amusement. First, the men see an underwear clad Jim scurrying home from tree to tree, and, then, Caroline marching past with a pair of new women's saddleshoes and a pair of men's pants dangling from her axe: “The porch rocked with

laughter. They had the answer to everything” (16). In another episode, Aunt Caroline publicly humiliates her rival on the church steps; the rival, like the one before, “left town in a hurry—a speedy hurry—and never was seen in these parts again” (16).

Similar stories about the Hurston household are told more briefly and with less amusement: “My mother rode herd on one woman with a horse-whip about Papa and ‘spoke out’ another one. This, instead of making Papa angry, seemed to please him ever so much. . . . The woman left the country without ever breaking another breath with Papa. Nobody around there knew what became of her” (11). And although Hurston ends this section with her father leaving the house “looking like he had been whipped all over with peach hickories,” because her mother won’t stop asking questions about his “doings,” she also concludes, “But I had better not let out a giggle at such times, or it would be just too bad” (16). The men of the community—in public and private—receive satisfaction and amusement, they get the laugh, from women’s repetitious performances. The efficacy of the women’s resistance is bounded by that repetition and the satisfaction that it affords the men. The repetition as entertainment merely conveys the extent to which the men do not take the women seriously, since it conveys a ritual in which men never change their “doings.”

Furthermore, Hurston ends this chapter on an odd note. She immediately follows the above story with a passage on how many visitors came to their house, and how her mother carefully prepared for her guests:

Our house was a place where people came. Visiting preachers, Sunday school and B.Y.P.U. workers, and just friends. There was fried chicken for guests, and other such hospitality as the house afforded. Store-bought towels would be taken out of the old round-topped trunk. . . . The pitcher and bowl were scrubbed out before fresh water from the pump was put in there for the use of the guest. Sweet soap was company soap. We knew that. . . . Company got the preference in toilet paper, too. . . . Mama would sort over her old dress patterns when really fine company came, and the privy house was well scrubbed, lime thrown in, and the soft tissue paper pattern stuck on a nail inside the place for the comfort and pleasure of the guests. (16–17)

Although this seems an abrupt shift, this tacked on ending of the chapter conveys at least two different images. From one perspective, this is a nostalgic memory of the Hurstons’ place within the community, a reminder of the Hurstons’ public standing within Eatonville. However, it also records the

lengths to which Lucy Hurston goes to present a particular kind of household to that community; it describes the difference between the Hurstons' private way of life and the image her mother constructed for others. This reading is reinforced by a later passage in which Hurston writes of her father's second marriage, "Suddenly he must have realized with inward terror that Lucy was not there any more. This was not just another escapade which Mama could maul his knit for in private and smooth out publicly" (97). These passages also reference the gap between the meaning of Aunt Caroline's silent performance and the men on the porch's claim to have the answer to everything, because it suggests what they don't know: the "inside meaning" of these public displays.⁶

This representation of the gendered relations in Eatonville and within the household climaxes in Hurston's description of her mother's death and the after effects that leave Hurston homeless. The most obvious moment of silencing—of both Hurston and her mother—occurs in the scene of Lucy Hurston's death. Her mother asks Zora to prevent the village women from carrying out their traditional rituals for the dying—covering the mirror, taking the pillow from under her head, and turning the bed. But the women and her father silence Zora as her mother looks on. Asked to act as her mother's voice, Zora fails. This moment in the text when Lucy Hurston looks at her daughter and cannot speak becomes a center against which the remainder of the first section of the text is written.

Zora continues to wonder what her mother wanted to say, and looks to her father to give some voice to her mother's "inside meaning":

I have often wished I had been old enough at the time to look into Papa's heart that night. If I could know what that moment meant to him, I could have set my compass towards him and been sure. I know that I did love him in a way, and that I admired many things about him. He had a poetry about him. . . . He could hit ninety-seven out of hundred with a gun. . . . We were so certain of Papa's invincibility. . . . All that part was just fine with me. But I was Mama's child. I knew that she had not always been happy, and I wanted to know just how sad he was that night. (68)

Zora is listening for her mother's voice in her father's heart, as if the truth of her mother's life could be read in John Hurston's reaction to her death. But John Hurston fails to offer Zora the answers she seeks. And earlier both he and the community have been aligned against Zora's own attempt to speak for her dying mother.

But what happens after her mother's death is as significant in the text as the silencing that precedes Lucy Hurston's death. Hurston's father sends Zora to join her sister at a boarding school. While at school, she learns that her father has remarried, only months after Lucy's death, and, worse, he stops paying Hurston's tuition. Finally, he sends a note, telling the school they may "adopt" Zora; the schoolmistress sends Zora home on her own dime. Hurston's father's remarriage, his attempt to "adopt" out Zora, "mama's child," represents a final rejection of Hurston's mother, and seems to suggest that he was willing to permanently sever his ties to his youngest daughter. However, the trauma of this experience of abandonment is "smoothed over" in the text, when Hurston chooses to narrate her journey home as an adventure of boat and rail travel.

Furthermore, Hurston interrupts this story of homecoming to narrate a battle she has with her stepmother six years later. This battle disrupts the chronology of the narrative; Hurston writes that she is so angry thinking about her stepmother's treatment of Sarah that she has to tell the story right then. This strategic surrender to the demands of stream of consciousness suggests that Hurston reinscribes emotional coherency as more significant than autobiography's demand for chronological development. In fact, the entire telling of John Hurston's marriage and Zora's estrangement from her father suggests that autobiography's demand for "truth" may be superseded by the necessity of articulating a public empowerment in the midst of private deprivation. Thus, this battle is written as Zora's attempt to "pay back" her stepmother for her treatment of her father's favorite, Sarah: Zora heroically speaks out for her banished sister not as a reaction to her own abandonment or to arriving home from school and finding that her stepmother has taken possession of Lucy Hurston's feather-bed, a bed promised to Zora but that her father claims as his own.⁷ Hurston presents herself as emotionally impervious to her own abandonment, reacting instead to the stepmother's treatment of her sister.

In this battle scene, John Hurston stands silently by while Zora beats his wife to the floor. Only after a neighbor attempts to intervene does he separate the two. According to Hurston, however, she acts as the "catalyzer" for the end of John Hurston's marriage: "My brief appearance on the scene acted like a catalyzer. A few more months and the thing fell to pieces for good" (98). Hurston tells readers that her mother's friends in the church sought to "disestablish" the new Mrs. Hurston and that John Hurston's career began to decline, "As it was his foundations rotted from under him, and seven years saw him wrecked" (98). Finally, Hurston tells readers that she left home again after the episode with her stepmother,

because the air “was too personal and pressing, and humid with memories of what used to be” (98).

However, most of this differs considerably from other family members’ recollections. Pam Bordelon has conducted interviews with members of the Hurston family, most notably Winifred Hurston Clarke, Hurston’s oldest surviving niece. These interviews suggest that much of what Hurston writes about this episode and its aftermath deviates from the rest of the family’s memories. Most obviously, Hurston claims that her stepmother and father were divorced, that her father was ostracized from the community, and lost his career, because of his second marriage. But Hurston Clarke claims that John Hurston and his second wife were never divorced, and, in fact, as Bordelon points out, John was mayor of Eatonville from 1912–1916; he married Mattie in 1905. According to Hurston’s text, her father’s career would have been in decline during these years. Finally, Winifred claims, contrary to Hurston’s representation, that the other Hurston children treated their stepmother as their own mother.⁸

Maya Angelou’s reading, in the restored edition’s foreword, of Hurston’s relationship with her father and stepmother seems indicative of how Hurston wished readers to perceive this episode: “Her father remarried, and the antipathy between them was exacerbated by the presence and actions of a thick-skinned and malicious stepmother. Hurston found her first personal power at the expense of her father’s wife” (ix). It is more likely, however, that Hurston has rewritten a traumatic history of betrayal by her father and the community as a scene of personal empowerment. She not only empowers herself in this rewriting, but rewrites her mother’s death, not as an insignificant event in her father and the community’s life, but as the event that ruins his standing in that community. By rewriting her father as too weak to succeed in the absence of her mother, Hurston explains and excuses her father’s failure to care for Zora and reinvests her mother’s life with significance. She also, here, remembers her mother for the community, since John Hurston’s public success suggests that the community did not exile her father because of his quick marriage and abandonment of Zora, but continued to support him.⁹

This revenge plays like the female rivalry stories represented earlier in the text. Hurston’s story of her confrontation with her stepmother and its consequences enacts a reversal of the scene of her mother’s death: her father does not restrain her and the community speaks out against the stepmother in her mother’s name. Hurston attempts to resolve the gendered dynamics of her relationship with her father by enacting a retroactive revenge against her stepmother; Hurston rewrites her exile from the family as a choice. For within the

dynamics of female rivalry set up within the text, it is Hurston who is banished and never “breaks another breath with Papa”—and not her rival. Hurston’s rewriting of the final years of her father and stepmother’s life exacts a kind of revenge for her mother, imagining him as too weak to overcome her mother’s absence, and too weak without Zora to act as “catalyst” to discard his ill-suited wife. The stepmother is seen as the rival who works through a weakened John Hurston; Zora is also able to imagine that the stepmother is responsible for John Hurston’s poor treatment of his children: “. . . having to put up with what she did to us through Papa” (76). The all-powerful stepmother is banished by a more powerful Zora who is then able to feel sorry for her father who, like a “baby,” cannot care for himself without her mother’s “smoothing over.”

Hurston is fairly explicit in rejecting her father and the town’s model of black masculine citizenship because they marginalize her and her mother and make a mockery of black women’s desires. In their place, she constructs for herself and the reader a model father who also comes to represent a model of citizenship within the text. After narrating the story of how she is restrained within the household, Hurston tells readers, “But I had one person who pleased me always” (30). This is the white man who acted as midwife at her birth, *because both her father and the community’s midwife were absent*. She creates in this white man a “useful citizen” who valorizes both her tomboyishness and her speech and fulfills his duties to his community and family, even as he fulfills the requirements of frontier masculinity. Whereas her mother tells her not to fight with boys and her father tells her “‘you ain’t white,’” her white male granny tells her, “‘Don’t be a nigger.’” Compare the two men’s reactions—presented closely together—to Zora as a baby. Her “midwife” remarks that “I was a God damned fine baby, fat and plenty of lung power. . . . He thought my mother was justified in keeping me” (21–22). But Hurston describes her father’s disappointment at her birth: “. . . by the time I got born, it was too late to make any suggestions [about her gender], so the old man had to put up with me. He was nice about it in a way. He didn’t tie me in a sack and drop me in the lake, as he probably felt like doing” (20). The father’s intolerance of Hurston’s word-changing and her gender is explicitly compared to the white man’s appreciation of Hurston’s “lung power” and, apparently, an ignorance of the fact that she is a girl and that she “‘ain’t white.”

Moreover, the white man is the only “character” in Hurston’s story to receive the name of “citizen.” This is surprising considering Hurston father’s position as lawmaker in Eatonville:

[My father] was . . . elected Mayor of Eatonville for three terms, and to write the local laws. The village of Eatonville is still governed by the

laws formulated by my father. The town clerk still consults a copy of the original printing which seems to be the only one in existence now. I have tried every way I know how to get this copy for my library, but so far it has not been possible. I had it once, but the town clerk came and took it back. (9–10)

Ironically, Hurston's black father represents the lawgiver in this text, and although this passage has been read as an indication of Hurston's pride in her father's accomplishment, it represents as well the paradox of Hurston's relationship with her father and Eatonville when she tries to steal the town's only copy of these laws. Hurston's desire to appropriate black masculine forms of law-making and citizenship is thwarted by the community's—by black masculinity's—official representative.

In contrast, the man who “grannies” her personifies for Zora the frontier culture of lawlessness in southern Florida, and he acts as counselor to the young girl. According to Zora, he gives her three key pieces of advice: don't lie, only “niggers” lie; don't be afraid to fight, but don't take on more than you can handle; and, if anyone spits on or kicks you, “Kill dead and go to jail” (30–1). Hurston explains in a note, “The word Nigger used in this sense does not mean race. It means a weak, contemptible person of any race” (30). However, as Susan Edwards Meisenhelder notes, “his use of ‘nigger’ as a universal derogatory term is, unquestionably, rooted in his equation of ‘weak,’ ‘contemptible,’ and black” (152). The white masculine discourse of frontier citizenship requires that she forget the difference that race and gender make, and, in fact, denies that difference even as it depends on that difference to define its own freedom. The white male granny speaks, after all, from within the Jim Crow South and easily produces the term “Nigger” as an identity in opposition to the qualities that define citizenship. And although Hurston's note is an effort to divorce that term from race, the fact that she must do so, indicates the extent to which race is already implicated in the term. The white granny goes and comes as he pleases, and, thus, comes to define freedom and truth according to his own relation to the law; he also has the power to name, and he explicitly uses a racialized discourse to name those who cannot qualify for citizenship.

“Lying” on the store porch and the “lying” that the white male granny attributes to the figure of the “nigger” are two different discourses. But most importantly they are raced and gendered discourses. The black male community on the store porch imagines a black nation through “lying,” through the creation of a discourse that invokes a shared past and creates its own community. In this sense, “lying” is a fictive construction of power and subjectivity,

an imaginative play upon the racial hierarchies of the dominant white culture that seeks to both explain and subvert those hierarchies.¹⁰ Nevertheless, Eatonville as a frontier space of African-American nation-making depends not only on the lies told on the store porch but also on the performances of black women's sexual/economic investment in black masculinity. In Eatonville, women are more often than not the object rather than the subject of nation-making. Although Hurston's mother validates her own fiction-making, women are not allowed to participate in the communal discourse of the porch; their "doings" are the object of that discourse.

Therefore, the white male's suggestion that Hurston can transcend race and gender is all the more attractive to her and this unnamed white man becomes a template for the "citizen" in Hurston's narrative. The white man, from his position of freedom, models a mode of citizenship that apparently—and that he obviously believes—transcends these specificities of race and gender; he encourages Zora to model her behavior on his own, regardless of the conditions that construct her as different: the conditions of race and gender that authorize her father's silencing of her in the name of protecting her from whites; the conditions of class and gender that prohibit her from fighting with boys and participating in "lying." When Hurston is ten, "the hard-riding, hard-drinking, hard-cussing, but very successful man, was thrown from his horse and died. . . . Everybody said that he had been a useful citizen, just powerful hot under the collar" (32). She describes the characteristics that made the man a "useful citizen":

He was an accumulating man, a good provider, paid his debts and told the truth. Those were all the virtues the community expected. . . . Nobody found any fault with a man like that in a country where personal strength and courage were the highest virtues. People were supposed to take care of themselves without whining. (31)

This idea of citizenship is built on the notion of self-care, physical force, economic independence and speech that is truthful, but that does not engage in overt complaint.

In this same chapter on the white male granny, as an example of the values that the citizen represents, Hurston tells her readers that on all frontiers "lawing" is a sign of weakness. She tells the story of a man who goes to court to swear out a complaint against a man who beat him up and finds himself fined more than the defendant, because he went to court instead of fighting back. Hurston's description of the frontier's relation to the law seems a deliberate attempt to negate the significance of her father's laws within the

community and to supplant his law-giving version of citizenship with the frontier model that the white man represents. Her representation of him as a nameless white masculine model of frontier democracy and as a model father is crucial to understanding her subsequent characterizations of the law, the nation, the North, and white and black women.

Hurston presents an alternative white model of the nation almost immediately after she narrates her relationship with the old man. Northern reconstruction ideologies in which citizenship is defined in terms similar to those of Hurston's mother are represented by the two white women from the North who appear at Zora's school.¹¹ They single out Zora because of her reading skill, and ask her over to their hotel to read to them; they feed her and send her home with a fancily wrapped cylinder filled with "one hundred goldy new pennies." Later they send Hurston a package of books: sentimental novels, Norse and Greek mythologies, *Gulliver's Travels*, and *Grimm's Fairy Tales*. Hurston, of course, prefers the latter tales to the sentimental stories "about this and that sweet and gentle little girl who gave up her heart to Christ and good works. Almost always they died from it, preaching as they passed. . . . I didn't care how soon they rolled up their big, soulful, blue eyes and kicked the bucket" (39). Implicit in this statement is a rejection of the form of racial and gendered uplift that the northern women represent in favor of the independence and agency represented both by the white male granny and the masculine adventure tales.

Nevertheless, Hurston is singled out and rewarded by the women, because of her mastery of words. These rewards separate Zora from her peers and mark her as different within the community: "My chums pretended not to like anything that I had, but even then I knew that they were jealous" (38–9). But she is singled out most obviously as an object of curiosity, and, although she will not name this, it is the novelty of a Southern black child reading that seems to edify the Northern women donors to the school—an indirect product of their own belief in "Christ and good works." Zora knows she must present herself as a child who "sincerely" likes school and as a neatly dressed and washed version of the "sweet and gentle little girl" of the books.

In this way, Zora's mother is awkwardly allied with northern women's strategies of racial uplift through her association with reading and her concern that Zora behave according to the class and gender conventions of the black middle class. Zora begins to love to read because her mother locks Zora in her bedroom with the *Bible* after Zora tells a story she is not supposed to tell. And her mother performs afterschool home teaching. Lucy Hurston also is aware of the necessity of presenting Zora as a "lady" for the elite white women and takes pains with Zora's appearance before she leaves to visit with

them. On the other hand, whereas Zora knows that she must perform as a child who likes school and appreciates the women's visit for the women, her mother defends Zora's "lying," her tall tales, to her own mother, refusing to see them as a reason for discipline. Hurston, then, who hates school, nevertheless, associates it both with her mother's ambitions for her daughter and with her difference from the community. Ironically, the women at the school reward her appropriation of the black male word in their sanctioning of her speech. But this also constructs her as a particular kind of black female subject produced for the white gaze as a representation of their "good works." Nevertheless, the mother who authorizes Zora's African-American version of "lying"—and promotes her daughter as a "sincere" representative of the desire for upward mobility within the construction of white female citizenship—dies inarticulate, her desires and her life unacknowledged by the community. She is incapable of providing a model of citizenship for her daughter that would successfully bridge the differing models of the text, allowing Zora access to a specifically black female version of subjectivity that authorizes a recognition of both race and gender. And it is the marginalization of her mother's desires in life and death that comes to represent Hurston's own inability to articulate a model of citizenship that would incorporate those desires repressed through black women's sexual and economic inequality.

In the final chapters of the first section of the text, Hurston presents herself as model subject through the northern white uplift model. Eventually, through hard work and help from friends she educates herself and migrates North. Despite her original dislike of school, when Hurston leaves home and is shuttled from one relative to another, she misses school more than her family or Eatonville. Hurston writes herself in this section of the text as child in pursuit of books forced into domestic service by family members who see her only as a liability. This is particularly true in her brother's home, where she is promised an education, but ends up caring for the household without pay. However, she turns her enforced migration into a story of educational mobility and uplift, but only after discovering herself, once again, as a representative of southern blackness. Hurston runs away to work as a lady's-maid with a traveling actors' troupe. Here, she finds herself embraced because of her difference, a difference coded as both authentic (sincere) and as southern blackness. When she flees her brother's home to become an actress's lady's maid, she finds herself coveted because of her difference from the northerners that make up the troupe: "In the first place, I was a Southerner, and had the map of Dixie on my tongue" (104). Hurston is not so different from other southern black migrants to the North, but she also sees herself, as her opening narration on Eatonville suggests, not as a product of the South but

as a member of a southern folk community displaced and resettled on the frontier. Significantly, Southern-ness exists only on Zora's "tongue." She is not so much a product of the South, but a vehicle of its expression. In both the theatrical company with which she travels and in the North, Hurston becomes not only the "sacred black cow," but also a representative of Southern blackness (139). In other words, the public Zora Neale Hurston is created through the white female northern model of uplift, based as it is on her ability to represent an authentic (sincere) Southern blackness.

These same northern liberal ideologies helped popularize to a white audience and fund the artists of the Harlem Renaissance. The congruence of the urban North's history of white social welfare progressivism, inaugurated in the abolition movement, and the black migration from the South helped produce the movement that facilitated Hurston's creation of herself as a writer and as a public figure. It is this ideology that makes possible the public Zora Neale Hurston—a product of both northern women's attempts as social mediators to revise the cultural, economic, and social meaning of citizenship and northern urban African-American's focus on the folk as part of its cultural and political heritage. However, Hurston offers only two paragraphs on the Harlem Renaissance as a black cultural movement that formed her primary social and creative circle. Instead, she focuses on her educational and career achievements, her transcendence of Jim Crow as the only black student at Barnard. In fact, what Hurston does is recreate for herself a public family that is white. She calls herself the daughter of Franz "Papa" Boas, the anthropologist who acts as her mentor, and adopts as "godmother" Charlotte Osgood Mason, the wealthy patron of several Harlem Renaissance artists, including Hurston, Langston Hughes, and Alain Locke. This family is notably different from her Eatonville family: Boas does not reject her as his daughter, but tells others, "of course, Zora is my daughter" (140). Godmother Mason doesn't prevent her from "wandering," but provides the funds that make her travels possible. Neither sees her blackness or her gender as a liability to her success; instead, her blackness, her difference, is precisely that which makes her adoption by these white parents a possibility. In the North, Hurston constructs herself as representing blackness by appropriating the black masculinity of the storefront porch that formerly prohibited her speech; in so doing, among whites she becomes the embodiment of southern blackness's difference.

However, according to Hurston, godmother—like Hurston's father and like her "granny"—has her own interpretation of the law:

"You have broken the law," [her letters] would accuse sternly. "You are dissipating your powers in things that have no real meaning,"

and go on to lacerate me. "Keep silent. Does a child in the womb speak?." . . . anything, however clever, in you that felt like insincerity to her, called forth her well known "That is nothing! It has no soul in it. You have broken the law!" . . . Often when she wished to impress upon me my garrulity, she would take this book from the shelf and read me something of Indian beauty and restraint. (145)

Although this representation of Mrs. Mason seems very different from Hurston's representation of the two northern women who visit her school and her "granny," it reveals the similar premises that structure their interaction with Hurston. Mrs. Mason, like the women who visit the school and the "granny," seeks to invest Hurston in a discourse of sincerity, creating her as a citizen through acceptable models of reading and speaking. Zora's writing down of "lies" makes her a mobile representative of a constituency who performs her difference as the authentic difference of the (southern) regional other; Zora, herself, as representative, however, must adhere to both the sincerity laws of uplift and the model of the "frontier" in order to act as this representative. She must be sincere in her representation of difference and she cannot make complaints against the law.

Hurston's research in the field demonstrates this paradox of her own investment in frontier democracy, even as it most directly interrogates the requirement of "sincerity" that underlies both white masculine and white feminine models of democracy. Polk County, Florida is more "frontier" than Eatonville; it is a place where the "law" has no jurisdiction: "the 'law' is forbidden to come on the premises to hunt for malefactors who did their malefacting elsewhere. The wheels of industry must move, and if these men don't do the work, who is there to do it?" (146). Godmother's law of sincerity and silence is inverted within this frontier culture. In Polk County, ignoring the "law" also means giving up "sincerity": People on the job kill for "reputation" and not out of any sincere motive. More importantly, this frontier is notable for its absence of the mother-godmother figure whose "Christ and good works" helps produce Hurston as an "authentic" subject. In their place is Big Sweet. Big Sweet has become a paradigmatic figure in Hurston's work, because she appears not only in *Dust Tracks*, but also in Hurston's *Mules and Men*. But what Big Sweet points to, I argue, is the contradiction at the heart of *Dust Tracks*, at the heart of Hurston's attempt to write herself as a black female subject into the public sphere.

While most critics focus on Big Sweet's larger-than-life reputation as a fearless proponent of frontier democracy (Meisenhelder, Plant), I want to focus on Big Sweet's "sincere" desires, her feeling of entrapment within the

frontier rather than her modeling of its principles for others. Big Sweet tells Hurston,

“ . . . don't you bother, 'bout no fighting. You ain't like me. You don't even sleep with no mens. I wanted to be a virgin one time, but I couldn't keep it up. I needed the money too bad. But I think it's nice for you to be like that. You just keep on writing down them lies. I'll take care of all de fighting. Dat'll make it more better, since we done made friends.”
(155)

Big Sweet's defense of Hurston represents not merely their different approaches to the white man's model of frontier democracy, but her inability to escape that model, because of the absence of the uplift model, and because of the absence of readers, such as Mason, to read her sincerity, since Mason's focus is on her as representative of the power of the law of authentic blackness: “[Mason] is altogether in sympathy with [the Negro farthest down], because she says truthfully, they are utterly sincere in living” (145). What is sincere about Big Sweet from Mason's perspective is her difference, not how that difference embodies the limits of the law, marked by the public nature of both her sexuality and the economics of that sexuality; her position as the embodiment of authentic black female difference effectively negates her voice. Thus, Big Sweet's “sincere” desires are forgotten in the construction of her as a figure who “transcends” the laws of race and gender. She is, according to myth, manlier than any man, so fierce that the representatives of the law—the boss and the sheriff—fear her.

If the frontier is a defining location for the imagining of American citizenship in the early twentieth century and within Hurston's text, then Big Sweet represents its imaginative limits. She is explicitly represented within the text as fulfilling the frontier myth of force, individualism, and truth telling. Big Sweet is able to tell the truth, is unafraid to “kill dead and go to jail,” and we are told even the Boss “won't break a breath with Big Sweet less he got his pistol in his hand” (154). But Big Sweet's self-articulation occurs from within the language of uplift and the white feminine model of “sincerity,” and the truth she tells is one of failure to achieve independence from men: she wanted to be a virgin, but must sleep with men in order to earn her living.

Big Sweet's “freedom” from the law makes her its ironic representative within the black male community. Big Sweet and the women like her are imagined as free, because the law ignores their killing of black men, giving legitimacy to the black male contention that white men and black women

“is runnin this thing” (151). Paolo Boi notes a significant difference between Hurston’s representation of men and women in Polk County: “Men bustle around Polk County uttering jokes, songs, invective, whereas the woman performs a solo” (200). Boi sees this solo as a mark of Big Sweet’s power, akin to the white male granny’s, but Big Sweet’s solo not only speaks and performs power, but unfulfilled desire as well and the conditions of race and gender that prohibit her from participating in the chorus of male voices that imagine community. The black woman and the white man are the “free” objects through which and against which black male community is imagined. To accept the contention that she has as much power as Hurston’s white granny is illusory within the context of her explanation of her own “inside meaning”—what she once desired as opposed to the conditions of economic and sexual subordination that undermine her ability to act freely.¹²

As Kevin K. Gaines argues, one of the conventions of racial uplift is its focus on individual character so that gender and class oppression are transformed into a “volitional matter of moral conduct” (123). In this sense, we can see how in the representation of Big Sweet the ideologies of frontier individualism and racial uplift dovetail in their reinforcement of the system of oppression that constitutes Big Sweet’s difference. The conventional codes of sexuality, class, and gender are simply reversed in Mrs. Mason’s appreciation of the folk. However, even as Big Sweet assumes the outlines of an exaggerated frontier masculinity, she cannot escape the oppression of herself as a black woman. To transcend the law is, in this instance, not to transcend the body, but to become the embodiment of the distinction between public and private within the frontier construction of citizenship. In other words, what ties Hurston and Big Sweet together is not their ability to transcend the laws of difference, but their embodiment of just how much the laws of difference matter in terms of their ability to construct that difference as race and gender inequality. Big Sweet’s own recounting of her history counts for little in the mythologizing of her as representative of “frontier” lawlessness.

This image of Big Sweet as both similar to and unlike the white male granny in relation to the law is made explicitly political when Hurston turns to black nation-making within the colonial context of the Bahamas. Hurston represents the Bahamas, like Florida, as a frontier, in this instance a British colony that is being used as a safety valve for England’s workers. Here, Hurston tells of the political struggle between native Bahamans and the recently arrived white settlers and mulattos who side with the government. Central to the struggle is Leon Walter Young, a native hero and representative of the people. Young takes on a young black man, Botts, who attempts, as a representative of the British government, to carry an election

in another district. Young first reminds the people of Botts' ignoble past: he pays his poor black mother, who put him through school in England, to stay away from his home, and he stole money from his own brother. Young, the candidate he has picked to run against Botts, and Botts' brother go to the island district to rally the people against Botts. However, Hurston's attention is divided between the story of Young's triumph and the story of Botts' mother. The mother is allowed to see the boats off, but she is not allowed to campaign against her son. Hurston reports, "They left the old woman, mother of both the boys, on the dock. She was ragged, not too clean, and *bitter*. As the boat steamed out, she was muttering, 'God! I wish I could go! I want to campaign against him, too!'" (my italics; 162). Supposedly this is the story of a political hero of the Bahamas, who vanquishes another native who has become an instrument of colonial power. However, Hurston's focus is not only on the mother's "bitterness," but also her absence at the moment of political triumph. When the boats return, the men having defeated Botts at the polls, Hurston goes to the dock to witness the mother's reaction: "She had bitter moments, but after all, she was his mother" (163). Hurston speculates that the mother could not bear to see her defeated son's face either because, "she was off somewhere trying to rustle up a tuppence or two, or merely that she did not want to look on his dear face when his pretensions had met his realities" (163). Hurston is still—as she was at her mother's death—searching for the sign of "bitterness" or "love" that will articulate the female subject's "inside meaning," an inside meaning similarly revealed and largely ignored in the portrait of Big Sweet. Why does Hurston tell this story, and why, when it is apparently a story of political cunning and native overcoming, does she, as with the men's stories on the Eatonville store porch, as with the story of black male community-making through song in Polk County, disrupt national imaginings to emphasize women's singular placement as performative objects—as opposed to participants in—that discourse?

What about the mother's status prevents her from being taken over on the political boat to participate in the political fight for nation—her bitterness, her filth, or her motherhood? The black woman becomes a sign and symbol of political betrayal for the anti-colonial nation, but this betrayal does not authorize her political participation; rather it prevents it.¹³ The "mother" black woman on the dock, excluded from the politics that happen elsewhere, is both the originary point of national imaginary and excluded because of that experience; her appearance—a result of her experience of subjection and exclusion—disqualifies her from participation, because it makes manifest the private history of the female body that motivates the movement toward a national imaginary. It is also paradoxically, too

potentially disruptive; both bitter and ambivalent, her reaction to the son/politician's betrayal is not known: is her absence another sign of economic subordination or her love? Bitter, ragged, and dirty, her body registers the defeat and victimization engendered and unaddressed within the political sphere of the frontier as it constructs itself as a political field for the national imaginings of its citizens. Black male political anger is here, as in the store porch "lies" of Eatonville, glorified as a heroic battle of words and strategic alliances. But the bitter ambivalence of the mother must be denied as too personal and too untrustworthy to participate in the lies of nation-making.

Once again, a tale of nation-making is disrupted by Hurston's focus on a scene that dramatizes black female subordination. Yet, as she has done in the first section with her own mother, Hurston abandons an analysis of this black female bitter ambivalence and its relation to male nation building. She chooses, it seems, by default, the frontier model of citizenship in the second section of the text and pushes "bitterness" to the unstable margins of the text.

This is particularly evident in the chapter "Love," in which Hurston presents the gendered self as an "other" self who speaks and acts separately from the "public" Zora. Although Zora, herself, sees no contradiction between her career and her relationship with P.M.P., she attempts—in an inverted performance of her mother—to smooth things out in "private" and maintain her public career which is formulated as a desire for articulation, for the externalization of the inner self that is denied her mother, Big Sweet, and the Bahaman woman on the dock: "He begged me to give up my career, marry him and live outside of New York City. I really wanted to do anything he wanted me to do, but that one thing I could not do. . . . I had things clawing inside of me that must be said" (208).

Throughout this chapter, Hurston articulates a femininity rarely glimpsed in her writing, a femininity more akin to the women on the porch at Eatonville and her mother's own self-presentation. Hurston claims to find attractive the extravagant masculinity of P.M.P. He tells her, in a passage that closely resembles Hurston's father's model of black masculinity, that he does not want his wife to work, but to only live for him. Furthermore, he and Hurston have a physical confrontation that results, not in Hurston's anger and rediscovery of self-definition and empowerment—as with the stepmother—but in her admitting that it brings them closer together: love makes her not her "self." As Sidonie Smith argues, one strategic response of the female autobiographer to dominant images of femininity is to masquerade as the feminine, to perform an "overidentification with the 'feminine.'" According to Smith, "[s]elf-consciously adopted, the staging of masquerade

in women's autobiographical practice might effectively undermine the stability of any essentialist 'truth' of sexual difference" (46–47).

Here, however, I argue that Hurston's claim to femininity, a "triumph only a woman can understand," operates to reveal the extent to which such performativity is an essentialized part of "woman." This is the moment in the text at which a feminist articulation of location, of the ways in which the frontier is inadequate to a public expression of the "inside meaning" of black female subjects might present itself. Instead of a feminist articulation of the fictiveness of white and black nation-making and a focus on the bitterness that attends the prohibition to speak truth from within the forced fictiveness of both white, male and female, and black masculine models of lying and gender, Hurston naturalizes gender and reencloses both the bitterness and ambivalence of the black female body within the narrative of "love." When she meets P.M.P. again, she is reassured, ". . . I had a triumph that only a woman could understand. He had not turned into a tramp in my absence, but neither had he flamed like a newborn star in his profession. He confessed that he needed my aggravating presence to push him" (211). Hurston refuses to kiss and tell and closes the story of their relationship by insisting that their relationship remain "private business" (211).

Throughout both sections of the text, Zora makes it clear that a pre-supposition of women's living is this smoothing over of the seams of the disjuncture between public and private as it affects their ability to attain a place within the frontier model of democracy. This is evident in Hurston's own autobiography, which is constructed of lies; and Hurston reveals more of the dimensions of this "lying" in the "Love" chapter when she sharply closes the door on the discussion of any politicization of the restraint she experiences when she is with a man who resembles, in many ways, her father. Furthermore, this smoothing over of the private in public is represented in her portrait of her mother, and the few in-depth depictions of other women that she presents in the text: the actress she works for, Fannie Hurst, and Ethel Waters. What Hurston finds noteworthy about these women is their dissemblance, their construction of themselves as public women, and in each story Hurston reveals the "lie" behind their public representation of themselves. The actress's career and upwardly mobile marriage hide a family life filled with trouble and the rejection of marriage to the man she desires; Hurst escapes her position as a famous author and wife by playing house with herself and running away; Waters performs in musicals that reflect none of her own moral and religious beliefs. Each woman is represented as moody, capricious, and unpredictable: all attributes associated with Hurston herself. But Hurston shares with Waters another characteristic: her rejection of that

quality that most defines and divides Hurston from the male members of the Harlem Renaissance and the mother on the dock: bitterness.

Hurston's attempt to suppress her own "bitterness," her hatred of the emotion, suggests that it is bitterness combined with the woman's gendered position as mother that constructs her as extraneous to the male nation-making. Although Hurston denies her bitterness, the emotion runs throughout the text; she frequently seems bitter, and not merely against her stepmother, or her brother, but against the race leaders of the North, some of the leaders of the Harlem Renaissance, and numerous other bit players whom she depicts with a less than flattering pen. Bitterness becomes a position of marginality: "I take no refuge from myself in bitterness. To me bitterness is the under-arm odor of wishful weakness. It is the graceless acknowledgment of defeat" (227). Hurston tells readers, "So I smile and not bitterly" (253). And several pages later, Hurston reiterates, "I am not bitter" (261). Repetition of her non-bitterness becomes a mantra against which others are measured; however, its repetition is a testimony to the effect of suppressing bitterness, rather than the dangers of bitterness itself. No where is this suppression more visible than in two separate chapters: one, explicitly about race that was edited for the manuscript, but remains essentially the same in both forms, in its rejection of essentialism; the second, a chapter that was removed by editors because of its questioning of U.S. politics on the eve of World War II and its fervent anti-imperialist politics.

In these chapters, Hurston fails to acknowledge the uplift model of nation-making that is most closely associated with a female model of citizenship, the model that helps produce her as the public Zora Neale Hurston. What is important about these chapters on race and imperialism, for my purposes, however, is that you will not find a similar chapter on gender. If Hurston seeks to define herself politically, it is in terms of race. Race is a public term that has political resonance for Hurston, but female experience is just that—personal experience that cannot be forwarded into the cultural politics of the second section of the text: it remains private, enclosed within a chapter on love that essentializes woman.

The first of these, the chapter of *Dust Tracks* that has probably been most controversial, is "My People! My People!," a chapter that attempts to explain and resignify the meaning of this African-American phrase for a white audience. Hurston's deconstruction of race essentialism is narratively constructed from the perspective of the white gaze. "My People, My People" originally is explained as a social class phrase used in scorn. In Hurston's example, an educated black couple (from Barnard and Yale) use the phrase to express their exasperation at two black men making a spectacle of

themselves on a train in the North: “Barnard and Yale sit there and dwindle and dwindle. They do not look around the coach to see what is in the faces of the white passengers. They know too well what is there . . . [they] are thinking, ‘That’s just like a Negro.’ Not just like *some* Negroes, mind you, No, like all” (236). It is the couple’s willful awareness of the essentialism and racism of the white gaze that propels both the connection and the desire for distance between the two pairs of African-Americans. This gaze becomes institutionalized in the Jim Crow South where blacks are grouped together within the train, regardless of their differences. So, Hurston makes it clear that her purpose in deconstructing this phrase, and the racist essentialism that propels its use, is to dismantle white assumptions that skin color and character are related. But Hurston also makes it clear that the phrase has its affectionate and ironic purposes within the black folk community: affirming distance and connection at one and the same time, more positively in the absence of the white gaze. It is a performative utterance that functions in Hurston’s analysis much in the same way the “we the people” functions in the Declaration of Independence: a phrase that creates and recreates its constituency and the significance of that constituency through its enunciation. Hurston is able to claim, “After all, the word ‘race’ is a loose classification of physical characteristics. It tells nothing about the *insides* of people” (my italics; 249). The phrase “my people, my people,” however, enunciates nation through its inclusionary and exclusionary powers: “my people” cannot be identified by skin color, but only as they speak and respond to the phrase itself. This fictive nation-making owes its debt to the “lying sessions” of the store porch that enunciate nation building through a collective imagining of a past and present that creates itself outside of whiteness. Thus, Hurston ends with a humorous folktale that explains blackness’s origins as an accident.

Hurston’s appropriation of black male discourse by telling black folktales has been seen as a misappropriation. Yet, in effect, Hurston merely demonstrates the power of black male lying to recreate racist exclusion and discrimination as a tool for community building; she is able to both deny the existence of the white man’s “Negro” and to pedagogically reconstruct race as affiliation. This does not, however, as Hurston’s critics have indicated, address racism; and, in fact, Hurston’s use of comic folklore may be said to pander to white assumptions about African-Americans, because some of the tales may be read as ridiculing African-Americans and in some instances re-essentializing race. Because although Hurston attempts to divorce race and character, she also, then, goes on to define “my people, my people” through a set of characteristics that have been used to stereotype African-Americans. When Hurston appropriates black masculine lying for a white audience, then, she

does so in a way that is truly appropriative: she assumes the power of naming and defining the Negro, even as she contends that no such thing exists.

Furthermore, Hurston continues in the chapter on imperialism, "Seeing the World as It Is," a chapter originally excised by the publishers, to undermine the significance of race to a construction of political citizenship, to being an American. Here she measures the distance between the folk nation-building from the freedom of the store porch and the ability of such a fiction to construct nationhood. This deconstruction of race challenges the Anglo-Saxon to give up race, but it also articulates an individualism, an Americanism, that reveals Hurston's adherence to a frontier model of citizenship, despite its inability to address the specificities of condition that create inequality and exclusion.

First, Hurston dismisses the possibility of black nation-building, because of the inability of the black American to create his own economic system: "The only thing that keeps this from working is that it is impossible to form a nation within a nation. He makes spurts and jerks at it, but everyday he is forced away from it by necessity. He finds that he can neither make money nor spend money in a restricted orbit. He is part of the national economy" (252). This is a significant statement because it questions the very foundations of Eatonville's significance as a self-governing community within a racist economic and political system. As Hurston tells readers in the first section of the text, most of Eatonville depends economically on white Maitland; almost everyone in Eatonville works in Maitland. This emphasizes more generally the economic interests that undermine and underpin American democracy, particularly as it is practiced by Anglo-Saxons who she describes as greedy and self-interested in their promotion of democracy abroad; she challenges Roosevelt to practice democracy at home.

However, although many critics have seen this indictment of imperialism as the most straightforward and condemnatory statement against U.S. race politics at home and abroad—she states, for example, that slavery has merely been moved further away and not abolished—Hurston also states that this is the difference between practice and ideal, and that she refuses to give up the desire for economic and social mobility that democracy "ideally" offers. She does this in part to make it clear that she rejects communism, but also to reiterate her own previous success and desire for continued economic mobility: "It seems to me that the people who are enunciating these [communist] principles are so saturated with European ideas that they miss the whole point of America. . . . I am all for the idea of free vertical movement, nothing horizontal" (263). Furthermore, although she sometimes seems to reject both race and nation as forms of identification for the self, she does

so from within the metaphor of the frontier, so that she appears to represent that very imperialism she criticizes: “I do not wish to close the frontiers of life upon my own self. I do not wish to deny myself the expansion of individual capabilities and depths by living in a space whose boundaries are race and nation” (283). Samira Kawash argues that in this chapter, and particularly in this passage, “that Hurston repudiates not only nationalism but race consciousness, a truly risky practice for a black woman in the 1940s” (168). However, by imagining the nation through the location of the frontier, Hurston reimagines a black female subject without bitterness or the ambivalence that structures black women’s inability to participate in the nation-making of white and black models of citizenship. She privatizes gender and deconstructs race in order to place herself in the position of American. Having revealed the dissemblances of white female models of citizenship, and the exclusions of black masculine models, she assumes the “ideal” of the white granny, even if that ideal cannot be placed into practice.

There is, however, an implicit critique of gender and race as they intersect in her body when she argues that “I will fight for my country but I will not lie for her” (261). This obvious reassumption of the frontier model of masculinity that defines citizenship as the willingness to give up the body for one’s country invokes that model of first class citizenship that has traditionally been the responsibility of the male. Hurston, ironically, because of her gender would not have been called upon to die for her country. So perhaps she is making the claim that she better understands the meaning of sacrificing the body for the state than the white “granny” does, slyly giving the lie to his model of citizenship. But perhaps she is also saying that it is easier to die for one’s country than to attempt the self-disclosure of desire and subordination that Big Sweet and the Bahaman mother represent—the kind of embodiment that is rejected as untrustworthy, and, therefore, unworthy of full citizenship. Thus, Hurston’s final claim becomes an intricate testimony to the fictiveness of attempting to construct a model of black female nationhood through the frontier model of citizenship.

II. ANOTHER BITTER FRONTIER

Smedley’s novel, *Daughter of Earth*, is not an autobiography, but autobiographical, releasing it from the accusations of “lying” directed at Hurston’s text. The cover of fiction makes it possible for Smedley to articulate her story within her own notion of truth, and it allows her to situate the story of herself within a cultural geography that is more able than the facts to represent the gendered politics of public and private within the United States.

For example, many of the events that occur in the second section of the text actually occur in Europe, but Smedley places them in the U.S. to emphasize the Americanness of her story. This allows Smedley to articulate the ways in which the protagonist Marie Rogers' story is an American story. In other words, just as Hurston represents Eatonville as frontier to suit her own version of truth, Smedley constructs a national geography for Marie that reflects her own understanding of the relation between the frontier model of citizenship and gender.

As Hurston does in *Dust Tracks*, Smedley's Marie adopts the frontier model of citizenship; and not surprisingly, critics have leveled similar complaints of incoherence against Smedley's novel. In fact, Walt Carmon, in an early review in the *New Masses*, argued that the novel was a poor representative of proletarian fiction, "because it owes its bias to the bitterness of a woman."¹⁴ Here, we have a problem similar to the one that Hurston's text reveals: the bitter female body is seen as disruptive to masculine public forms of political identification and nation-making. Whereas Hurston's text increasingly suppresses this female body in the second section of her text in order to align herself with frontier nation-making, Smedley constantly defers coming to terms with the female body and its constant violation in the text—so that Marie's rape becomes the central turning point in her abandonment of the frontier model of citizenship.

Like Hurston, Smedley's Marie sees her own propensity toward "wandering" as a trait inherited from the father. And she eventually writes this "wandering" tendency as a survival mechanism that propels her into her professional life as a writer. Marie tells the reader, "Had it not been for the wanderlust in my blood—my father's gift to me—and I had not inherited his refusal to accept my lot as ordained by a God I might have remained in the [mining] towns all my life, married some working man. . . ." (123). And yet, on both writers' part there is the recognition that their "wanderings" are not conducted under the same conditions of their fathers; both men may be raced and classed subjects, but their wanderings are written as voluntary, as being in service of their imaginings. But the conditions that propel both women into mobility are directly connected to their father's treatment of them as subordinate female subjects.

Marie Rogers, like Hurston, defines her experience in relation to the frontier. Although born in a small Missouri farming community, she is raised in the western states of Colorado, Arizona, and New Mexico. Her father's obsession with adventure and his conviction that riches lie just beyond the horizon keeps him on the move, and often, his family with him. Like Hurston, Smedley is the second daughter, and one too many for her father who

ignores her once he has a son. However, gender in Smedley is constituted not through the prohibitions of the father, but through fear of the father's abandonment and a complex identification with the father's freedom.

The frontier father comes and goes and moves his family at will, searching for wealth and adventure. In this, he is different from the other members of the farming community, who do not always believe the stories he tells of his adventures: "my father's imagination reached to a mysterious city called St. Joseph on the Missouri River. But then he was a man with the soul and imagination of a vagabond. People listened to his stories, filled with color and adventure, but they did not always believe" (10). This is because Marie's father is part American Indian: "For he was not one of them; he was almost a foreigner, in fact. His family was unknown to our world. They were not farmers, and some said they were unsteady, unreliable—a shiftless crew; that was the Indian blood in their veins. . . . you could never trust foreigners or Indians" (10). So, he recreates the world through fiction to rewrite his subordinate position as one of power in much the same way as the men on the Eatonville store porch.

Her father's difference from the community—his foreignness—however, also makes him an object of desire, particularly to Marie: "[My mother] was fallible but he was not. His word was enough for me—I obeyed. To be like him, to drive horses as he drove them, to pitch hay as he pitched it, to make him as proud of me as he was of my new baby brother George was my one desire in life" (17). However, through his insistent wanderings, his creation of his own identity through the discourse of frontier masculinity, he destroys the stability that her mother desires and teaches Marie that the solution to unhappiness and failure is geographical: ". . . our roots were torn from the soil and we began a life of wandering, searching for success and happiness and riches that always lay just beyond where we were not. Only since then I have heard the old saying: 'Where I am not, there is happiness'" (35). The father's attempt to establish himself outside the community that sees him as foreign makes it clear that the basis of frontier masculinity is the construction of oneself as "native" and, therefore, to identify oneself with the heroic outlines of the West as a place of self-making. But, this self-making—which involves turning the Indian into a symbol of white native-born frontier masculinity—requires constant transience.

The father's pursuit of frontier masculinity ensures the family's constant homelessness. What emerges from Smedley's portrait of Marie's life is the absence of a public/private divide, if that divide depends on a notion of the home, of domestic ideology in the way that it is interpreted in separate spheres ideology. No such domesticity is imaginable here as the condition of

their migrancy and poverty ensures that no home can be constructed. The Rogers live in the open air on the road, in a tent, and rarely do they all live together. Nor is there a sense of privacy that is so necessary to the construction of domestic ideology. What is important here, as on the frontier of Polk County, is the “law” of the job that negates any distinction between home and work in its encroachment on the home. This becomes literally true when a flood hits the Rogers’ tent, sweeping the home away and forcing the family to seek shelter on the boss’s front porch, perched high on the hill. The Rogers are not invited in. This sweeping away of the home, a product of economic geography, exposes the Rogers to the social degradation of the boss and his wife. But, whereas, it would seem to represent the father’s failure to secure the domestic privacy upon which masculinity supposedly depends for its legitimacy, John Rogers turns the destruction of their home into an occasion for masculine mythmaking, retreating to the saloon to tell the story of “his saving” of a bloated dead body from the muddy depths of the flood.

John Rogers’ desire to transform himself into an American is not structured through his ability to provide a stable home for his wife and children. What it means to be “American,” is thus not predicated on the private as the domestic and the familial, but in terms of Rogers’ ability to overcome the burden that his wife and children come to represent. Stripped of the facade of domestic ideology, the public/private divide is constructed only through masculine transcendence of the family as a social structure that hinders rather than complements his efforts to express that “dominant individualism” that Turner describes as constitutive of the male American character.

Finally, her father stakes his claims to citizenship—to his American-ness—through his allegiance to the economics of the state. When Marie remembers the childhood landscape of the West, it is her father’s allegiance to the “job”—and not his family—that she recalls. The transience of small company mining towns dominates Smedley’s story, as the family follows the “job” and her father’s mythic fantasies of masculine approbation. Smedley depicts this frontier as self-interested, exclusionary, and dominated by “a code” of behavior that her mother and father, the cowboys, and other native-born Americans of the West attempt to live by. Smedley delves deeply into the stories of these mining camps—not unlike the camps of Florida in Polk County that Hurston describes—to articulate for women the conflict between the ideals of frontier masculinity that her father represents and the concept of embodied citizenship, that form of citizenship that might recognize the conditions of inequality that the white male granny rejects and that Big Sweet and the Bahaman woman represent in Hurston.

As Hurston notes in her description of Polk County, the job itself is the only “law” that functions on the frontier, and this is true, as well, in the mining camps the Rogers live and work in. On the one hand, the camps represent the passing of that frontier masculinity represented by the ex-cowboys who come to the camps in search of work. On the other hand, the camps become a site for redefining American masculine character and realigning the interests of native-born American men with the economic interests of the state. The violent struggles between worker and company in the mining camps reveal the extent to which the companies transcend both law and nation; the companies issue their own “script,” and U.S. and state military forces represent their interests by keeping order in the towns and camps. Often, the native-born American men are mere spectators to the often violent struggles that occur between the immigrant miners, the companies, and the U.S. forces brought in to protect the company’s interests. Marie’s father and the native-born men who work with him remain embedded in a frontier mythology which neither understands nor can incorporate the ethnic and class struggle they observe: “As a native American himself, with hopes of becoming an employer, [my father] tried to identify himself with the sheriff and the officials of the camp against the strikers, who were foreigners. . . .” (119–120). So, John Rogers establishes himself as a citizen through his economic investment in individualism, and his interests become identical with the public interests of the state. He is no longer a foreigner.

In short, whereas Marie’s childhood imaginings are mapped according to her father’s individualistic imagining of the West as a backdrop for his own fictions, Marie produces a map of the West that reflects her mother’s awareness and her own belated political consciousness of how the companies have colonized the land of her father’s imaginings: “In all directions lay the lands and the towns of the company, and to the north lay other towns of other companies with conditions just the same” (102). Once again, the fictions of western masculinity attempt to ignore the conditions that position subjects differently in relation to the law—in particular Marie’s father attempts to ignore his own “foreignness” (his Indianness) in order to recreate himself within the codes of frontier masculinity. And Marie attempts to arrange her own life according to this code, attempting to both appropriate it and to avoid the code’s public exclusion of women.

This frontier code through which “foreign” men become representative Americans implicitly excludes women. And, as in Hurston’s text, women’s position in relation to nation-making is represented through the trope of “bitterness.” The word is used repeatedly throughout the text; whereas Hurston used the term to signify the black mother’s position, in *Daughter*

of *Earth* the term is most often associated with the condition of being both female and poor within the United States. The articulation of women's bitterness begins with Marie's mother: "*Her tears . . . they embittered my life!*" (my italics; 37). The bond Marie has with her mother is an inarticulate bond of "bitterness," created through work, poverty, and the family's transience in pursuit of the father's desires. Marie comes to understand the cruelty of her mother's life, but she hopes to escape this "bitterness" through living the wandering life represented by her father and the cowboys of the West. And, as in Hurston's text, this model depends on an acquired individualism that seeks to negate the unequal realities of female embodiment.

However, according to Marie, there is a gendered code that applies to working-women in the West, a code that offers some freedom for single women. Marie defines this code as "a woman who earned her own money was a free woman. Only married women had to take orders" (78). And yet this code repeatedly fails to protect the autonomy of the Rogers women. John Rogers violates this code when he attempts to prevent his daughter Annie, who works in the laundry, from attending dance halls. He treats Helen, his sister-in-law, with more respect than his wife, because she helps support the family. But, later, he throws Helen out of the house when it is revealed that she has been earning money to support the family through prostitution. Helen argues that it is John Rogers' refusal to support his family that has made her a prostitute, and Marie's mother supports her sister against her husband. However, Helen agrees to leave "his" house when he threatens to destroy the house itself if she stays (83). Marie learns from these episodes that economic independence can provide women with respect and autonomy, but the father is able to challenge their sexual autonomy. Despite the code that supposedly protects the independent woman's autonomy, both Helen and Annie can be dismissed from John Rogers' house because of their sexuality. This episode is also instrumental for what I understand as Marie's misapprehension of how women's sexual and economic subordination are mutually constitutive.

This misapprehension is revealed in Marie's discussion of her admiration for Helen. Marie focuses on the issue of marriage versus prostitution and the supposed freedom from male domination and maternal responsibility that Helen acquires as a prostitute:

To me her profession seemed as honorable as that of any married woman—she made her living in the same way that they made theirs, except that she made a better living and had more rights over her body and soul. . . . She was pledged to obey no man. By such things I

judged decency and self-respect, and such a life seemed preferable to marriage. (142)

In this passage, sexual freedom, individualism, and economic independence are aligned with one another.

However, Helen, as with Big Sweet, cannot be said to be representative of the frontier model of citizenship, since she, unlike John Rogers, is forced to choose between her own desires and the needs of the family. Helen is no more free than Marie's mother, and, in fact, her sacrifice for her sister and her sister's family precludes her own desires; she prostitutes herself for her sister and her sister's children. She must give up her proposed marriage to her lover Sam, because she fears he will use her past against her once she is no longer economically independent. Sam marries Annie, and when Annie dies, Helen attempts to raise Sam and Annie's child, only to have Sam claim she is unfit and retrieve the baby: "The baby that now lay against her bosom seemed almost like the fulfillment of a desire that had long been dead. She would keep it with her, and she exulted when she thought of it. The Helens of the world are said to be hard and without a desire for children. The Helen who was my aunt was not" (142). Most readers do not focus on this passage, but on the first passage in which Marie compares marriage to prostitution. However, the articulation of Helen's desire as opposed to the obligations she assumes for her sister's family places her in a parallel position to Marie's mother, rather than in an alternative position. It also parallels the position of Big Sweet, inasmuch as Marie attempts to articulate Helen's sexual and economic subordination, and the unnamed desires that prevent her lawlessness from being a symbol of freedom and power.

Similarly, if Helen's economic and sexual freedom excludes her from the family, even as she works to support it, the political equality offered by suffrage may be made useless by the "codes" of gender that transform Marie's mother's economic subordination in the household into political subordination. When women in Colorado get the vote, Marie's mother attempts to assert her political independence by not telling her husband how she voted, "At last a weapon had been put into her hands. At least she felt it so. He threatened her, but still she would not answer . . ." (86). The mother's exercise of her political right is doomed by her economic subordination; her violation of the "code" leaves John Rogers free to abandon his family once again. After months of attempting to feed her children and herself alone, she falls ill and John Rogers returns—after she reveals how she voted. Marie's mother attempts to lay claim to the kind of public/private self exhibited by her husband when she exercises her suffrage, aligning herself with the political

interests of the state. Instead, her experience reveals the interrelatedness of her gendered economic and political subordination.

Thus, marriage and prostitution are parallel in the limitations that they place on women's citizenship. Inasmuch as both Helen and Marie's mother must relinquish self-interest in service of the family and/or the male customer, they reveal the laws contradictory limits when it seeks to privatize women's body within the discourse of the family—through the male wage, through its ignorance of domestic violence, through its denial of reproductive/sexual freedom the mother's ability to exercise economic and political rights disappears. Helen, on the other hand, comes to represent the female body as sexuality; when women transcend the "natural" institution of the family that ensures masculinity's participation in the state as an "equal," they become not like men citizens, but as we have seen with Big Sweet, they come to represent women's difference, their unsuitability to participate in both the domestic sphere upon which the presumption of masculine citizenship operates and in the public sphere, because their prostitution introduces sexuality and the body into the politics of the state, that which the "private" sphere has been created and designed to conceal.

It is not surprising then that Marie seeks to define herself in masculine terms. In a 1924 letter to her friend Florence Lennon, Smedley makes explicit the relationship between western constructions of gender and her own, and Marie's, decision to reject family obligations and love:

When I was a girl, the West was still young, and the law of force, of physical force, was dominant. Women were desired, of course, but the rough-and-ready woman made her place. . . . Now, being a girl I was ashamed of my body and my lack of strength. So I tried to be a man. I shot, rode, jumped, and took part in all the fights of the boys. I didn't like it, but it was the proper thing to do. So I forced myself into it, I scorned all weak womanly things. Like all my family and class, I considered it a sign of weakness to show affection. . . . (qtd. in MacKinnon and MacKinnon 94–5)

Similarly, in the novel, Marie claims, ". . . in our world no one was supposed to show affection or pain. Only weaklings and women did that" (90). When her mother dies, she rejects becoming caretaker to her father and brothers and embarks on an independent life. And she explicitly sees this rejection of them as an attempt to avoid being a woman.

As Smedley moves throughout the West, she continuously identifies with the masculine characteristics of her father and men, such as the

ex-cowboy Big Buck who helps finance her schooling. And she chooses a life that she clearly defines as opposed to the “[l]ove, tenderness, and duty [that] belonged to women and to weaklings in general” (142). Big Buck becomes a substitute father, not unlike the white male granny of Hurston’s narrative, and tutors her in the ways of being a man: “Big Buck had tried to blast out of me everything feminine. That I belonged to the female persuasion never induced him to show any leniency, and he showed me on more than one occasion that I had to face the consequences of my acts every bit as much as a man” (162). In this way, Marie defines herself within the paradigm of frontier masculinity and attempts to make a living at the male occupation of traveling salesman, which requires her to travel from city to city throughout the West.

However, wherever Marie goes she is understood not as an independent worker/citizen, but as a prostitute, as a woman. Marie’s attempt to live a masculine life on the frontier excludes her from both the category of “woman” and the category of “man.” Her body ensures that she does not have the freedom of masculinity on the frontier and her pursuit of a masculine way of life excludes her from any women’s community. On the one hand, she discovers that her independence is understood as sexual autonomy and not economic independence, and other women exclude her because of this. On the other hand, this sexual understanding of the “free woman” is what makes her a woman in the eyes of men. Marie becomes particularly embittered against the “private home” and its representative, the middle-class woman, in this section of the text. When she first goes on the road selling magazine transcriptions, she goes to “private homes.” But the women in these “neat, smug homes” meet her with suspicion and even “personal animosity” (151–152). And, this is seen not merely as a class issue, but a gendered one, because she tells readers that she begins to go to businesses “where I would meet only men” (152). Marie predicates her self-making as masculine, not merely to escape the bitterness of her mother’s life, but because she is excluded from that domesticity that signifies gender identification in the dominant ideology of public and private and is the imagined foundation of elite women’s social citizenship.

And yet, if the public/private divide is maintained through the differentiation of women’s bodies from men’s, then Marie cannot so easily escape female embodiment. This becomes clear when a set of confusions about women’s identity results in the rape of a middle-class woman who occupies the hall across from Marie at the hotel in a small western frontier town. The woman is raped, “because” she is mistaken for Marie, and the men—a bartender at the hotel and his friends—go in search of Marie because they

believe she is a prostitute. When the bartender discovers that she is not but is a virgin, he seeks to nurse the sick and starving Marie back to health as a sign of his remorse. Finally, he proposes to her. Marie's unviolated, nonsexual body acts as a kind of gendered shelter in this episode; and, since the middle-class woman disappears from the story (she is never mentioned once a brief story of the assault is told), Marie's nonviolation, and her disgust at the value placed upon her virginity, acts as a kind of textual deferment of the violation of the female body; it is almost as if no violation has occurred at all. And so, Marie is able to return to her life on the road. Yet this confusion of identity reveals the extent to which Marie must recuperate her body—attest to her virginity, her innocence—as an asexual body in order to enact the frontier model of citizenship.

Marie learns a similar lesson about female embodiment from her first failed marriage to a Danish intellectual and socialist. When they attempt to have a marriage of equality, Marie's fear and rejection of dependency and motherhood, of weak and womanly things, seems unimportant. However, two illegal abortions later, Marie leaves the marriage because they represent an ever widening gap between husband and wife and between Marie's desire for financial independence and the costly reality of being female. Marie pays for both abortions with her earnings just as she had paid for her share of the marriage license, as if a strict accounting of her financial independence can reestablish her autonomy and equality with her husband. Instead, the abortions reveal his inability to understand Marie's bitterness and ambivalence and his ignorance of her physical pain. Despite, then, her ability to physically avoid motherhood and to financially avoid dependence, she finds herself in the position of "woman." Finally she divorces her husband after the second abortion, because as they are traveling home on the street car Marie is in so much pain that she cannot sit up and he yells at her, "Sit up! People are looking at you—do you want to make a scene in public?" (217). Marie's inability to control her body in public in this scene is in direct contradiction to the frontier-based masculine codes by which she has lived. Her body publicly betrays her status as "wife." Moreover, her husband understands Marie's pain, not as the violation of her body, but as Marie's violation of the spatial division of public and private. Marie's divorce temporarily helps her regain her independence, but it does not solve, as the last section of the text makes clear, the problem of the female body's violation being seen as the female body violating the boundaries of public and private and threatening masculine constructions of the public as dependent on disembodiment.

After her divorce, Marie moves east to New York. The move east, however, is more than geographical, because moving east will also become a new

way of defining herself in relation to America and the frontier model of citizenship. In New York, Marie, who has always felt like an “individual,” begins to feel “ignorant, insignificant, unimportant” (234). In part this feeling about herself is caused by her immersion in the educated culture to which her friend and ex-sister-in-law Karin introduces her. But, more significantly, Marie begins to feel like a “girl” again, and this section reads as a (re)coming-of-age narrative, in which Marie attempts to reconstruct herself in those gendered roles that she has left behind—the familial roles of daughter, sister, and wife—by constructing for herself a political family of men. In her mind, their family will be based on political coalition and shared responsibility as equals, a family that does not require her to relinquish her personal desires for self-fulfillment, because the personal and political are aligned. But Marie must first relearn to interpret her experience from the perspective of her new political family.

Marie’s transition into an inexperienced “girl” is most marked in her relationship with her teacher Sardar Ranjit Singh and the other men of the Indian National Movement. Through her friendship with Singh, Marie becomes not only a student of Indian history, but becomes committed to the political movement to free India from British colonialism. She begins to see herself as having lived merely a purely physical life of reaction and impulse, and her new analytical and abstract studies negate her female experience as insignificant rather than as constitutive of what has led her to the movement. Smedley, however, is explicit about Marie’s desire to bond love and politics through the reconstituted family of father and brothers who make up the all-male—as depicted in the novel—movement. The men of the movement and her responsibility to them, rather than to it, represents the fulfillment of her failure to meet her responsibilities as daughter and sister to her father and brothers:

To me the Indians became a symbol of my duty and responsibility. They took the place of my father, of my brother, who was dead, and the brother whose destiny I was as yet uncertain. . . . I recalled that once I had deserted my little brothers who needed my help and protection. I had been selfish and in my drive to save myself had sacrificed them. (287).

But Marie’s difference—as an American white woman—is crucial to understanding how and why this attempt to recreate herself as sister within a national political movement fails on several levels.

The issue of Marie’s status as an American white woman first arises in a discussion with Singh. Singh tells her, “You are very American and you have a cheap and superficial view of life—the idea of profit” (273). This

argument attempts to situate Marie within a national identity, but Marie tries to reject it as an argument based on Singh's high caste status. She argues that only those who have never starved can imagine working without hope of reward. The two argue over class and nation and the difference between Singh's "patriotism" and Marie's rejection of American nationalism. At this point, Marie explicitly rejects nationalism, not because of her experience of gender subordination, but because she has acquired an internationalist-socialist position during her marriage. Thus, she understands nationalism as in opposition to class-based struggle. Singh, however, does not accept the class-based analysis that Marie offers in place of patriotism; he loves India and does not understand Marie's alienation from her homeland.

Singh also tells her, "I often hope that women, also, will work for freedom for all people. They should know, like the working class, and like all Asia, what subjection means. But I fear. . . ." Marie interrupts, "Oh, I don't think women have a vision broader than men! It all depends upon the individual and the class they come from" (275). This is indicative of Marie's increasing desire to connect her commitment to the freedom of India with her socialist commitments. For Marie, anti-imperialism becomes a necessary foundation for an international socialist politics, even though Singh rejects socialist interference as imperialist, and U.S. socialists define the Indian movement as nationalist. Singh appears to offer Marie an opportunity to articulate feminism's place with socialism and anti-imperialism, despite the "fear" that Marie doesn't give him an opportunity to name, she rejects any articulation dependent on "women" as a class. At this point in the novel, it appears that Marie rejects feminism and understands her gendered experience in terms of class.

The result of these arguments is to put Marie in her place, not merely as a student and an outsider, but to deny that her experience of class and gender oppression is significant to political and intellectual articulation: "To him, I was a raw impulsive, inexperienced girl" (277). Here, we can see that Marie's rejection of feminism as a political lens through which to articulate her experience makes that experience itself negligible in the new political family of men that she has adopted as her own. Her new political family teaches her to subordinate herself to masculine authority in a way that the traditional family could not.

Increasingly, Marie begins to subordinate gender politics to those of nation and class. And, in fact, despite her mother's experience of the West and her own failed ability to live out the masculine frontier model of citizenship, she increasingly relies on this model to understand the national politics of citizenship. This tendency to subordinate her experience of gender to the

mythology of western individualism can be seen earlier in the text when she reflects back on her experiences: “I recall now the years of my girlhood and youth amongst the men of the far West—unlettered rough working-men who had traveled the worst of life: and with but one exception and—that of a barber in a small town—I had never suffered insult and not one man had tried to lay a hand on me in violence” (125). Marie misremembers her gendered experience of the West—most significantly ignoring the earlier rape of the middle-class woman at the hotel.

Moreover, whereas Marie within the first section of the text associates bitterness with the tears of women, in this section of the text, she denies that connection: “I thought I had known what bitterness was, but when with [the Indian revolutionaries] I realized that I did not know the meaning of the word” (272). As Marie comes to perceive herself as a political subject, she also comes to distance herself from her female experience of the West; those experiences are no longer seen as political—her abortions, her marriages, the attempted rapes, her position as daughter. In fact, if she once experienced her avoidance of the female position of wife, mother, daughter, and sister as a necessity of personal and political independence, she now claims the position of “bahin—sister” as a form of atonement for her earlier selfishness in abandoning her father and brothers after her mother’s death. In this reconfiguration of self, her brothers, father, and the model of citizenship represented by the frontier come to represent the “real” America that has been betrayed by an eastern establishment that colludes with the British against its own people.

The question of Marie’s national identity becomes part of the thematic of the last section of the text. Her friends in the socialist movement and those women working for the birth control movement question her devotion to a movement that prioritizes neither international class struggle nor women’s rights. Others question whether Marie’s interest is motivated by some love affair with one of the men or an erotic interest in Indian men in general. Furthermore, when she is arrested and interrogated, her status as an American and as a white woman is directly invoked both by the detectives and later in the press. Marie develops several responses to the question of both her gender and national identity and their relation to her work with the movement.

What does it mean to be an American and to work within a nationalist framework for a woman who has primarily seen herself as gendered and classed subject? Marie has several responses. The first of these is, as in her response to Singh, to locate the Indian movement within a socialist context and to argue that Asia’s freedom from colonial rule is central to an international socialist movement, and therefore, is not merely a nationalist movement: “I

have no country . . . my countrymen are the men and women who work against oppression—it does not matter who or where they are. With them I feel at home—we understand each other. Others are foreign to me” (355). In another response, Marie more problematically attempts to re-cover another nationalist impulse in the western ideals of men such as Big Buck: “. . . I felt that I was molding the native earth of America. In working with them I realized how American I was, how native of my soil, and how I could appeal to principles, traditions and ideas of the American people, when they could make but an intellectual appeal” (359). She represents the lawyer who attempts to help her when she is freed from prison within this same ideal. He is, according to Marie, “a type of man that if fast disappearing—a man of the West who fought for the traditions of the days when America was young and believed in freedom for all men . . . a man holding the fort, hoping a new generation would arise, filled with the spirit of the days when he was young—and when America was young” (335–6).

Most of these responses and much of Marie’s devotion to the movement originates from her imprisonment for helping aid the movement. Before her imprisonment, as an American, she uses her publishing connections to help her friends publish a book, helps another leave the country, and agrees to hide and keep a list of members in her home, but she does not become a part of the political body until after her imprisonment. Prior to Marie’s arrest, she is raped by a member of the movement, Juan Diaz, and nearly commits suicide, but these events are marginalized precisely because Marie goes to prison and undergoes the interrogation of U.S. and British authorities. Diaz is later revealed as a traitor—a British spy, who is probably responsible for her arrest. But Marie’s imprisonment after she returns from the hospital—after a failed suicide attempt that is only blurrily narrated and never named as such—encourages readers and Marie, herself, to repress the rape and its emotional and political implications. Throughout her imprisonment, Marie must focus instead on her obligation to remain silent about her knowledge of and connections to the men. Therefore, this scene seems to repeat the scene at the hotel, when the middle-class woman is raped and forgotten; once again the violation of the female body is marginalized, as Marie tries to transform the familial identity of “sister” into a form of agency representing her loyalty to the politics of masculine nation building.

However, if Marie goes to prison as “sister,” she will exit the movement as “foreigner,” “wife,” and a bitter woman. Eventually the rape and Marie’s imprisonment are revealed as connected, when Marie’s rapist is revealed as also a political traitor. After her release from prison, Marie devotes herself to the movement, and, while participating in a conference, meets one of its

leaders, Anand Mankevar, and marries him. But a short time later, at another conference, after she and Juan Diaz have a political dispute in which many of the men including her husband take her side, Diaz reveals their “affair” to others. He claims that she opposes him only because he would not marry her and that she is a woman of “loose character.” Furthermore, he calls her a foreigner, a woman, and a wife who has no right to participate in the movement. It is of course this blending of characteristics—both fact and fiction—that gives his claims a hearing within the movement. She is a “foreigner” and has become a “wife.” More importantly, however, she has previously lied to Anand, telling him that she has not slept with any of his countrymen. This is important to Anand, he claims, because if she has had sex with other Indians it will undermine his political work. People will lose respect for him, because he has married a woman whose interest in the movement appears to be purely her sexual interest in Indian men.

However, even before Juan Diaz makes his claims, Anand and Marie are divided over issues of sexuality, specifically her sexual past. And Anand has become obsessed with Marie’s sexual past. During this time, “We were in a restaurant, but suddenly I wept with unrestrained bitterness and misery. It was a scandal, and with a white, drawn face he paid the bill and we left” (381). This scene is similar to the earlier post-abortion scene between Marie and her first husband. Marie’s violated body once again is seen as violating public and private—creating “a scandal.” The rape and its aftermath rupture the careful negotiation of public and private, of politics and the body, to which Marie has committed herself.

This scene precipitates Diaz’s semi-public utterance of his version of the rape. And Marie is prevented by Anand from publicly speaking the truth. Preferring to be blackmailed by Juan Diaz, he tells her that the men in the movement will not believe a woman over a man, even though many of the men have sided with Marie in the past. In any event, Anand sees his political work threatened and blames Marie, forbidding her from speaking even after Diaz has been uncovered as a British spy. Marie tells readers, “I wished to stand on a housetop and tell the truth as it was, instead of being caught in a trap like this. And acid bitterness ate into me; to think that a miserable sex story was causing such misery. . . .” (399). And what condemns her in Anand’s eyes is her original silence about the rape, a silence maintained not only because she fears that it will destroy the national movement but because of her inability to articulate what has happened to her. So her experience becomes constituted as a lie in multiple ways: Diaz claims that she was not raped; her silence about her experience with Diaz makes her a liar to her husband; and her involvement with the Indian national movement is

no longer seen as politically motivated, but motivated by her sexual interest in Indian men.

More problematically, Marie never clearly defines what occurs as rape. Nor do the other characters—Diaz, Marie’s husband, or the other men in the movement. So, it is not certain what truth Marie would speak from the rooftop, because at the center of Marie’s silence is an internal confusion about what has occurred. Although the scene is written as rape, later Marie seems to believe Juan Diaz’s interpretation of events. He tells her, “You have no right to be so bitter . . . to try to make me responsible for all this. . . . You asked me to stay. . . . And your fight against me was a bit of a sham” (296). Marie reflects back later,

Now, with distance lying between me and that night, I see that this thing could never have happened without either my conscious or my unconscious consent; that had there been no unconscious response in me to the masculinity in him, he would have left my room as calmly as he came. . . . I was too dishonest to admit that I was even a passive participant. (297)

This belated understanding is itself fraught with confusion of oxymoronic terms that need explanation and that once again focus on her own inability to articulate why accepting responsibility for the rape—because of her “unconscious consent”?—should be equated with her refusal to accept responsibility, more generally, for her sexual desire. Passivity comes to be understood as a form of agency, and Marie seeks refuge in the rhetoric of the Freudian unconscious to erase her own victimization. Attempting to avoid the “bitter” position of female embodiment and her assert her own power, Marie digs deeper into her own sexual pathology and effectively shuts down the possibility of recognizing how her experience directly represents the systemic oppression against which she is fighting and, in itself, reveals how sexism undoes her political agency and the promise of full citizenship that she sees in socialism and anti-imperialism.

What Marie appears to learn from the political framework that is placed upon her story is that the failure to police her own “unconscious responses” brings about political “injustice” for men (297). If Juan Diaz is a traitor to the Indian National movement, then Marie’s body is no less so, producing as it does the “miserable sex story.” Diaz’s presentation of her as a “loose” woman effectively destroys both her marriage to Anand and her work, thus succeeding in establishing the danger that women, but particularly white American women, represent when they are allowed political participation in

the construction of nation-making. Just as Marie betrays her responsibilities to her own father and brothers, who represent a “true” American frontier nationalism, to pursue an intellectually and economically independent life, so too does she betray her brothers in the Indian National movement through her “unconscious responses” to masculinity.

Returning to our discussion of the public/private binary in Hurston—the scene with her stepmother in which she writes her exclusion from the family as empowerment, her love affair and the rhetoric of privacy that she uses to exclude questions about the transformation of her self into a woman who accepts violence—I think that this episode in Smedley shares many resemblances with Hurston’s own rhetoric. Foremost here, in their attempt to present themselves as national subjects is their transformation of victimization into a discourse that rejects complaint and relies, respectively, on the discourse of “love” and the discourse of the “unconscious” to reject any notion that they are incapable of protecting themselves. This is apparent in both scenes of violence, when Marie claims that she must have “unconsciously” wanted Diaz, because she is physically capable of overpowering him and similarly, Hurston emphasizes her own physical power when she tells readers “that she gave as good as she got.” Both women, of course, eventually abandon their relationships, but Smedley is able, in a way that Hurston is not, to make a connection between the private home and the political project of nationalism. By resituating European events in the United States, Smedley more clearly rejects her earlier attempts to imagine the original masculine model of the frontier as a model for women’s citizenship. Thus, when Marie leaves her husband, she also leaves the United States and the Free India Movement.

Both Hurston and Smedley indicate the extent to which gender may be a marginalized context for the subject who attempts to articulate her position within the nation. And both authors indicate how that marginalization may occur—through the rendering of the female body as both bitter and untrustworthy, whether the female writer marginalizes that bitter body through the appropriation of a frontier individualism or through the abandonment of a national politics. Both authors reject the social citizenship model defined by middle-class women at the Representative Congress, because even as it provides the means through which to achieve suffrage it negates that suffrage by marginalizing the economically dependent woman whose vote, like Smedley’s mother’s must go with the husband’s and the women who, though, economically independent become the object of nation-making rather than its subject, because they have no means to argue their complaints within a construction of citizenship that mistakes

subordination and violation for authentic difference or an untrustworthy bitterness likely to undermine with tales of sexual violation or economic subordination the lies of nation-making.

In feminist theory today, we can see the legacy of Smedley and Hurston's struggle with the models of citizenship available to them in feminist debates over the representation of female experience, particularly women's experience of violence. Although the women's movement of the seventies made the "personal is political" its slogan, Carine M. Mardorossian argues that our current polarization of victimization and agency tends support the dominant hegemony of earlier eras, making "women's psyche the site of analysis." She argues that this is a "depoliticizing gesture [for] feminist politics" (756). And it is one that, like Hurston and Smedley, gives into the assumption that victimization, inequality, and subordination are still signs of unworthiness for citizenship, revealing the female subject's lack of self-mastery. Moreover, in revising or reinterpreting their traumatic experiences as scenes of agency and empowerment to present themselves as worthy representative citizen subjects, the authors' private "psychologizing fictions of individualism" have not achieved the desired effect (756).

Hurston's and Smedley's attempts to write themselves as representative Americans, to present their private selves as aligned with the public models of citizenship available to them, ultimately fail at several levels. Their texts have been criticized as incoherent and untruthful. Yet they only uncover the flaws of the models of citizenship available to them and the importance of not only critiquing those models, but the necessity of reorganizing the public/private divide, so that female embodiment—and the difference that race, class, and sexuality makes to such embodiment—does not have to be marginalized in order for women to lay claim to public representativeness.

Conclusion

As I have argued, feminist political theorists and feminist geographers' analysis of the public/private divide has taken an approach that encompasses the history of separate spheres, but is not confined to the study or critique of separate spheres in the nineteenth century. And, as I argue in chapter one, it is important to recognize that this recent feminist critique is part of a much longer history of women's struggle to redefine the relation between public and private realms. Contemporary gender relations cannot be understood, critiqued, or reconfigured unless we understand the complex workings of "guiding fictions" and "metaphors" of the public/private divide in political, social, and private life, and how they have produced effects that are both constitutive of reality and a mystification of it. The successes and failures of the arguments of speakers at the Congress of Representative Women, of middle-class female urban reformers, and writers such as Glasgow, Hurston, and Smedley provide us with the historical context that helps us approach contemporary theorizations of gender with an eye to the complexity of the public/private and women's challenge to this divide.

To further examine some of the implications of these challenges, the implications of recognizing the long history of the feminist public/private critique, I want to return to Davidson and Hatcher's influential introductory essay in *No More Separate Spheres!*. One of the lessons to be learned from feminist challenges to the public/private divide is that Davidson and Hatcher's analysis of separate spheres is incomplete, because they fail to see that separate spheres is useful politically. Examining separate spheres through the lens of the home/work divide, they omit the significant category of the political, and feminism as a primarily political project. Therefore, their representation of contemporary gender relations seems overly simplistic, precisely because they do not challenge dominant U.S. ideologies of the public/private divide and the assumptions that originate with these ideologies, assumptions about

gender, race, class, citizenship, and the individual that have been examined here.

This inattentiveness to the complexity of gender inequality is manifest in an example that the authors provide in the “pedagogical aims” section of their essay:

Separate spheres feminism, we suggest, has potential to foster anxiety for students who—at least in part thanks to the gains made by women’s movements—grew up in a world where spheres could be characterized by a fluidity seemingly at odds with generalizations about women’s or men’s worlds, behavior, character, aptitude, or other attributes. However, at the same time that experience might be fluid (i.e., mothers who are full-time CEOs), the rhetoric most readily available often remains as static and bifurcated as the separate spheres. (Classroom moments in which a student says, “Women are more emotional and nurturing than men” are as common as the moments when a student says, “I’m not a feminist, . . .”). What is helpful about the separate spheres debate—and the literature that tackles these issues—is that it offers a different model for discussing feminism, one that attends to fluidity, contradiction, and uneven developments. (22)

In this example, the authors conflate separate spheres with essentialist notions of gender. Davidson and Hatcher seem to feel that a student’s statement that “‘women are more emotional and nurturing than men’” derives from separate spheres criticism and that a more “fluid” model of gender relations, articulated by a “bright” student, would more accurately reflect contemporary and historical structures of gender (21). This critique then is not a historical argument against the notion of separate spheres ideology per se, but against essentialist notions of gender, and, as the authors admit, less about “debate” than an “admonition” directed against essentialist representations of gender. But the “mother who is also a CEO” example is as much about ideology and our particular moment in U.S. history as is separate spheres ideology of the nineteenth century and the critical perspective of feminists in the 1960s, 70s, and 80s who relied on this paradigm. (The example evokes the rhetoric of postfeminism, although Davidson and Hatcher carefully avoid the term.)

First, the description of contemporary gender experience as fluid is just as historically inaccurate—if by accuracy one means representative—as those who would describe separate spheres ideology as “what actually happened” in the nineteenth-century United States. CEO mothers are even more unrepresentative of contemporary women than were white middle-class women in

the nineteenth century. Second, the metaphor of “fluidity” seems to create another binary, a binary structured around the suspect notion of “uneven development”—which suggests that the student who does not experience gender as fluidity is anachronistic. The metaphor of fluidity has been an extremely popular one for those who do postmodern studies and, in fact, is a metaphor that calls to my mind the “fluidity” of capital, the language of globalization, and the mobility of the individual, key metaphors in U.S. culture’s conception of itself; to me, it has always been a suspect term, because it seems borrowed from the ever expanding rhetoric of corporate America. (And women’s “fluidity”—termed “adaptability” by reformist Clara Laughlin—is hardly a new concept.)

Their example of the CEO/mother merely replaces the white middle-class homemaker of the nineteenth century with an example as privileged, an example ideologically wed to late twentieth-century U.S. culture’s focus on individual success narratives. If separate spheres ideology portrays women as existing in the private, domestic realm and men in the realm of work, post-separate spheres criticism represents feminist success—or the gendered experience of fluidity—through the image of the working mother. But just as separate spheres ideology cloaked all women in a discourse that privileged white middle-class women, so too does Davidson and Hatcher’s image depend on a similar sleight-of-hand in which class and race privilege quietly marginalizes other women’s less than fluid experiences of the home/work dichotomy. Given the historical reality of women’s work as a necessity and their inequality in the workforce, the authors cannot merely use any working mother to represent gender fluidity, they must use a CEO—a completely nonrepresentative figure for most U.S. citizens, but particularly for female citizens. The example must be appropriately privileged within the privatizing lexicon of American cultural definitions of successful individualism.

What is not transformed in this example is the public/private structure that produces such apolitical individualism as an example. This example does not transform the meanings of the “individual” or of “success” as defined in dominant American ideologies. In contrast, the speakers at the Congress of Representative Women indicate the extent to which the relation between the individual, the social, and the political must be renegotiated to accomplish a feminist redefinition of citizenship, instead of merely entering into a dominant configuration of citizenship built on the exclusion of women and the assumption of women’s inequality. Their oppositional position to dominant masculine ideologies of the public/private divide attempts not merely to have women share men’s place in the structure of civilization, but to transform that

structure. Similarly, the urban reformers demonstrate the necessity of seeing that overcoming the home/work dichotomy cannot be accomplished by a simple substitution of the mother/CEO for the middle-class homemaker. In their study of the working-girl, they demonstrate the mutual constitution of home and work. Examining this mutuality through the unprivileged working woman, these authors demonstrate the necessity of rethinking how home and work are implicated in one another from a feminist perspective that recognizes that worker/mother is not an experience of fluidity, but of conflict and inequality. Within the context of this oppressive mutuality of home and work, the parlor becomes symbolic of women's desire to escape public and private inequalities.

Finally, Glasgow, Hurston, and Smedley all demonstrate the dangers of appropriating masculine models of the relation between public and private, whether those models collapse the distinctions between public or private, or rely on simplistic notions of an individual free from gender, race, and class. Glasgow's attempts to place the female subject within the agrarian narrative only illustrate the extent to which that model depends on the denial of female labor and reproduction in its construction. Furthermore, her assumption of the agrarian perspective shows how feminist appropriations of masculine models are dependent on the marginalization of race and class. And the texts of Hurston and Smedley reveal that even these two "successful" authors could not translate their private stories into a feminist public representativeness using masculine models of the public/private divide. Their texts come to represent incoherent narratives of half-truths, concealing the more bitter truth of the difference that the female body makes in the construction of the public/private divide, a divide that successfully refuses to recognize what Jan Pettman has called the "private inequality" of women and that yet manages to reproduce itself through that very inequality.

Notes

NOTES TO CHAPTER ONE

1. This debate is taking place outside of feminist theory as well. A good introduction to current debates about the public/private dichotomy is Jeff Weintraub and Krishan Kumar's *Public and Private in Thought and Practice: Perspectives on a Grand Dichotomy*.
2. Davidson and Hatcher critique separate spheres in two ways. First, they critique feminist historians' and literary critics' use of the model as essentialist and exclusionary. Second, the authors not only critique this separate spheres criticism, but reject separate spheres as a significant construct in nineteenth-century U.S. culture. For example, the authors argue that "the [separate spheres model] may have been less convincing as an explanation for what actually happened in the nineteenth century than as an explanation for what was happening, ideologically, in the American 1950s" (10). Thus, "we have run the gamut of what the separate spheres model can tell us about the nineteenth century and beyond" (11).
3. For representations of these views see Pateman, Nina Yuval-Davis, Jan Pettman, and Judith Squires.
4. The term "protean" is Jeff Weintraub's.
5. Davidson and Hatcher argue that "separate spheres logic creates a structural disincentive for thinking about nation in relationship to home, politics in relationship to privacy, femininity in relationship to reason, and so on" (20).
6. Trachtenberg also argues that the "building occupied the significant site of the exact junction between the Court of Honor and Midway Plaisance, just at the point of transition from the official view of reality to the world of exotic amusement, of pleasure. Housing exhibits of domestic labor, virtue, and order—exhibits of the ordering hand of women—the building represented the conceptual opposite, the most pointed moral contrast, to the excitements of the Midway (221–22).

7. See Trachtenberg's claim that the "prevailing note was domesticity, the unique and uniquely virtuous powers of women as mothers, homemakers, teachers, and cooks" (221).
8. The Women's Representative Congress was organized by Sewall as a meeting for the recently formed International Council of Women. Apparently, Palmer organized a separate Congress for the Woman's Building, but it is not clear why a separate Congress was organized. See Weimann for the most detailed account of the Woman's Building and the Congresses. On the International Council of Women see Leila Rupp.
9. Black feminist critics have tended to give more attention to the Representative Congress, because black women were excluded from representation in most other venues—including the Board of Lady Managers. Hazel Carby, for instance, has located the birth of the modern black feminist movement at the Exposition. For discussions of black women's participation in the Exposition see Massa and Reed. Here, I do not discuss how black women's speeches differ from white women's but focus on their similar definitions of civilization and citizenship. For discussions of late nineteenth-century black women's use of the rhetoric of civilization to promote racial uplift and women's equality see Tate and Gaines.
10. Sewall, the organizer of the Congress of Representative Women, also compiled the speeches for publication.
11. See also the speech of D'Alcala of Greece, "To you O American women! Lovers of progress, we look with hope. You are the van; you are the flag-bearers. . . . To America has been intrusted the privilege of developing the highest qualities of womanly character and granting unrestrained action to them" (Sewall 644).
12. Similar statements were made by McDonnell, "In securing to women enlarged opportunities, provincial law-makers have placed our young nation on a higher plane, for it is well-known fact that the civilization of a nation may be ascertained to-day more truly by the economic and social status of its women than by its consumption of coal, lumber, or pig-iron" (Sewall 682).
13. I mention this because at least one historian, David Downey, notes the "irony" of the women using the Woman's Building, a separate gendered space, to articulate their equality with men. This is not surprising to most feminist theorists.
14. The intertwining of the discourse of civilization and the domestic has been remarked upon in studies of empire and nationalism, most particularly in Anne McClintock's *Imperial Leather*. Most critics point out how domestic ideology becomes women's special role in furthering the creation of nationhood. However, this same discourse was originally used against women by those who were against women's participation in the abolitionist movement prior to the Civil War; the discourse of

Christianity, civilization, and women's status was, however, taken up by suffragists to argue for their own rights. Nineteenth-century women were well aware of the way in which these discourses could be manipulated in both directions. Part of their intent, then, at the Exposition was to distinguish their notion of civilization from the dominant ideology crafted by elite men.

15. And Gail Bederman argues, in *Manliness and Civilization*, that Turner's implicit concern for masculinity was taken up in numerous distinct venues throughout the early twentieth century.
16. In fact, according to Weimann, Isabella Beecher Hooker passed about a circular reminding Connecticut women of the importance of maintaining good relations between northern and southern women. See Weimann and Massa for more information about the decisions leading up to the decision to exclude black women from the board.
17. It probably did not help that a representative from South Dakota was placed in charge of gathering information about industrial women. Women's economic independence was of particular interest to the nonsuffragist Palmer and to the Southern women who spoke at the Woman's Congress in the Woman's Building.

NOTES TO CHAPTER TWO

1. For a discussion of the different genres in which the working-girl was represented, see Laura Hapke's *Tales of the Working-Girl: Wage-Earning Women in American Literature, 1890–1925*.
2. Each of these texts was popular when it was first published, but each is currently neglected. Van Vorst's text received national recognition when President Roosevelt wrote the preface to the book, which was originally published in *Everybody's Magazine*. Richardson was a journalist for such publications as the *Social Democrat* and the *New York Herald* and *The Long Day* was a bestseller. Laughlin was a bestselling novelist and travel writer who originally wrote her essays for a Chicago newspaper before publishing them as a collection.
3. For an early and interesting essay on middle-class women's isolation during this era, see social geographer R. Miller's "The Hoover in the Garden: Middle-Class Woman and Suburbanization, 1850–1920."
4. Three major histories of urban working-class women are relevant here: Joanne Meyerowitz's *The Woman Adrift* that I mention later; Christine Stansell's *City of Women* which is a social history of working-class women in the pre-Civil War era and Kathy Peiss's *Cheap Amusements* which focuses on working-girls' social life away from the home. Stansell's archival work in nineteenth-century working-class women's history reveals the scant attention given to working-girls prior to the Civil War. Most early reform

- societies' efforts are directed generally to the poor, to widows, to pregnant women, or to seamstresses working in their homes.
5. If this were not clear enough from a reading of Van Vorst's text, then Theodore Roosevelt, in his preface to the book, makes it explicit when he condemns "Americans" who refuse to reproduce as "criminal[s] against the race" (2).
 6. Richardson, like her narrator, according to William O'Neill and Cynthia Sondik Aron, was the daughter of a country doctor; like her narrator, she moved to the city in search of "mental" work after her parents' deaths, only to find herself forced into factory work. Sondik Aron has doubts about the authenticity of Richardson's experiences as a working-girl. However, neither Richardson nor her narrator claims to be from anything but a middle-class Protestant background.
 7. See O'Neill's introduction to the novel in *Women at Work*, Sondik Aron's more recent introduction to the novel, Meyerowitz, and Enstad. All are historians.
 8. See Meyerowitz, Enstad, and Hapke.
 9. Through the novel, Richardson attempts to claim or reclaim a kind of working-girl homosociality. She dedicates the novel to her "lady-friends" and writes of the term, "I know all the prejudices of polite society, which smiles at what is esteemed to be a piece of vulgar vanity characteristic of the working-girl world. . . . [but] there is none other to designate the highest type of friendship, no other phrase to define that affection between girl and girl which is as the love of sisters" (198).
 10. For contemporaneous accounts of these transformations see my discussion of Howell's above and Gilman; useful historical interpretations of changes in housing conditions at the turn of the century include Haltunnen, Trachtenberg, Marsh, Spain, Hayden, and Hawes. Most of these interpretations do not focus on gender; when they do, they do not clearly explicate how urbanization helped to affect these changes.
 11. See Grier, Haltunnen, and Spain.
 12. Two other reform texts on working-girls mention the parlor: *Making Both Ends Meet* (1911) and *A Study of the Conditions of Self-Supporting Women in New York City* (1915).

NOTES TO CHAPTER THREE

1. Some earlier works on gender and regional writing include *Regionalism and the Female Imagination* (1985) and *Teaching Women's Literature from a Regional Perspective* (1982).
2. King is writing in 1980 prior to much revisionary feminist criticism written on Glasgow. But certainly he must have been aware of her writing. King's claims, however, seem quite typical of many claims made about the

renaissance by scholars. Critics usually view paternal lineage and the recovery of memory as primary. In another vein, Daniel Joseph Singal makes similar claims about the renaissance in *The War Within: From Victorian to Modernist Thought in the South, 1919–1945*. Singal, like most critics, includes Glasgow as a precursor to the renaissance. Glasgow's most notable supporter among Southern literary historians has been Louis Rubin, who sees her as a "necessary bridge" between 19th-century literature and the renaissance. He notes that there is hardly any subject taken up in the renaissance that Glasgow has not already touched upon in her novels.

3. Marjorie Pryse and Barbara Ewell point to the assertion of place and region as an "essentialist" position in the writings of those male authors who see regional difference as the only difference that matters. Other feminist responses include Patricia Yaeger's reconsideration of how the "small" concerns of writers such as Carson McCullers and Eudora Welty represent regional—and gendered—concerns through representations of the everyday and the body. Anne Goodwyn Jones argues that the work of gender in the southern renaissance must be understood in terms of women writers' embracing of a national feminist ideal, while their southern male counterparts experienced the postwar as a time of alienation and loss, an alienation reflected in their regionalist frameworks. Yaeger's essay appears in *Haunted Bodies: Gender and Southern Texts*, which is a direct response to the omission of gender in studies of the pre-contemporary South. The introductory essay, "Rethinking the South through Gender," explicitly addresses King and argues that his and others' "theoretical assumptions are—perhaps unconsciously—homologous with dominant Southern ideological patterns" (Donaldson and Jones 5).
4. See also Ransom's essay in *I'll Take My Stand*. He writes in "Reconstructed but Unregenerate" that the culture of the South "long ago came to terms with nature, fixed its roots somewhere in the spaces between the rock and in the shade of the trees, founded its comfortable institutions, secured its modest prosperity—and then willed the whole in perpetuity to the generations which should come after" (5).
5. Stark Young complains about young women from good families using their family name and image to help companies market their products. This could not have been as common an occurrence as young southern women from all backgrounds going to work in factories, shops, and offices. But for Young's purposes it emphasizes the relation between women's opportunities in the "New South" and the denigration of the family—and the order associated with that family.
6. Susan Lurie discusses *Barren Ground*, and Dorinda's lack of identification with Idabella in particular, in relation to two Virginia legal decisions of 1924: the law against miscegenation and the law allowing the sterilization of poor, white, and unmarried Carrie Buck. Lurie is most interested in

how Glasgow writes against the eugenicist—racist and sexist—aims of these laws. My own reading suggests that the laws are also about inheritance and property. Both laws have the effect of making it difficult, if not impossible, for illegitimate children to have a legal status within southern culture.

7. As Dorinda says later, referring to Idabella and Dr. Greylock's children, "What the law doesn't acknowledge, I suppose it doesn't bother about" (492). This comment follows her stepson's suggestion that the children might bear some familial responsibility for the now dispossessed and ailing Jason. But Dorinda's answer suggests, even if it is not what she means, that the law can hardly ask illegitimate offspring to take responsibility when they have no rights of inclusion through inheritance.
8. Compare Dorinda's embarrassment when Jason takes her home at how Old Farm looks, and her disgust at the disorder of Five Oaks, discussed above. Only Eudora's obsession with cleanliness prevents the interior of Old Farm from becoming a reflection of the dissipation at Five Oaks. This difference between the two farms is racialized as a reflection of Idabella's slatternliness, as an example of African-American "slighting," and as a more general reflection of the effect of miscegenation. Later in the novel, Dorinda claims that "slighting" has ruined both blacks and whites. However, Eudora cannot be said to be "slighting," merely ineffective, because of her place within the gendered economy of agrarianism. Similarly, Idabella's and Dorinda's maid Fluvanna's positions within the racial economy might adequately explain their refusal to work, or at least to work according to Dorinda's standards. If race and gender define who can make a claim to inheritance, then their work is wasted in a way that Dorinda—who like her mother is obsessed with waste—does not want to comprehend.
9. Significantly, Rufus is off gambling and killing when he should be at home fixing his mother's churn. Not only does the son receive the mother's and daughter's share of their own labor, but he actually impedes their labor. This seems true of Ralph McBride in *Vein of Iron*, as well; his joy ride with the young girl Minna ends in a paralyzing accident that costs the family its savings and forces Ada to return to work, necessitating the deferment of her own desire to have another child.
10. The farm originally belongs to Dorinda's maternal grandfather. Dorinda's father deeds the farm back to Eudora before his death. Neither Rufus nor Joshua want to work the farm, so Dorinda inherits it from her mother.
11. Many critics have discussed Dorinda's relation to the land. Most contextualize this relation in terms of the pastoral tradition, or, as in Raper, in relation to the myths of the frontier and the Southern garden. Joan Santos is the only critic to situate *Barren Ground* within a specifically agrarian context. She does not provide a specific analysis of the agrarians nor does she take gender into account in her work. Critics often read Dorinda's mastery of nature as an assumption of masculine position, achieved only

through the disciplining of her own female body. However, I know of no critic who has discussed the property owning aspects of Dorinda's reclamation of the land. For different analyses of Dorinda's relation to the land see Harrison, Raper, Bond, Levy, and Holman, as well as Caldwell.

12. Elizabeth Harrison makes a similar point about race in *Vein of Iron*. She does not connect this to the situating of the Shawnee within the text, who, having been eradicated from the wilderness, are able to provide a historical alternative to the regional framework without miring Glasgow within the contemporary racial politics that continually emerge in *Barren Ground*. But I argue that even this imagined historical distance emerges as a problem in *Vein of Iron*.
13. On the wilderness as a concept in U.S. culture, see Slotkin, Nash, and Cronon. Also, see Kolodny and Comer for analyses of gender and the wilderness concept.
14. Faulkner and Hurston are exceptions.
15. Similarly, Raper notes that Ada's sexuality must exist outside time and space (37). I argue that Ada's sexuality cannot exist within the confines of southern regionalism; thus, Glasgow appropriates the wilderness as a space outside the conventional codes of inheritance that define the culture. The public space that is not "owned"—like the "public" roads of *Barren Ground*—functions as a site of illicit behavior.
16. Middle landscape, a pastoral device that rejects both city and wilderness and represents the middle ground of a cultivated settlement, is Leo Marx's term in *The Machine in the Garden*. Marx also notes the frequent pastoral device of describing people as sheep. It is no accident that people are often described as sheep in *Vein of Iron* or that Ada experiences her revelation about the earth while contemplating the sheep Minnie and Martha. Glasgow's appropriation of this device is not as clearly defined as her use of the wilderness.
17. Harrison argues that "Although the Fincastles return to Ironside at the end in order to recapture the old life they had led, they do so to regain autonomy and to farm side by side instead of maintaining the gender specialized roles required by industrialized society" (34).
18. Part of Ada's plan to restore the manse involves Toby and one of the Geddys, the only black family of the village, working the garden: "Toby Waters or some old Geddy will be glad to work it in return for his living. That's the good thing about a village. There's always somebody to do nobody's job" (403). This recruitment of the idiot and the African-American to work the manse's garden is central to Ada's desire to ignore how history structures her own desires. In this scenario, the Geddys and the idiots stand outside that history—the idiot representing the stasis of the village, and the interchangeability of the Geddys representing the insignificance of blacks as individuals—that Ralph questions, even as they

are its products. Glasgow's representation of Toby and the Geddys could be usefully compared to Faulkner's treatment of the same subjects in *The Sound and the Fury*.

NOTES TO CHAPTER FOUR

1. For an overview of recent feminist theories of autobiography see Smith and Watson. And Leigh Gilmore's *The Limits of Autobiography* is a particularly helpful analysis of the relations between truth-telling, trauma, self-representation, and genre.
2. Berlant's work and the work of Benedict Anderson, on the nation as an imaginary construct, are useful in helping to explain how the private individual may become a representative citizen.
3. See also Mohanty and Probyn.
4. Hurston explicitly states that African-Americans seek out Eatonville to escape the Reconstruction South; she tends to emphasize southern Florida's difference from the rest of the South.
5. Only Plant and Rodriguez mention the frontier.
6. I have borrowed this phrase from Hurston's *Mules and Men*.
7. Hurston claims to be nine when her mother dies, but records show that Lucy Hurston died in 1904. So Hurston would have been thirteen at the time of her mother's death. Pam Bordelon, in an essay I discuss below, suggests that this battle may actually have occurred when Zora arrived home from school; the feather-bed may have been the object of contention, since Hurston later tells readers that a similar battle was waged over the bed, but that it was a fight between her brother John, on her behalf, and her father, and not a physical altercation between her stepmother and herself. I am not entirely convinced by this argument, but I find the story about the bed to be more provoking—and probably more painful for Zora—than her story about Sarah. Sarah is mentioned only once more in the text; although as Bordelon notes, Zora lived for several years in Baltimore at the same time as her sister, Sarah's presence in Baltimore is never referred to in the text.
8. "At the time of Jon's death in Memphis in 1918, Mattie was still his wife. . . . Winifred Hurston Clarke verifies this information, revealing the fact that Mattie Hurston got along well with John Hurston's other children." Hurston Clarke reports that she did not understand until she was an adult that Mattie Hurston was not her father's biological mother. (Bordelon 11)
9. See Diana Miles for a similar argument. However, Miles takes a more positive view of Hurston's repetitive return to and revising of her mother's death than I do. She does not give much attention to the second section of the text.
10. On lying and masking as subversive strategies in African-American culture, see Baker and Gates; on lying as a form of signifying in *Dust Tracks*, see Meisenhelder and Plant.

11. Meisenhelder reads the relation between Zora and the white women in a similar way, although she emphasizes their appreciation of Hurston's exoticism and Hurston's ability to perform for the women while maintaining her freedom of self-definition (149–150). In general, Meisenhelder reads Hurston as a trickster figure/writer throughout the autobiography.
12. Meisenhelder sees Big Sweet and the white granny as similar in their power and argues that Big Sweet represents the kind of powerful ability to “back her crap” that the white man sees as constitutive of frontier citizenship. Boi concurs with this view.
13. See Anne McClintock, in *Imperial Leather*, on women as simultaneously symbol of and marginalized in the construction of the nation.
14. Carmon's remark is quoted in Paula Rabinowitz's *Labor and Desire*, one of the few studies to discuss the novel. Mostly, as Rabinowitz indicates, critics have either seen the novel as flawed because 1) the proletarian text mars the feminism of the novel or 2) the feminism mars the proletarian plot. Recently, Sondra Guttman has argued that it is race, and Marie's fear of race, that mars the plot. My own argument is that if there is an incoherence in the text, it is related, as in Hurston's text, to the inability of a female author to articulate the difference that the female body makes in becoming a representative political subject. The public/private divide is obviously implicated in the gender versus class debate about the novel. Just as race is an identifiably political category within the public section of the text, so class and nation become identifiably political categories in Smedley's novel. But neither writer, because they draw on the frontier model of citizenship, can articulate gender as a political category.

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