SUBVERSIVE ANTI-STALINISM: RACE AND SEXUALITY IN THE EARLY ESSAYS OF JAMES BALDWIN

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The value of James Baldwin's stock in the literary critical market, like Ralph Ellison's, rose with the political fortunes of racial integration in the postwar period. "Everybody's Protest Novel," Baldwin's well-known attack on Harriet Beecher Stowe and Richard Wright, represents an African American contribution to the larger postwar effort to repress the cultural and political legacy of the Red Decade. Baldwin's rejection of the protest tradition of American literature is consistent with the discourse of Cold War liberalism associated with the anti-Stalinist intellectuals of *Partisan Review*, yet as a gay African American—or, in postwar parlance, a Negro and a homosexual—Baldwin had little stake in the domestic arrangements of *pax Americana*. He thus employed end-of-ideology rhetoric to other ends besides the cultural erasure of Communism, namely, the extention of liberal subjectivity to blacks and gays. Through what seems today like a withdrawal from political engagement, Baldwin carried on the struggle for equal rights, not "by any means necessary" but by means that seemed most promising to him and other black writers during the early years of the Cold War.

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In a recent reassessment of Wright, Houston Baker cites Baldwin's essays on *Native Son* as "paradigm instances" of traditional bourgeois aesthetics in their dismissal of the "merely" social in favor of individuality and their celebration of a transcendent sphere of Art.[1] Baker is right about the liberal-humanist inscriptions of "Everybody's Protest Novel" and "Many Thousands Gone," but bourgeois aesthetics covers a wide territory; the specific Cold War context of Baldwin's critique of Wright must be taken into account in order fully to understand Baldwin's liberal aesthetics. In the wake of World War II and the Holocaust as well as a series of betrayals by the Communist Party culminating in the "iron curtain" across Eastern Europe, liberal intellectuals "abandoned many traditional liberal tenets . . . replacing them with a chastened and, in their view, 'realistic' philosophy which stressed man's sinfulness, the seeming inevitability of

conflict among nations, and the dangers of democratic rule."[2] The old left's faith in progress was equated with a dangerous utopian innocence, and solidarity shaded into a dark surrender of individual consciousness to the totalitarian state.

Among those redefining liberalism in the postwar era were the disillusioned former leftists later known as the New York Intellectuals. Arthur Schlesinger, Jr.'s *The Vital Center* (1949) and Lionel Trilling's *The Liberal Imagination* (1950) provide valuable guides to their rapprochement with the welfare state and their hostility to the political and cultural left. Published the same year as "Everybody's Protest Novel," *The Vital Center* describes a politics of consensus in which moderate liberals and conservatives join forces against the extremes of Communism on the left and fascism on the right. Schlesinger and company traded a Marxian model of society, where the bourgeoisie and proletariat were locked in decisive struggle, for a pluralist model, in which a complex web of tensions were continually being negotiated—pragmatically, non-ideologically—by responsible leaders in government, business, unions, and so forth. Although it bred "contradiction" and "strife," conflict must be entertained rather than suppressed because it was "the guarantee of freedom."[3] In effect, the one big dialectic was dropped in favor of a multitude of little dialectics. The New York Intellectuals never really conceded the vocabulary of the left, its embattled stance, or its moral high ground; throughout *The Vital Center*, in fact, Schlesinger keeps referring to the "new radicalism," not the new liberalism. The pluralist model, however, with its intricate network of conflicts dispersing power and providing a "natural" system of checks and balances, ultimately insured stability rather than revolution. It permitted former leftists, in an age of nuclear stalemate, to fetishize struggle and agonize over the burdens of "freedom" without any messy social consequences.

Trilling's contribution to the discourse of anti-Stalinist liberalism was to shift the pluralist drama of multiple dialectics to the individual psyche. Throughout the forties and fifties, Trilling would refer to Keats's "negative capability" and Montaigne's approbative "*ondoyant et divers*" to describe the ideal posture of a complex mind confronting a complex reality. One of the best known explications of his view is found in "Reality in America," a critique of V. L. Parrington that targets the Progressive and Popular Front traditions of American letters. "A culture," says Trilling, disputing the title of Parrington's *Main Currents in American Thought*,

> is not a flow, nor even a confluence; the form of its existence is struggle, or at least debate—it is nothing if not a dialectic. And in any culture there are likely to be certain artists who contain a large part of the dialectic within themselves, their meaning and power lying in their contradictions; they contain within themselves, it may be said, the very essence of the culture, and the sign of this is that they do not submit to serve the ends of any one ideological group or tendency.[4]

The classic American authors whom Parrington slighted—Poe, Melville, Hawthorne, James—were "repositories" of that cultural dialectic; according to Trilling, "they contained both the yes and no of their culture" (RA, 9). Eschewing the security of ideology, the liberal imagination hosted the dynamic contradictions that a "free" society and a "free" mind were heir to.

Trilling defended nineteenth-century American romancers in "Reality in America" as adjuncts to the tradition of high modernism from Flaubert and Dostoyevsky to Kafka, Joyce, and Lawrence. Symbolistic, self-referential, formally innovative, and intellectually demanding, the modernist text best represented the heroic, critical subjectivity the New York Intellectuals valued in reaction to the realist aesthetics of the left. Through their strategic conflation of modernism and the avant-garde, these critics maintained the illusion of an adversarial cultural politics; their construction of modernism, however, was entirely compatible with their consensus liberalism, as the tropes of irony, complexity, ambiguity, and maturity, common to both discourses, suggest. The realism/modernism debate thus provided a literary parallel to the global opposition of totalitarianism/freedom. The gender inscriptions of these cultural and political divisions are clear from Schlesinger's depiction of "totalitarian liberals" as soft and sentimental and freedom as a "fighting faith": the annihilating threat of a feminized left fostered a kind of anti-Stalinist machismo that made modernism and liberalism strenuous, manly propositions.[5]

Baldwin began his literary career in the bosom of anti-Stalinism. In his early twenties, having been passed over by black editors, Baldwin earned money writing book reviews and essays for Sol Levitas of the *New Leader*, Elliott Cohen and Robert Warshow of *Commentary*, and Philip Rahv of *Partisan Review* as well as Randall Jarrell of the *Nation*. Despite his youth, he managed in these first published pieces to catch the irony and authority of the New York Intellectuals' style. "He had what is called taste," Mary McCarthy recalled, "—quick, Olympian recognitions that were free of preju-

dice."[6] Baldwin's engagement with the official left, moreover, enacted a light version of the anti-Stalinists' political narrative: he joined the Young People's Socialist League in 1943 and shortly thereafter became a Trotskyite. Baldwin remembered these first editors, especially Levitas, with a good deal of affection and gratitude. Although later in life he would claim that his left-wing experience was negligible, his coming of age in a period of disillusionment with the left inevitably shaped his political and asethetic convictions.[7]

Baldwin's essays in the forties and early fifties reflect his anti-Stalinist origins. As he remembers it, he gave up reviewing after a year or so because he grew weary of books on the "Negro problem" and resented the assumption that his race made him an authority on the subject.[8] Yet his primary theme was not race but rather the political and literary shortcomings of proletarian and Popular Front literature. Characterizing Maxim Gorki's novel *Mother* as typically childish and simplistic, Baldwin further maligns it by calling it a "best seller" and associating it with mass cultural melodrama. "With some ideological concessions and the proper make up," says Baldwin, "*Mother* would make an impressive vehicle for, say, Bette Davis." Gorki's novel demonstrates the "invalidity" of the doctrine that art is a weapon in the class struggle. Art, he intones, with the youthful solemnity of Arthur Schlesinger, Jr., "belongs to us all, including our foes; who are as desperate and as virtuous and as blind as we are and who can only be as evil as we are ourselves."[9] Like the anti-Stalinists, he is even more contemptuous of the progressive, celebratory literature associated with the Popular Front. Comparing Ross Lockridge, Jr.'s *Raintree County* to "The Battle Hymn of the Republic," Baldwin remarks that unfortunately the novel "is not nearly so concise [and] it is a good deal more difficult to get through without gagging." Lockridge's Whitmanesque celebration of the people "define[s] the individual out of existence."[10] The first sentence of his review of Hodding Carter's *Flood Crest* describes the novel as "yet another addition to the overburdened files of progressive fiction concerning the unhappy South." Ridiculing the clichés of this genre, Baldwin observes that Carter is for "Change" and "Progress" brought about by "the Common People" acting together in "The American Way."[11] He criticizes black novelist Chester Himes's *Lonely Crusade* along the same lines and attributes its undistinguished prose and its shapelessness to Himes's ambition to treat exhaustively the subject of Negroes and the left. "The resolution—the holding aloft of the union

banner—," observes Baldwin, "leaves one with that same embarrassed rage produced by a reading of *Invictus*."[12] Baldwin's attitude toward Erskin Caldwell's novel, *The Sure Hand of God*, is obvious from the title of his review: "Dead Hand of Caldwell." In "Journey to Atlanta," he describes the ill-fated encounter of "The Melodeers," a Harlem vocal group to which two of his brothers belonged, with Henry Wallace's Progressive Party and characterizes the Wallacites as the anti-Stalinists would: as aristocratic do-gooders abstractly committed to racial brotherhood and insensitive to individual blacks.

This synopsis of Baldwin's early reviews doesn't mean that he was unconcerned with race; he did review books by and about African Americans and the "Negro problem," and his first stories profoundly explore race and racism in the United States. Nevertheless, the debt to anti-Stalinist liberal discourse is obvious in his disdain for left-wing faith in a committed art, for abstractions like "the common man" and "the people," for sentimentalism and mass culture as well as in his corresponding respect for individuality and psychological complexity, for social contradiction over false unity, for political and aesthetic maturity and the *succes d'estime*.

Baldwin develops these themes in "Everybody's Protest Novel" and "Many Thousands Gone," essays that were published in 1949 and 1951 respectively in *Partisan Review*—that is, at the beginning of the Cold War in the most influential organ of cultural anti-Stalinism. One of Baldwin's best known essays, "Everybody's Protest Novel" has been widely admired as a manifesto of artistic independence in which Baldwin repudiates second-class citizenship in the republic of letters by refusing to write the kind of "Negro problem" novel a white readership expected of him. *Uncle Tom's Cabin* is the protest novel in question, the paradigmatic literary treatment of the Negro problem. "Many Thousands Gone" works out the critique of Richard Wright's *Native Son* that Baldwin touched upon in the concluding paragraphs of the earlier essay.[13] For Baldwin, these novels represented two ends of the spectrum of American protest literature: nineteenth-century evangelical reform and twentieth-century proletarian aesthetics. In the gendered terms implicit in Baldwin's evaluation, they are the feminine and masculine traditions of literary realism. The tensions between "sentimental" and "sociological" realism, however, are subordinated to the broader oppositions of anti-Stalinist liberal discourse which shape Baldwin's thinking in these essays: propaganda versus art (Stowe "was not so much a novelist," he says, "as an impassioned pamphleteer" [EPN, 14]);

realism versus modernism; and mass culture versus the avant-garde. These polarities are ideologically charged and magnetized in their alignment by the Cold War agon of east and west, totalitarianism and freedom.

If, for her well-known recuperation of *Uncle Tom's Cabin*, Jane Tompkins had wanted to find the *locus classicus* of modernist contempt for sentimentality, she need have looked no further than "Everybody's Protest Novel."[14] "Sentimentality," says Baldwin,

> the ostentatious parading of excessive and spurious emotion, is the mark of dishonesty, the inability to feel; the wet eyes of the sentimentalist betray his aversion to experience, his fear of life, his arid heart; and it is always, therefore, the signal of secret and violent inhumanity, the mask of cruelty. (EPN, 14)

Baldwin wrests moral authority from the left by probing for the unconscious motives of political altruism as Trilling had in his short stories and his novel, *The Middle of the Journey* (1947). It's not goodness that motivates do-gooders like Stowe's or Trilling's fellow travelers, but rather fear, guilt, and hatred. Uncle Tom—feminized, Christ-like victim though he is—is really a displacement of white terror, for Stowe's "virtuous rage," says Baldwin, stems from "a panic of being hurled into the flames, of being caught in traffic with the devil" (EPN, 17). Conflating Stowe's evangelical novel with the kind of middlebrow "problem" fiction that the anti-Stalinist intellectuals associated with the Popular Front and held in utter contempt, Baldwin argues that novels like Laura Z. Hobson's *Gentleman's Agreement* (1947) reveal a "terror of the human being, the determination to cut him down to size" (EPN, 16). Their objective, he continues, invoking simultaneously the nightmare of totalitarian conformity and the benign populism of the Popular Front, is "to reduce all Americans to the compulsive, bloodless dimensions of a guy named Joe" (EPN, 19). Although Baldwin doesn't explicitly draw on the contemporary critique of mass culture, his indictment of the sentimental, the feminine, the popular, and the left in "Everybody's Protest Novel" is ideologically compatible with the views of the Frankfurt school and of Clement Greenberg and Dwight Macdonald.

Following Baldwin's own psychoanalytical example, we might conclude that his energetic repudiation of Stowe is motivated by an equally powerful attraction and susceptibility to *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. Indeed, in the "Autobiographical Notes" that precede "Everybody's Protest Novel" in *Notes of a Native Son*, Baldwin describes the

novel's formative importance. The eldest child of a large family, he helped raise his younger brothers and sisters: "As they were born," he recalls, "I took them over with one hand and held a book with the other. . . . and in this way I read *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and *A Tale of Two Cities* over and over and over again" (AN, 7). In a later memoir, *The Devil Finds Work*, Baldwin returns to this primal literary scene and reveals that he read Stowe's novel "compulsively, the book in one hand, the newest baby on my hipbone. I was trying to find out something, sensing something in the book of immense import for me." His mother was concerned enough to keep hiding the book, and Baldwin obsessed enough to keep finding it.[15] In one sense, Baldwin's rejection of his favorite childhood novel marks an intellectual development that resonates with what Thomas Hill Schaub has called "the liberal narrative": the odyssey from innocence to maturity, from moral simplicity to ambiguity, from sentimental idealism to modernist irony. Baldwin, moreover, had been a teenaged preacher in a pentacostal Harlem church, and Stowe's evangelical Christianity was a powerful reminder of the "provincial" Harlem roots he had severed in his bid for the "cosmopolitan" life of the artist. This putting away of the things of childhood, politically or otherwise, is not the only significance Stowe has for Baldwin in the context of Cold War liberalism, however. There are issues of gender and sexuality to be explored as well, but they must be deferred to a consideration of Baldwin's larger argument regarding Stowe and Richard Wright.

According to Baldwin, *Native Son* doesn't represent an advance over *Uncle Tom's Cabin* but is instead its mirror image; if Uncle Tom, the emasculated black saint, is ultimately the embodiment of white terror, so too is Bigger Thomas, the rapist-murderer. Although Baldwin never utters the word "ideology," contaminated as it is in anti-Stalinist discourse, it is precisely what he means by "the cage of reality bequeathed us at our birth." The oppressed internalize the oppressor's view and thus are "bound, first without, then within, by the nature of our categorization" (EPN, 20). Bigger, a character created by a black author, is nonetheless a projection of white racial hostility, the "native son" as "nigger." The concrete, inescapable experience of racial oppression in everyday life inevitably provokes black rage, yet every African American must resist the temptation to live up—or down—to the worst expectations of the normative (white) culture. He is obliged, says Baldwin, "to make his own precarious adjustment to the 'nigger' who surrounds him and to the 'nigger' in himself." This "tension" must be "perpetually sustained—

for without this he has surrendered his birthright as a man no less than his birthright as a black man" (MTG, 36). In terms of character and characterology, Bigger does not sustain the tension; he is objectified, a cipher, a one-dimensional construct of white racism.

Ironically, Bigger is also the projection of white revolutionary desire. Published in 1940, *Native Son* is a product of the thirties, when, "swallowing Marx whole," black intellectuals like Wright elided "the Negro" and "the Worker" and committed themselves to "class struggle" (MTG, 31). Baldwin, on the other hand, calls the final courtroom speech of Max, Bigger's lawyer, "one of the most desperate performances in American fiction" (MTG, 38). To entertain the notion that Bigger is a harbinger of black revolution is "to exploit the national innocence," for the African American has neither "the means of wreaking vengeance upon the state" nor "any desire to do so." The "savage paradox" of his condition is that it is not defined solely by oppression and hatred but also by "the force and anguish and terror of love" (MTG, 39). Baldwin's affirmation of black ambivalence over black militance, of integration over revolution, might reasonably leave *him* open to charges of Uncle Tomism, but he legitimates his position as black spokesman by associating the white heat of Bigger's anger with white racism, and by identifying revolutionary aspiration with conventional American optimism and innocence. "Red," in other words, is more white than black.

In the symbolic order of Cold War liberalism, red is also more feminine than masculine. As many critics have noted, Baldwin's struggle with Wright is Oedipal; one of his boldest tactics, as a gay man whose masculinity is open to question, is pre-emptively to feminize Wright in the masculinist terms of anti-Stalinist discourse. Baldwin kills the literary father, that is, by smearing him as the literary mother. Just as Bigger *is* Uncle Tom (since he is merely the flip side of the same ideology of white fear and hatred), so Wright *is* Harriet Beecher Stowe. "Everybody's Protest Novel" ends with a gothic image of the two writers' interracial coupling:

> the contemporary Negro novelist and the dead New England woman are locked together in a deadly, timeless battle; the one uttering merciless exhortations, the other shouting curses. And, indeed, within this web of lust and fury, black and white can only thrust and counter-thrust, long for each other's slow, exquisite death. (EPN, 21–22)

This *danse macabre* of eros and sadomasochism, a parody of genuine integration, reconstructs Wright, the virile black revolutionary, as a

schoolmarm in bustle and whiteface. Baldwin thus exorcises the threatening feminine and maternal tendencies associated with Stowe and *Uncle Tom's Cabin*—"the book in one hand, the newest baby on my hipbone"—and, indeed, with his role within "his father's house."[16] The young Baldwin provides a textbook case of gender anxiety: he was illegitimate, the child of his mother and not David Baldwin, his stepfather; he was cast in the role of surrogate mother as eldest daughters often are; he was effeminate and tormented about his sexual identity. Vulnerable to the neo-traditionalist gender and sexual prescriptions of the Cold War period, he shores up his own masculinity at the expense of Wright. There is, finally, no difference between the feminine and masculine traditions of literary realism. The crucial distinction is not between Stowe and Wright, but between Stowe and Wright on the one hand and Baldwin on the other.

Baldwin's second major point in these two essays concerns the limitations of Marxism's conception of reality, its exclusive focus on the economic and social facts of life. In "Many Thousands Gone" he rejects Wright's materialist analysis of the race problem and takes a therapeutic approach that presumably owes its inspiration to Freud, the intellectual hero of anti-Stalinist intellectuals. Referring to "the Negro" in the third person, Baldwin brackets his own racial identity and adopts a persona that is implicitly white insofar as it represents the authoritative voice of consensus. Racism has created a kind of national neurosis, and the psychic cost of repressing the Negro is too high; "in our estrangement from him," says Baldwin, "is the depth of our estrangement from ourselves" (MTG, 23). Denying "the Negro" his human complexity, "we"—white Americans—reduce him to a one-dimensional social problem and thereby displace and manage our own guilt; "if he breaks our sociological and sentimental image of him," says Baldwin, "we are panic-stricken and we feel ourselves betrayed" (MTG, 24). The health of the national psyche thus depends on our confronting and owning what we've repressed.

"Problem" literature by white or black writers perpetuates this neurotic denial and displacement. Far from liberating its object of concern, Baldwin argues, the protest novel actually ratifies the status quo by staying safely on the plane of the social and thereby allowing us to evade the universal heart of darkness within. The existential self, however, the "void" of the unconscious, is the true source of freedom and salvation. It is also the source of art: "the reality of man as a social being is not his only reality," says Baldwin, "and that artist is strangled who is forced to deal with human beings solely in social

terms" (MTG, 31). Stereotypes of black goodness (Uncle Tom) or evil (Bigger Thomas) are both denials of black subjectivity and the complexities of black community. If Wright had explored Bigger's inner contradictions, his character's fate would have been "human" and "tragic." If he had explored the rhythms of black social life instead of accumulating socioeconomic detail, we would better understand "the relationship that Negroes bear to one another, that depth of involvement and unspoken recognition of shared experience which creates a way of life" (MTG, 33). Protest novels give us the mistaken impression "that in Negro life there exists no tradition, no field of manners, no possibility of ritual or intercourse." African Americans do have a rich cultural heritage, Baldwin asserts, only "there has as yet arrived no sensibility sufficiently profound and tough to make this tradition articulate" (MTG, 34). As David Leeming points out, Baldwin had, hopefully, that sensibility, and he was struggling to articulate that tradition in his first novel, *Go Tell It on the Mountain* (1953), published two years after "Many Thousands Gone."[17]

Others have noted that Baldwin's complaint about the perceived absences in African American culture—"no tradition, no field of manners, no possibility of ritual or intercourse"—alludes to Henry James's famous catalogue, in his study of Hawthorne, of "absent things in American life": "No sovereign, no court, no personal loyalty, no aristocracy, no church, no clergy, no army, no diplomatic service, no country gentlemen, no palaces, no castles . . ." (Lacking these furnishings of the novel in nineteenth-century America, Hawthorne, according to James, was obliged to exploit the resources of romance.) Another plausible source for Baldwin, however, is Lionel Trilling's "Manners, Morals, and the Novel." This essay, which cites James's list, addresses concerns that are closer to Baldwin's own, namely the liberal left's ideological conception of reality and its vitiating effect on culture.

Trilling describes manners as the nuanced social consequences of brute economic facts of money and class, the "hum and buzz of implication" within a particular cultural setting.[18] Manners are the lifeblood of the classic novel, but according to Trilling they make right-thinking, educated Americans uncomfortable. Although these readers can't get enough of society in their fiction, their "abstract" and "doctrinaire" notions of reality explain their preference for problem novels like *The Grapes of Wrath*, *Gentlemen's Agreement*, and *Native Son* over the great novelistic tradition of "tragic reality"

that Faulkner alone is keeping alive.[19] "In proportion as we have committed ourselves to our particular idea of reality we have lost our interest in manners," he says (MMN, 203–4). Our "moral righteousness," however, needs a stiff dose of "moral realism":

> We have the books that point out the bad conditions, that praise us for taking progressive attitudes. We have no books that raise questions in our minds not only about conditions but about ourselves, that lead us to refine our motives and ask what might lie behind our good impulses. (MMN, 207)

The similarity to the sentiments expressed in "Everybody's Protest Novel" and "Many Thousands Gone" is striking, yet even if "Manners, Morals, and the Novel" was not specifically on Baldwin's mind, Trilling apparently influenced the style and substance of his work. The Baldwin persona, for example—ironic, modulated, and assured, even in his fledgling reviews—closely resembles the voice of Trilling, whose essays, later collected in *The Liberal Imagination*, were appearing in the same journals. Trilling had democratized the royal "we" which Baldwin as a black writer used to unexpected effect in "Many Thousands Gone." (Baldwin also shares Trilling's bad habit of sometimes coasting on rhetorical skill, strewing prose bouquets over lapses in linear development.) More to the point, the two writers were engaged in the same task of redefining political and aesthetic "reality" for the anti-Communist moment; they helped license an epistemological shift in intellectual discourse from the social to the individual, from objective to subjective. The "savage paradox" of African American ambivalence toward the United States, the "tension" between "the nigger without" and "the nigger within" that blacks must perpetually manage—both situations correspond to Trilling's "yes and no of culture," the multiple dialectics that heroic white liberals must contemplate and sustain. What Baldwin demonstrates in his protest against the protest novel is that blacks are equal to the demands of the liberal imagination.

In making this assertion, I'm not implying that Baldwin was a dupe of anti-Stalinism or that he played Rochester to Trilling's Jack Benny. On the contrary, there was a critical dimension to his position that was largely absent from the anti-Stalinist discourse of white liberals like Trilling. Before turning to the element of resistance in Baldwin's early work, though, I want to consider its significance within the contemporary context of Cold War cultural politics.

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Baldwin and Wright were both living in Paris when "Everybody's Protest Novel" and "Many Thousands Gone" appeared. After the second attack on him, by a young writer who'd been his protégé, Wright began to suspect that Baldwin had been recruited by the United States government to harrass him. This was hardly pure paranoia on Wright's part, for he had been under FBI surveillance in the States, and the CIA cooperated in that effort once he moved abroad. Baldwin wasn't an informer, and he smiled at Wright's efforts to keep meetings of the French-American Fellowship Club that Wright had organized a secret.[20] Wright's FBI file reveals, however, that in Paris, in 1951, "one James Baldwin," incorrectly identified as a student, "attacked the hatred themes of the Wright writings" and opposed the Club's efforts to "perpetuate 'Uncle Tom Literature methods.'" Somebody had been taking notes. By the end of the sixties, ironically, Baldwin's own FBI dossier, over 1,400 pages long, would dwarf Wright's. In the eyes of the government the mature James Baldwin was a "pervert," a "Communist," "an advocate of Black Power," and a writer "likely to furnish aid or other assistance to revolutionary elements."[21] In the forties and fifties, however, Wright, the former Party member, was the black writer under suspicion for subversive tendencies—which included a too-fervent commitment to civil rights. "His interest in the problem of the Negro," according to one 1944 FBI report, "has become almost an obsession."[22]

How Wright's George Harris sentiments could be squared with "Uncle Tom Literature methods" was not the sort of question FBI agents pondered. Conservative racists like Herbert Hoover regarded all black intellectuals with suspicion and were not likely to appreciate or even recognize divergent opinions within this community on politics or literature. For Hoover, the "Negro problem" simply meant trouble.[23] Anti-Stalinist liberals, however, were still liberals. Their commitment to civil rights was genuine, even though it was complicated by the exigencies of the Cold War.

For most Americans, *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka* (1954) marks the beginning of the modern civil rights movement, yet in order to understand the attitude of anti-Communist liberals toward race in the first phase of the Cold War, it's important to recognize the efforts to end segregation—outside of the south, at least—that were underway in the 1940s. The Brotherhood of Sleeping Car Porters, for example, prompted Roosevelt to issue an

executive order in 1941 to end employment discrimination. The Congress of Racial Equality (CORE), established in 1942, led several successful campaigns to desegregate movie theatres, restaurants, and playgrounds. And while the Brown case was its crowning achievement, the NAACP won a series of legal victories starting in 1946 with the desegregation of interstate buses. Jackie Robinson, who joined the Brooklyn Dodgers in 1947, opened doors for other athletes and also made black Americans more visible to the national consciousness. During the Second World War, racial discrimination and segregation within the armed forces provided a particularly compelling example of the contradiction between American ideals and American social realities.[24] Truman's Executive Order of 1948 led to the desegregation of the military and set an important precedent for the federal government's intervention on behalf of racial equality.[25] These are the social advances Baldwin had in mind when he made the following observation in "Many Thousands Gone":

> Aunt Jemima and Uncle Tom are dead, their places taken by a group of amazingly well-adjusted young men and women, almost as dark, but ferociously literate, well-dressed and scrubbed, who are never laughed at, who are not likely ever to set foot in a cotton or tobacco field or in any but the most modern of kitchens. (MTG, 26)

On the other hand, he was under no illusion about the persistence of racism in American society and the barriers these "well-adjusted young men and women" would encounter. "In a land where, it is said, any citizen can grow up and become president," he had dryly observed in an earlier essay, "Negroes can be pardoned for desiring to enter Congress."[26]

Anti-Stalinist intellectuals supported civil rights legislation. As pluralists they believed in negotiation among varous interest groups, or at least the responsible leaders of interest groups; the NAACP could be a player as well as, say, the United Auto Workers or the New York Stock Exchange. Theoretically, as one film historian put it, "People who came in from the cold, regardless of race, color, or creed, found a warm welcome, a job with an equal-opportunity employer, and shelter from the stormy weather that made life outside the vital center very difficult indeed."[27] The anti-Communist liberals of the Americans for Democratic Action pressed successfully for inclusion of a civil rights plank in the Democratic Party Platform of 1948, even though it antagonized southern Democrats.[28] Since

"freedom" was the trump card of the United States, the Cold War provided opportunities for civil rights advocates, just as the Second World War and the "four freedoms" it was fought for had. But the commitment of anti-Stalinist liberals to desegregation was subordinated to the fight against Communism. "We Put Freedom First," a pamphlet of the American Committee for Cultural Freedom, asserted that Soviet propaganda exaggerated racial tensions "to divert attention from the totalitarian threat and to spread confusion in the progressive camp." The authors were confident that the condition of blacks in the United States had been steadily improving since the Emancipation Proclamation, and although the struggle for racial equality was not yet won, it would be "madness" to risk "the total enslavement of Europe because in the Southern states of America Negroes still have to travel in separate railway compartments."[29] Cold War liberals had, so to speak, reassigned slavery to the overseas bureau and thus relegated the central fact of African American experience and the most potent symbol in a continuing struggle for equality to a historical footnote. Whatever racial problems persisted in American society could be resolved by what Karl Popper had called "piecemeal social engineering."[30]

In the polarizing atmosphere of the Cold War, the Oedipal struggle between Wright and Baldwin assumed a larger political significance than most literary feuds. That two prominent African American literary intellectuals had chosen exile in Paris, at a time when the United States was struggling for the hearts and minds of Europe, was a fact not lost on either the American Embassy or dissident French intellectuals. Wright, who'd had some difficulty getting abroad in the first place due to his outspoken criticism of the United States, was buttonholed at an Embassy function by a white compatriot; "Listen, for God's sake," he begged, "don't let these foreigners make you into a brick to hurl at our windows!"[31] Wright nevertheless continued to denounce American racial discrimination and supported the non-aligned leftist groups who made up the *Rassemblement Démocratique Révolutionnaire*.

The anti-Stalinists, on the other hand, enlisted Baldwin in the cultural Cold War by reprinting "Everybody's Protest Novel" in *Perspectives USA*, one of the journals founded in the early fifties to woo European intellectuals to the side of freedom.[32] Trilling was the guest editor of the issue in which Baldwin's essay appeared, and he both acknowledged and deflated this agenda when he distinguished between his ostensible role as American "Cultural Ambassador" and

his more modest, "true" identity as a writer. The former, he says, is a propagandist who would celebrate "the *energy* and *reality*" of American literature "—quite as if energy and reality were new criteria of literature invented by the simple, passionate people who swept over the middle part of the great North American continent." The writer, on the other hand, is "a lover of discord" for whom "it is impossible to stand in a simple relation to a whole national literature."[33] He is, in short, the familiar Trillingesque figure who says yes and no. In a typical rhetorical maneuver of Cold War liberal rhetoric, Trilling establishes his authority by disavowing it (updating the time-honored American strategy of "Ben Franklin, printer"). He pairs Baldwin's essay with black novelist Richard Gibson's "A No to Nothing" under the rubric of "Two Protests against Protest." Gibson's imaginary dialogue between a publisher and a black novelist reiterates many of the same themes as "Everybody's Protest Novel." According to Gibson, the black writer has two choices: he can either succumb to the demands of totalitarian liberal publishers and become one of the legion of "puerile imitators of Richard Wright" or struggle for the freedom of claiming his modernist heritage as a contemporary of "Joyce, Proust, Mann, Gide, Kafka and not merely . . . Chester B. Himes. . . . of Eliot Valery, Pound, Rilke, Auden and not merely of Langston Hughes." In a striking mixed metaphor, Gibson chooses the west for the African American writer: "His black skin is no iron curtain about his brain; he is not cut off from the main stream."[34] The "Notes on Contributors" cite Baldwin's critiques of the protest novel in which "he has condemned the generalized story of social criticism, and has insisted that fiction be motivated by the truly individual concern."[35] In one sense, then, Richard Wright was wrong about Baldwin; the younger writer didn't spy on him for the United States. But in another, of course, he was right, for Baldwin's attack on *Native Son* became propaganda in the war against Communism.

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There is more than one way to read Baldwin's "protest against protest," however. Although he opposed the politics and aesthetics of the Communist Party, he was not willing to sacrifice the struggle for civil rights to Cold War objectives. Freedom, as I mentioned above, had a historical resonance for African Americans long before the Cold War; its binary opposite was not Soviet totalitarianism but American slavery.[36] The tragic past and the burdens of history which consensus historians counterposed to Progressive optimism had a

specific referent for Baldwin in his stepgrandmother; Barbara Baldwin, who spent her last years living in the Baldwin's Harlem apartment, had been born a slave in the south. As Leeming observes, this mother of fourteen children, "white" as well as black, would represent to her impressionable grandchild "the prototype of that ancient forced motherhood that makes black and white Americans 'brothers' and 'sisters' whether they like it or not."[37] If Baldwin would not defer the black/white conflict to the east/west conflict, he might adapt the ideology of the latter to his own uses.

In his analysis of *Invisible Man*, Schaub asserts that Ralph Ellison was redefining reality in subjective, universalist terms in order "to wrest reality not only from the Stalinists . . . but from the misperceptions of all white Americans."[38] Baldwin, who admired Ellison as the first African American novelist to represent "the ambiguity and irony of Negro life," was engaged in a similar project (AN, 12). The perceptual limitations of "Stalinist" reality that he outlined in "Everybody's Protest Novel" and "Many Thousands Gone"—a tendency toward simplification and stereotyping—were the perceptual limitations of white Americans toward black Americans. For the former to objectify the latter as a "sociological or sentimental image" was to behave like—a Communist. If "reds" are "white" and "whites" are "red," then perhaps the only true blue Americans are black. Baldwin, of course, never advances an argument so fancifully tendentious, yet his concluding remarks in "Many Thousands Gone" depict the black struggle for subjectivity as a particularly American endeavor. If the African American capitulates to white definitions of black identity, he says, he "can only acquiesce in the obliteration of his own personality, the distortion and debasement of his own experience, surrendering to those forces which reduce the person to anonymity and which make themselves manifest daily all over the darkening world" (MTG, 42). Baldwin invokes the spectre of totalitarianism—the extinction of the individual under Communism—to mark the urgency of the race problem in America. Unlike white anti-Stalinists who subordinated race to the arms race, Baldwin appropriated Cold War rhetoric to denounce domestic oppression.

Baldwin's perception that the greater threat to American society was racism rather than Communism was shared by black leaders. Testifying before the House Committee on Un-American Activities, Lester B. Granger of the National Urban League cited the Ku Klux Klan as an appropriate target for HUAC investigation.[39] Clarence

Mitchell of the NAACP declared that southern blacks "could not believe that the threat of Communism was as much a menace to their freedom as the actual and present danger of mob violence." A young former Party member named Foster Williams testified that the Party was more interested in exploiting black struggle for propaganda purposes than supporting it. "In looking at the achievements and contributions of the American Negro," he said, "we see at once that they have been made within the framework of our American political system."[40] Although it is possible that Williams was simply telling HUAC what it wanted to hear, there is no question that Party policy in the forties and fifties was out of step with black organizations and the aspirations of most African Americans. With the revival of the Popular Front in 1941, the Party's commitment to civil rights took a back seat to the war effort. According to Irving Howe and Lewis Coser, "the Communists were the main force within the Negro community in favor of muting—and often preventing—the campaign for equal rights."[41] When Earl Browder was removed from office in 1945, the Party reinstated the "Black Belt" thesis of the militant Third Period, which envisioned a separate black state south of the Mason-Dixon line federated with the United States according to the Soviet model.[42] During the great integrationist phase of modern black protest, then, the Party espoused a separatist policy, only to abandon it in 1959 when self-determination and Black Power were on the horizon.

The question that remains to be asked is what the critical potential of subjectivity and freedom was for blacks in the postwar period. In light of poststructuralist postmortems on the bourgeois subject, we might be inclined to write off Baldwin's bid for this piece of the democratic-capitalist pie as either historically quaint or politically benighted or both. The ideological crimes of bourgeois liberalism—its spurious claims to objectivity and equality—have been well documented. There's no question that for most anti-Stalinist intellectuals, Cold War liberalism marked a retreat from the left yet provided an illusory iconoclasm in the figure of the heroic, tragic individual at odds with society. In short, the anguished dialectics of saying yes and no inside and out masked accomodation to the warfare-welfare state. But as Elizabeth Fox-Genovese points out, those groups to whom subjecthood has historically been denied are not so eager to attend the funeral of the bourgeois subject. "Surely it is no coincidence," she continues, "that the Western white male elite proclaimed the death of the subject at precisely the moment at

which it might have had to share that status with the women and peoples of other races and classes who were beginning to challenge its supremacy."[43] Neither the affirmation of the liberal self (Trilling) nor the "de-facement" of it (de Man) comes naturally to marginalized Others who cannot take their subjectivity for granted. Thus, Baldwin's embrace of Cold War liberalism should not be regarded as mere capitulation; it is in itself a political act necessarily different from Trilling's, and it opens up unanticipated possibilities for claims upon the social order. His subsequent involvement in the civil rights movement—so different from the New York Intellectuals' distance from the grassroots political movements of the fifties and sixties—demonstrates as much.[44] Baldwin's efforts to secure the full rights of a complex, contradictory consciousness for the black artist in the early fifties complement the efforts of black leaders like Martin Luther King, Jr. and Thurgood Marshall to secure the full civil rights of black citizens. In this sense they represent a continuation of the left's struggle more than a repudiation of it.[45]

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Baldwin, it should be remembered, was a member of a sexual minority as well as a racial minority. My reading of "Everybody's Protest Novel" and "Many Thousands Gone" earlier in this essay addressed the gender and sexual implications of Baldwin's repudiation of Wright; by way of conclusion, I'd like to return to this subject and consider Baldwin's explicit comments on sexuality, for here, too, he managed to adapt Cold War liberalism to his own purposes.

"The contemporary sexual attitudes," he observed somewhat wistfully in an early review of an obscure novel called *The Sling and the Arrow*, "constitute a rock against which many of us founder all our lives long; no one escapes entirely the prevailing psychology of the times."[46] Since the "prevailing psychology" of the early Cold War conceived of homosexuality as a form of deviance and traced its roots to arrested Oedipal development, the classic shift of allegiance among Cold War liberals from Marx to Freud was complicated in Baldwin's case by sexual identity, if not race. Baldwin didn't write as extensively about homosexuality in this period as he did about the "Negro problem"; historically, the concept of gay civil rights had yet to take its cue from the earlier movement for racial equality. Moreover, in the postwar imaginary, homosexuality was politically contaminated by Communism and thus engaged the messy issue of civil liberties rather than civil rights. In his few discussions of it,

however, Baldwin staked the male homosexual's claim for the same kind of complex subjectivity he had demanded for the African American.

The title of his most explicit postwar statement, "Preservation of Innocence" (1949), suggests his strategy for reconciling homosexuality and Cold War liberalism. Published in the second issue of a new Parisian journal, *Zero*, the essay establishes the axes which construct postwar homosexuality—good/evil, natural/unnatural—and then cannily dismantles them. The current "hysteria" over homosexuality, Baldwin argues, is related to rigidly defined gender roles: the "present debasement [of the homosexual] and our obsession with him corresponds to the debasement of the relationship between the sexes."[47] Popular culture, specifically the *roman* and *film noir*, provides an index to the debasement of masculinity and femininity in the cartoonish stereotypes of the tough guy and the treacherous *femme fatale*. Baldwin's primary concern is the tough guy, "who, for all his tommy-guns and rhetoric is the innocent" (PI, 19). The hard-boiled genre ultimately endorses an adolescent sentimentalism of boy meets girl typical of "The Rover Boys and their golden ideal of chastity" (PI, 21). Baldwin reveals a particular animus against James M. Cain; in fact, his review of *The Moth* (1948) a year earlier in the *New Leader* was called "Modern Rover Boys."[48] In that novel, set in the Depression, the protagonist's love for a twelve-year-old girl revealed how "preposterous and tasteless" his ideal of feminine purity was. Cain's homophobia is explicit in an earlier novel, *Serenade* (1939), in which "the hero's mistress, a lusty and unlikely senorita," stabs to death a predatory "invert," thereby preserving the protagonist's "immaculate manliness" and destroying any threat to "the union of the Boy and Girl." This gesture, however, is futile; killing the homosexual doesn't restore sexual order, "for the boy cannot know a woman since he has never become a man" (PI, 20).

Baldwin's argument in "Preservation of Innocence" turns postwar Freudianism on its head. It's not the homosexual male who fails to resolve the Oedipus complex but rather the hypermasculine, heterosexual male. Furthermore, the psycho-sexual innocence and immaturity of the tough guy implicates him in the political innocence of Communists and fellow travelers. According to Baldwin, gender and sexuality are paradoxical, complex phenomena which cannot be reduced to the simple binarisms of popular culture and Christian morality. "The recognition of this complexity," he says, "is the signal of maturity; it marks the death of the child and the birth of the man"

(PI, 18). Only by embracing every aspect of human experience are we able to "free" ourselves. For all his talk about gender complexity and the "communion" of the sexes, however, both in "Preservation of Innocence" and a 1954 essay on Gide's homosexuality, Baldwin shows no interest in deconstructing the Freudian female, straight or lesbian. Several critics have remarked on the misogyny of such protagonists as David and Giovanni in *Giovanni's Room* (1956) and Rufus in *Another Country* (1962). Many of his female characters, moreover, are models of essentialist feminine masochism and passivity. In his interpretation of *Another Country*, William A. Cohen argues that for Baldwin gender is "a rigidly fixed, virtually incontestable axis of difference" while sexuality, on the other hand, is remarkably fluid, "to the extent that 'gay' and 'straight' barely constitute identities."[49] Baldwin was essentially a critic of heterosexism rather than sexism. Although he was sensitive to the excesses of Cold War machismo, his feminization of Wright and the left which I described earlier shows that he wasn't above deploying gender categories to his own advantage. Suspect as a gay man, politically and psychologically, Baldwin was more eager to appropriate masculinity than revise it.

Baldwin's insight about the relationship between homophobia and neo-traditionalist gender roles in the postwar period anticipates the work of later historians. According to Elaine Tyler May, Cold War anxieties were expressed in a domestic ideology which made the "nuclear" family the vehicle for personal fulfillment and social stability: "if presumably subversive individuals could be contained and prevented from spreading their poisonous influence through the body politic, then the society could feel secure."[50] Feminism posed one threat to the nuclear family and, by extension, to the global balance of power; the male homosexual represented another. McCarthy and other right-wing forces railed with equal vehemence against Communists and queers in the government and subjected both groups to purges. The "striped pants set" in the State Department which "lost" China to the Reds was coded as homosexual by its critics; these cookie-pushing diplomats lacked the masculine wit and will essential to the fight against Communism.[51] Baldwin's FBI file also illustrates the conflation of political and sexual deviance in anti-Communist discourse; agents kept track of Baldwin's sexual preferences and the interracial and homosexual themes of his novels as well as his political activity. One of the reports prompted Hoover's handwritten question, "Isn't Baldwin a well known pervert?"[52] On

the heels of wartime heroism, the Cold War ushered anti-Communist machismo into fashion among liberals as well as conservatives. Endless debates in liberal journals over the "hards" and the "softs" on the Communist question provide one example of its rhetoric.[53] The "soft" Stalinist/homosexual was the fifth columnist who allowed—invited—penetration and infiltration by a foreign power.

Baldwin's recuperation of the homosexual, however, like his recuperation of the African American in the early Cold War, was essentially literary rather than political. There was hardly a flourishing subgenre of progressive homosexual "problem" novels; nevertheless, Baldwin equated Gore Vidal's *The City and the Pillar* (1948), William Maxwell's *The Folded Leaf* (1945), and Charles Jackson's *The Fall of Valor* (1946)—contemporary novels that addressed the subject of homosexuality—with the likes of *Gentleman's Agreement*:

> It is quite impossible to write a worthwhile novel about a Jew or a Gentile or a Homosexual, for people refuse, unhappily, to function in so neat and one-dimensional a fashion. If the novelist considers that they are no more complex than their labels he must, of necessity, produce a catalogue, in which we will find, neatly listed, all those attributes with which the label is associated; and this can only operate to reinforce the brutal and dangerous anonymity of our culture. (PI, 21–22)

The indirect allusion to totalitarianism at the end of the passage, the aversion to ideological simplification and innocence, the privileging of complexity, maturity, and masculinity—these are the same strategies Baldwin used to negotiate a modernist African American literature in Cold War terms. His own treatment of male homoeroticism in *Giovanni's Room* and *Another Country* would be a far cry from either the sentimental problem novel or the "case history" of "abnormal psychology" he described in his review of *The Sling and the Arrow*.

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In the late forties, the New York Intellectuals gave Baldwin his start and his subject as a writer. Following their example, he rejected the Communist left along with the realist literary traditions associated with it, and he embraced the cultural tropes of irony, ambivalence, complexity, and maturity that defined Cold War liberalism and modernism. How admirable "Everybody's Protest Novel" is as "a call for the integrity and freedom of art from the shackles of ideology" must be determined in light of its historical context, for its compat-

ibility with the hegemonic discourse of Cold War liberalism made it a missle in the international propaganda war between east and west.[54] Baldwin's own objectives, however, were not entirely congruent with those of the New York Intellectuals, and they would become ever more divergent as the civil rights struggle gained momentum in the late fifties and early sixties. Ultimately, the Cold War construct of the dynamic liberal subject lent itself to different agendas for white and black anti-Stalinists, and perhaps straight and gay anti-Stalinists. To the former, it provided a retreat not only from vulgar Marxism's *homo economus* but from the left altogether; to Baldwin, it offered equal status under the imagination. Existential selfhood (ironically, like the Christian soul in nineteenth-century abolitionist discourse) was a radically egalitarian concept that transcended race and sexual orientation. Baldwin's liberal faith in a shared, complex humanity as the basis of social change may seem naive or simply conservative to a contemporary audience versed in postmodernist concepts of difference, the decentered self, identity politics, and queer theory, but liberalism is as liberalism does, even Cold War liberalism. "Freedom," said Schlesinger in *The Vital Center*, "must become, in Holmes's phrase, a 'fighting faith,'"[55] to which Baldwin on the home front replied, "Amen."

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NOTES

[1] Houston A. Baker, Jr., *Blues, Ideology, and Afro-American Literature: A Vernacular Theory* (Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1984), 140–43.

[2] Mary Sperling McAuliffe, *Crisis on the Left: Cold War Politics and American Liberals, 1947–1954* (Amherst: Univ. of Massachusetts Press, 1978), 63.

[3] Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *The Vital Center: The Politics of Freedom* (Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1949), 255.

[4] Lionel Trilling, "Reality in America," in *The Liberal Imagination: Essays on Literature and Society* (1950; New York: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1979), 9; hereafter cited parenthetically in the text as RA.

[5] For more detailed descriptions of Cold War liberalism, see McAuliffe, 63–74, and Thomas Hill Schaub, *American Fiction in the Cold War* (Madison: Univ. of Wisconsin Press, 1991), 3–24.

[6] Quoted in James Campbell, *Talking at the Gates: A Life of James Baldwin* (New York: Viking, 1991), 40.

[7] James Baldwin, "Introduction: The Price of the Ticket," in *The Price of the Ticket: Collected Nonfiction 1948–1985* (New York: St. Martin's, 1985), xii–xiii.

[8] James Baldwin, "Autobiographical Notes," in *Notes of a Native Son* (1955; New York: Dial, 1963), 8; hereafter cited parenthetically in the text as AN. See also Campbell, 38.

[9] James Baldwin, "Battle Hymn," *New Leader* 30 (29 November 1947), 10.

[10] James Baldwin, "Lockridge: 'The American Myth,'" *New Leader* 31 (10 April 1948), 10.

[11] James Baldwin, "Change within a Channel," *New Leader* 31 (24 April 1948), 11.

[12] James Baldwin, "History as Nightmare," *New Leader* 30 (25 October 1947), 11.

[13] "Everybody's Protest Novel" was published for the first time in *Zero*, a short-lived European journal, a few months before it appeared in *Partisan Review*. Both this essay and "Many Thousands Gone" are collected in *Notes of a Native Son*; hereafter they are cited parenthetically in the text from this volume as EPN and MTG.

[14] Jane Tompkins, *Sensational Designs: The Cultural Work of American Fiction, 1790–1860* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1985), 122–46. See Horace A. Porter, *Stealing the Fire: The Art and Protest of James Baldwin* (Middletown: Wesleyan Univ. Press, 1989), 46–49.

[15] James Baldwin, *The Devil Finds Work* (New York: Laurel-Dell, 1976), 16–17.

[16] "In My Father's House" was for years the working title of Baldwin's autobiographical first novel, *Go Tell It on the Mountain*. Although the biblical and Oedipal allusions of the original title are obvious, the similarity to *Uncle Tom's Cabin* and the traditions of literary domesticity should not be overlooked.

[17] David Leeming, *James Baldwin: A Biography* (New York: Knopf, 1994), 84.

[18] Lionel Trilling, "Manners, Morals, and the Novel," in *Liberal Imagination*, 194; hereafter cited parenthetically in the text as MMN.

[19] Trilling doesn't mention these titles, but they may be assumed from the following passage, along with *A Bell for Adano*, *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit*, and *The Snake Pit*: "What is the situation of the dispossessed Oklahoma farmer and whose fault it is, what situation the Jew finds himself in, what it means to be a Negro, how one gets a bell for Adano, what is the advertising business really like, what it means to be insane and how society takes care of you or fails to do so—these are the matters which are believed to be most fertile for the novelist, and certainly they are the subjects favored by our reading class" (MMN, 202).

[20] James Baldwin, "Alas, Poor Richard," in *Nobody Knows My Name: More Notes of a Native Son* (New York: Laurel-Dell, 1961), 165.

[21] Quoted in Natalie Robbins, *Alien Ink: The FBI's War on Freedom of Expression* (New York: William Morrow, 1992), 345, 348–49.

[22] Quoted in Robbins, 285.

[23] See Richard Gid Powers, *Secrecy and Power: The Life of J. Edgar Hoover* (New York: Macmillian, 1987), 127–28, 323–24.

[24] As the sole support of his large family, Baldwin was not drafted. He remembered, however, the heightened racial tensions in Harlem during the war: "everybody felt a directionless, hopeless bitterness, as well as that panic which can scarcely be suppressed when one knows that a human being one loves is beyond one's reach, and in danger." The danger he referred to was military training in the south; families in Harlem experienced "a peculiar kind of relief" when black soldiers were shipped to overseas theaters of war.

The funeral of David Baldwin, Sr. took place on 2 August 1943, the same day a major riot broke out in Harlem over the shooting of a black serviceman by a white policeman. The next day, Baldwin recalled, he and the family "drove my father to the graveyard through a wilderness of smashed glass" ("Notes of a Native Son," in *Notes*, 90–91, 98–100, 76; hereafter cited parenthetically in the text as NNS).

[25] My brief sketch of integrationist efforts in the forties draws on Marty Jezer, *The Dark Ages: Life in the United States 1945–1960* (Boston: South End Press, 1982), 296–98; and Richard M. Dalfiume, *Desegregation of the U. S. Armed Forces: Fighting on Two Fronts, 1939–1953* (Columbia: Univ. of Missouri Press, 1969), 2–4.

[26] James Baldwin, "The Harlem Ghetto," in *Notes*, 53.

[27] Peter Biskind, *Seeing Is Believing: How Hollywood Taught Us to Stop Worrying and Love the Fifties* (New York: Pantheon-Random House, 1983), 228.

[28] McAuliffe, 37.

[29] *We Put Freedom First* (New York: American Committee for Cultural Freedom, 1950; Reprint, with Preface by Sidney Hook, Congress for Cultural Freedom, n.p., n.d.), 11, 12.

[30] Karl R. Popper, *The Poverty of Historicism* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957), 64–70.

[31] Quoted in Michel Fabre, *The World of Richard Wright* (Jackson: Univ. Press of Mississippi, 1985), 179.

[32] *Encounter*, published by the Congress for Cultural Freedom, is a better-known example because of the discovery in the sixties that it had accepted funding from the CIA. In the eyes of the New Left at least, anti-Stalinist claims of independence and iconoclasm were thus compromised. See Christopher Lasch, *The Agony of the American Left* (New York: Knopf, 1969), 101–10. *Perspectives USA* was funded by the Ford Foundation.

[33] Lionel Trilling, "Editor's Commentary," *Perspectives USA* 2 (Winter 1953), 7.

[34] Richard Gibson, "A No to Nothing," in "Two Protests against Protest," *Perspectives*, 91.

[35] "Notes on Contributors," *Perspectives*, 179.

[36] The testimony of Paul Robeson before the House Committee on Un-American Activities in 1956 neatly dramatizes the clash of black and white discourse on slavery during the Cold War. When asked about Stalin, Robeson replied that it was up to the Soviet Union to pass judgment and reminded the committee members of their own national disgrace. "You are responsible, and your forebears," he charged, "for sixty million to one hundred million black people dying in the slave ships and on the plantations, and don't you ask me about anybody, please."

"I am glad you called our attenion to that slave problem," a staff member of HUAC responded. "While you were in Soviet Russia, did you ask them there to show you the slave labor camps?"

"You have been so greatly interested in slaves," added the Chair of the Committee, "I should think that you would want to see that." Robeson, however, refused to concede slavery to the anti-Communist camp. "The slaves I see are still in a kind of semiserfdom," he replied. "I am interested in the place I am, and in the country that can do something about it." See *Thirty Years of Treason: Excerpts from Hearings before the House Committee on Un-American Activities, 1938–1968*, ed. Eric Bentley (New York: Viking, 1971), 785–86.

[37] Leeming, 4.

[38] Schaub, 99.

[39] Delacy Wendell Sanford, "Congressional Investigation of Black Communism, 1919–1967" (Ph.D. diss., SUNY Stony Brook, 1973), 117.

[40] Quoted in Sanford, 126, 153.

[41] Irving Howe and Lewis Coser, *The American Communist Party: A Critical History (1919–1957)* (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957), 415–16.

[42] "On balance," says Gerald Horne, "the Black Belt thesis was probably not an

asset for the party, particularly during the postwar period when blacks moved en masse to the North and West" ("The Red and the Black: The Communist Party and African-Americans in Historical Perspective," in *New Studies in the Politics and Culture of U. S. Communism*, ed. Michael E. Brown, Randy Martin, Frank Rosengarten and George Snedeker [New York: Monthly Review Press, 1993], 205).

[43] Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, "The Claims of a Common Culture: Gender, Race, Class, and the Canon," *Salmagundi* 72 (Fall 1986), 134. For a fuller consideration of this subject, see Betsy Erkkila, "Ethnicity, Literary Theory, and the Grounds of Resistance," *American Quarterly* 47 (1995): 563–94.

[44] Relations between Baldwin and the New York Intellectuals became increasingly strained through the fifties as black and white intellectuals developed different analyses of the race question. Although Baldwin soon revised the view expressed in his 1947 review of Chester Himes's *Lonely Crusade* that "no real group identification is possible" among blacks and that there is no "Negro tradition to cling to in the sense that Jews may be said to have a tradition" ("History as Nightmare," 11), his respect for Jewish culture is still apparent in "Many Thousands Gone." A decade later, however, *The Fire Next Time* (1963) provoked Norman Podhoretz to pen "My Negro Problem—and Ours," an essay which marked the neo-conservative turn of *Commentary*. On black-Jewish tensions in the sixties, see Alexander Bloom, *Prodigal Sons: The New York Intellectuals and Their World* (New York: Oxford Univ. Press, 1986), 331–37.

[45] Porter makes a similar point when he observes that in "Many Thousands Gone," Baldwin "projects a social message that is closely akin to Wright's." In his view, the essay owes its "striking rhetorical power" to the tension between Baldwin's "conscious repudiation and unconscious affirmation" of Wright (79).

Robert J. Corber considers Baldwin's critique of Wright in light of Trilling's "subjectivization of experience" and argues that Baldwin did *not* renounce the social sphere: "Although Baldwin seemed to share Trilling's assumptions about the nature of reality in that he criticized Wright for ignoring the construction of Bigger's subjectivity in relation to racist constructions of African-American male identity, he was not interested in shifting attention away from the historical specificity of the individual's identity as a social being. Rather, he wanted to show that the individual's subjective experience of the material world was complexly related to her/his identity as a social being" (*In the Name of National Security: Hitchcock, Homophobia, and the Political Construction of Gender in Postwar America* [Durham: Duke Univ. Press, 1993], 34). At the risk of sounding Jesuitical, I am arguing that Baldwin carries on the social struggle by exploring the resources of subjectivity. Corber's formulation underestimates Baldwin's debi to anti-Stalinist discourse.

[46] James Baldwin, "Without Grisly Gaiety," *New Leader* 30 (20 September 1947), 12.

[47] James Baldwin, "Preservation of Innocence," *Zero* 2 (Summer 1949), 16; hereafter cited parenthetically in the text as PI.

[48] Although the hard-boiled genre developed by Cain, Hammett, and Chandler owes something to the proletarian novel, Baldwin's consistent association of Cain with the middlebrow problem novel is puzzling, particularly since Cain was never involved with the Popular Front and in fact was staunchly anti-Communist in the late forties and fifties. See Roy Hoopes, *Cain* (New York: Holt, Rinehart, Winston, 1982), 389–90.

[49] William A. Cohen, "Liberalism, Libido, Liberation: Baldwin's *Another Coun-*

try," *Genders* 12 (1991), 2.

[50] Elaine Tyler May, *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (New York: Basic Books, 1988), 14.

[51] See John D'emilio and Estelle B. Freedman, *Intimate Matters: A History of Sexuality in America* (New York: Harper and Row, 1988), 292–94; May, 95; Corber, 8–9.

[52] Robbins, 347–48. Hoover's own sexual orientation was the subject of speculation and rumor because of his unorthodox companionate "marriage" to Clyde Tolson. See Powers, 171–73, 185. In his sensational biography, Anthony Summers attributes Hoover's animus toward gays to the Director's closet homosexuality (*Official and Confidential: The Secret Life of J. Edgar Hoover* [New York: Putnams & Sons, 1993], 91–95), a position Athan Theoharis refutes in *J. Edgar Hoover, Sex, and Crime: An Historical Antidote* (Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1995), 11–55.

[53] See McAuliffe, 109–10.

[54] Quotation from Leeming, 64.

[55] Schlesinger, 245.