Race and the Fragmented Self in Twentieth-Century American Literature.

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RACE AND THE FRAGMENTED SELF
IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY AMERICAN LITERATURE

VOLUME I

A Dissertation

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in

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by

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M.A., Louisiana State University, 1991
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To Dana

for believing
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Abstract

Beginning with a definition of "race" as a system of discourse about human difference sustained by its symbolic articulations, I approach "race" as analogous to the social disciplines that Foucault describes as constructing the modern subject. Bringing together certain speculations of Lacan, Fanon, and Morrison, I suggest that this racial discipline facilitates a racial "mirror stage" through which "blackness" and "whiteness" are projected as distinct and unified conceptions of identity. My readings of representative texts examine how such racial identity patterns are both seductive as resolutions of self-discord and destructive in tension with the multiple, interpersonal, and historical determinations of the self. The anxieties of psychic and bodily disintegration represented in these texts simultaneously inscribe this tension and, because they are evoked in overtly racialized contexts, suggest the uses and effects of "race" in U.S. culture. These implications of "race" are quite different for whites and blacks, but it is precisely the study of texts by white and black writers together, as a literature of social racialization, rather than as literatures by "whites" and "blacks," that reveals the discursivity of "race" and its role in the construction and destruction of the self.
Thus, chapter 2 reads Stein's representation of "black," fragmented subjectivity in *Melanctha* as a racialized re-presentation of the social disciplines that circumscribed Stein's own identity and precipitated her anxieties of disintegration, while also noting how Stein's compositional approach dramatically illustrates "race" as a discursive system. Chapter 3 shows how Ellison's *Invisible Man* evokes the "white" mirror stage, its production of disciplinary models of "black" identity, and the disintegration of the "black" self-experience that results. Chapter 4 compares the blackface device employed in Berryman's *Dream Songs* to the function of historical minstrelsy, suggesting how Berryman simultaneously acknowledges the internal "blackness" that structures normative "white" identity, yet manipulates a carnivalized "blackness" to allay the moral and organizational anxieties of "whiteness." Chapter 5 suggests additional historical and theoretical directions for this racially politicized psychoanalytic criticism, applying Kohutian self psychology to the felt disintegration of the African-American self that, in Morrison's *Beloved*, is the legacy of slavery's intrapsychic and intrafamilial disruptions.
Chapter One
Introduction: Identity, Race, Fragmentation

In going underground, I whipped it all except the mind, the mind. And the mind that has conceived a plan of living must never lose sight of the chaos against which that pattern was conceived. That goes for societies as well as for individuals. (Invisible Man 567)

Near the end of Part Two of his Autobiography, in the midst of a rare admission of incapacity, Benjamin Franklin uses an intriguing parable to illustrate his personal surrender to "faulty character" (82). After outlining his "bold and arduous project of arriving at moral perfection" (75), with its thirteen categories of "virtue," its step-by-step regimen for making virtue habitual, and its reduction of both moral identity and daily life to a set of visual grids, Franklin admits that the category he labeled "Order" was his persistent tripping stone. To illustrate his frustrated resignation to disorder, Franklin tells the story of a man who, given the unendurable difficulty of perfecting an ax, decides to accept the instrument in its flawed state. The frank self-ironization of this anecdote is undercut by an irony Franklin evidently misses--the fact that his bid to perfectly organize and order his identity is derailed precisely by the inability to obtain perfect "Order"--but what makes the parable most telling, given its location in this archetypical document of the shaping of "American identity," is its almost unconscious yoking of the struggle for self order with a certain semiotics of color.
The anecdote, as Franklin relates it, involves a man so obsessed with making the "face" of his new ax "bright" that he is willing to take on the arduous task of turning the wheel himself while the smith attempts to "grind it bright." Like Franklin in his struggle to order his life, the poor fellow eventually tires of the futile task. "No, says the Smith, Turn on, turn on; we shall have it bright by and by; as yet 'tis only speckled. Yes, says the Man; but—I think I like a speckled Ax best" (82, Franklin's emphasis). As Franklin notes, quickly restoring his own upper hand, this is probably emblematic of other seekers after virtue who, lacking a systematic and structured approach like his own, "have given up the Struggle, and concluded that a speckled Ax was best" (82). Still, he admits, in that one category--"Order"—he himself was "incorrigible"—speckled, as it were.

As is indicated by the preoccupation with order itself and by the careful structuring, regimentation, and gridwork of "virtue," this episode in The Autobiography is not merely concerned with moral and ethical perfection, though that is the overt content. Franklin's entire approach to the pursuit of virtue, rather, reveals an effort to categorize, define, structure, and bring into a state of complete and final order both everyday life (his scheme includes a grid for the activities of each day, every day the same) and identity itself. Having developed a
comprehensive schema of "character" and its component categories, and specifications of what constitutes proper behavior in each category, Franklin embarks on a program of complete definition and control of his own identity--his own "self." The brief admission of failure, of course, is what is intriguing in a text that was destined to become the gospel of the pre-eminent myth of "American identity": the self-made, self-reliant, autonomous, independent individual. Here, from the father of American individualism, is the confession that his most conspicuous attempt to put his "self" in order was utterly frustrated by disorder. What I am most interested in, however, is Franklin’s selection of a metaphor of light and dark to illustrate his thwarted struggle to bring subjective coherence out of incoherence: the effort to brighten the ax is a struggle to secure brightness and clarity from darkness and chaos. Franklin’s italicized moral, a speckled Ax was best, refers then not only to the distasteful flecks of color which remain on the face of the ax, not only to the dirty "little black spots" which signify moral failures and speckle the would-be clean slate of Franklin’s daily examination grids (78), but also to the order of his identity itself. The effort to create an orderly, coherent, and structured self is figured here as a struggle to remove dark "speckles" of discoloration from a shiny, clean surface.
I open with the "speckled Ax" not because this book will be extensively concerned with Benjamin Franklin, or with the American ideal, so prevalent during the nineteenth century and so dependent on the Franklin archetype for its inspiration, of self-reliant individualism and self-made success. Nor do I intend a detailed analysis of the models of society and identity Franklin is working with--the extent of his essentialism and his attitude toward social context and historical process, for example. Rather, I open with the ax anecdote because it is suggestive of many of the concerns of the study at hand and because Franklin's *Autobiography* seems to be the document which initiates many of those concerns for a cultural tradition of which I will study only the most recent epoch. Foremost among those concerns are the ideal of individualism itself and the development of race and racism in the United States, ideas which, as theorists of race, culture, and identity have begun only recently to realize, are inextricably linked in a complex and vicious circle of codependence. That the moment in which Franklin posits his most audacious conception of the perfectly ordered, defined, and controlled subject is also the moment in which he begins to think in terms of eradicating "little black spots" (78), is illustrative of the entire history of the relationship of subjectivity and race in America which this book takes as its central theme. Franklin's "Art of Virtue," which is
really an art of self-ordering, and his parable of the ax, which is really a parable of the self, stand as the preface to a history of which this book will study only the most recent chapters. The making of "subjectivity" in America, the forging of both an "American identity" and the "American culture" which determines it, has been a process of constant wheel turning, constant grinding, constant effort to make the face of the ax bright and pure; always, the struggle has foundered on the ineradicable speckling of the ax. This book is about the presence, the meaning, and the denial of those speckles, and the realization, suppressed by Franklin even as he suggests it, that, perhaps, "a speckled Ax is best."

Of course, Franklin's story refers neither to racially typed human beings nor to the concept of race itself. Nevertheless, the "little black spots" of which the perfect self must be cleansed are immensely suggestive of what Toni Morrison has recently analyzed as the necessary presence of darkness in opposition to which white subjectivity is continually staged and restaged. In her brief but crucial new rationale for American literary criticism, Playing in the Dark, Morrison argues that the pre-eminent concern of literature in the United States has always been "the architecture of a new white man" (14-15). Though she focuses on other texts and on the wide discursive field she calls "Africanism" as the darkness in opposition to which
the new, white, male American identity was forged, the characteristics she attributes to this dominant idea of American selfhood are in fact those of Franklin, the archetypical new American white man: freedom, independence, individualism, autonomy, authority, power (Morrison, Playing 38-45). As Morrison details, most vividly by referring to the experience of the Scottish-American frontiersman William Dunbar, the identity of this new white man was established in contradistinction to a dark-skinned savage "other" that was positioned "out there." The savage other was eventually elaborated most fully as the Negro slave and the entire complex of terms, images, metaphors, and stereotypes that soon congealed around the black man in America: an entire discursive field that Morrison terms "Africanism." The initial instance of this vast network of racial discourse, according to Morrison, is the "repressed darkness" onto which "artists--and the society that bred them--transferred internal conflicts" (38-39). The anecdote with which Franklin illustrates the tale of his own struggle with disorder is an exemplar of just this process, including as it does the sense of both repression and darkness (the ax must be "bright," the speckles must be ground out). It would seem to be no accident, then, that such an image appears in connection with what may have been the first formalized "architecture of the new white man" in American literature.
If this segment of the *Autobiography* is not the first such blueprint for American manhood, it is surely the one most obsessed with order and structure, a fact that increases its relevance to the particularly Foucauldian analysis of subjectivity and race which I intend. The rather remarkable attempt to reduce identity to an ordered set of procedures and categories (one of which is concerned with enforcing "order" itself), the related attempt to reduce identity to an objectified visual or spatial presentation (grids on a page), the internalization of the codes of virtuous behavior—all seem to exemplify Michel Foucault’s assumptions about the nature of the Western world which was emerging at this time. Franklin’s methods exhibit both the increasing obsession with order and the increasing concern with "subjectification" through means of objectification that Foucault links to the Enlightenment and the end of the eighteenth century. Briefly, this was the historical moment that saw the emergence of what Foucault would call the "modern subject"--the individual: systematized according to a fixed set of categories, constantly examined and evaluated against a code of normativity, and constituted by the written record of itself.

Using Foucault’s genealogy of the modern subject as part of its groundwork, the present study will concern itself with the anxiety about disorder that surfaces in Franklin’s
account--almost against his will--and with its complex relation to the "ordering" of life, to the creation of "subjectivity," and to the development of race and racism in America. By examining twentieth-century literary texts that persistently link the anxiety of psychic disorder to issues of racist practice and racial identity--often within contexts of near or outright psychopathology--we can trace in this century the effects of the kind of obsession with order and subjectification of which Franklin's "Art of Virtue" represents only one of the first instances. When we examine literary representations of both race and identity, and especially racial identity, in the light of these issues, we can begin to see where we are today as a racialized society, why we are here, and where we might be able to go both socially and culturally by taking a full accounting of how we got here.

Specifically, I want to examine why and how, as Morrison asserts, race "functions as a metaphor so necessary to the construction of Americanness" (47), why and how "Africanism" itself, as she also suggests, had and has the effect of "ego-reinforcement" for white subjects (8). Even more specifically, I will use the peculiar and increasing prevalence in the twentieth century of a particular manifestation of this anxiety about disorder--literary metaphors of psychic and bodily disintegration--as the problematic through which I engage such questions of self
formation and race. The central question of this study will be: what is the role of the U.S. concept of race in the fragmentation of subjectivities, both white and nonwhite? For example, what cultural dynamics are in play when race, or "blackness," to use our culture's most common codification of racial difference, becomes a crucial aspect of the psychic fragmentation depicted by what we call "white" writers? Following Morrison, we might ask what "white" writers are trying to accomplish when they write about race, when they deploy "Africanism." It is with such concerns in mind that this study will try to open up new perspectives on the art of Gertrude Stein and John Berryman, both of whom deploy a distinctive "Africanist" presence in their work. Significantly, as I discuss in chapters 2 and 4, both also depict characters who are tragically unable to piece together a disintegrating sense of identity. At the same time, we need to ask why "self-disintegration," especially (but not only) since the advent of postmodernism, is such an apt metaphor for the psychological experiences of members of social minorities, like African Americans, that are marginalized by racial definitions. Why have writers from backgrounds as divergent as those of Frantz Fanon, Salman Rushdie, Gloria Anzaldúa, and Toni Morrison found the language and themes of psychic and physical disintegration useful for describing their historically very different experiences of racial oppression? By analyzing the
disintegration motif in novels by Ralph Ellison and by Morrison herself in chapters 3 and 5, respectively, the present study seeks to understand such fragmentation precisely in relationship to and, in specific ways, as a result of the kinds of psychologically motivated racial definitions deployed by Stein and Berryman. As we shall see, psychic disorder, the persistent speckling of the "ax," continued to be a preoccupation of U.S. literature into and throughout the twentieth century. My concern is with how that disorder relates to the fact that citizens of the United States, like no other people in history and no other people on earth, from Philadelphia in 1787 to Gettysburg in 1863 to Birmingham in 1963 to Los Angeles in 1993, have had one consistent and obsessive ax to grind: the presence of race in our society.

**Some critical premises: transgressing boundaries**

The extent to which Benjamin Franklin's ideal of an ordered and autonomous subject, implicit throughout the *Autobiography*, continues to function as one of the central assumptions, guiding myths, and accepted "truths" of U.S. society is a direct measure of the political urgency of this book. Taking my impulse from Fredric Jameson's insistence on the general priority of "political interpretation," combined with what Henry Louis Gates Jr. has called the tendency of a "new black aesthetic movement" to read "the
social aspects of literature, the larger dynamics of subjection and incorporation through which the subject is produced" (Gates, "Criticism" 309), I want to begin by politicizing the strategies of order, isolation, and self-sufficiency that Franklin idealizes in his construction of a self.6 One of the fundamental political messages of this inquiry, then, is that Franklin's ontological assumptions are rooted in a wider epistemology of order that has potentially falsifying, potentially pernicious consequences for the many aspects of human culture to which it has been applied. The ideals of individualistic order and autonomy became standards in U.S. society (and, as Foucault would argue, in Western society as a whole) for organizing ideas about everything from human identities to cultural identities to economic entities to physical and biological quantities to nations and states to literary artefacts themselves. Indeed, the critical formalism of twentieth century "well wrought urn-ers," with its emphasis on the perfectly crafted and autonomous text, bears an almost genealogical resemblance to Franklin's formalized outline of the well-crafted (and self-crafted) moral and economic "subject"--the "well wrought earner." The common thread is the impulse to draw boundaries, to create categories, to define and divide isolated entities--be they human or discursive (urns can be the conceptual containers of psychic, as well as written matter). It is this conceptual
mode, and its implications for human lives and human interaction, on which this book will focus its oppositional politics. Such boundary fixation, I will argue, be it to delimit persons, texts, nations, races, cultures, or academic disciplines, precludes or inhibits those kinds of bonding, interaction, and community which are most human—and most democratic.

My contention is that this philosophy that divides and isolates is an aspect of what Foucault calls the "objectivizing" of the sciences and the "dividing practices" of the various social institutions that manage human life, the first two of his three primary "modes of objectification which transform human beings into subjects" ("Power" 208). The "dividing practices," in particular, are methods of defining and categorizing human beings, processes through which "the subject is either divided inside himself or divided from others. This process objectivizes him. Examples are the mad and the sane, the sick and the healthy, the criminals and the 'good boys'" ("Power" 208). Franklin's self-conception, which reduces him to an ethical subject made up of thirteen categories and an economic subject capable of absolute self-dependence, both divides him within and partitions him from others. Indeed, it is the attachment of the "speckling" metaphor to such modes of subject production that suggests we conceptualize "race" as
another, and, in the U.S., particularly pervasive "mode of objectification" that divides and categorizes.\textsuperscript{7}

My concern with the problematic ramifications of thinking that rigidifies categories and boundaries, then, determines the basic philosophical and critical stance of this study. To the extent that the aforementioned principles of order and autonomy have been normalized and idealized in our society, this book must define itself as oppositional and, in the sense outlined by Frank Lentricchia, "radical": aimed at questioning both the assumed normalcy of society and its methods of sustaining that assumption, its methods of "normalization."\textsuperscript{8} As Edward Said and, more comprehensively, Jim Merod have pointed out, however, there is radical criticism and there is radical criticism. The skeptical quotation marks Said places around the term "left" in his essay "Reflections on American 'Left' Literary Criticism" ironize both post-structuralist "textual" criticisms and Marxist analyses that, despite pretenses of subversion, do little to engage with the society in which they are situated and even less to question its basic assumptions. The former too easily lapse into new formalisms (the "urn" they deal with is an expanded one, but an "urn" nonetheless), and both tend to foster the continued isolation of intellectuals within a cult of specialized expertise that operates around entirely traditional models of authority. This is a problem I recognize, as does Merod, with many ostensibly
oppositional intellectuals, including Foucault himself. It is on precisely such grounds that Merod questions the social relevance of both Foucauldian analysis and Jameson’s brand of academic Marxism:

Both Jameson and Foucault accept the authoritative role of the professional intellectual without finding any need to specify how, precisely, that authority supports or can be brought into relation with the victims of power each wants to champion... The threat to Jameson’s avowed Marxist ambition is his own substitution of verbal dexterity for the thankless job of building class consciousness: of arousing among students an awareness of the dominance of capital formation and its ability to direct or merely to pervert intellectual clarity and political reality. (149-50)

Without entering the debate that Merod examines about how various progressive social critiques are undermined and immobilized by their own degrees of institutional complicity, I would simply add my voice to Merod’s in arguing that a "politically responsible" criticism is possible--one that maintains a vigilant attention to the "politics" of context, community, and, most importantly for the present study, personality (specifically, in this case, psychology).  

In other words, my own formula for effective critical radicalism, derived from both Said and Merod, is based precisely on a willingness to transgress the arbitrary boundaries that literary critics often place around themselves, the texts they work with, and the academy itself. Politicization demands contextualization, a critical precept that begins for me with two guiding
attitudes. First, a politically responsible criticism must maintain an awareness of the cultural contexts of the discourse undergoing analysis and the material social consequences of all discourse. As Said puts it in trying to formulate a critical significance beyond mere "appreciative technical reading methods," critical consciousness should begin its meaningful cognitive activity in attempting to account for, and rationally to discover and know, the force of statements in texts, that is, as doing something more or less effective, with consequences that criticism should make it its business to reveal...Criticism cannot assume that its province is merely the text, not even the great literary text. It must see itself, with other discourse, inhabiting a much contested cultural space, in which what has counted in the continuity and transmission of knowledge has been the signifier, as an event that has left lasting traces upon the human subject.10 (World 224-25)

Said's sensitivity to context and his wariness of arbitrary boundaries here are appropriate: he is not merely expanding the "urn" of the literary object, nor even breaking it open; he is denying that the urn ever existed in the first place--or at least pointing out its provisional status, its constructedness. Moreover, this refusal of boundaries renders neither a larger "playground" for critical sport, nor a bottomless and ruleless interpretive activity, but a "political" imperative: the creation, transmission, and utilization of texts is always political, always entails gain and loss in specifically human terms. As Foucault would add, such creation and transmission of words is always done for some reason and for some purpose, and it is that utility which can be most revealing; the Foucauldian critic
is more interested in determining the uses to which discourse is put—the effectivity referred to by Said—than in pursuing the significations of authorial intention or reader perception. Most importantly, Said directs critical attention not merely to the elucidation of abstract and hidden political "content" which inheres in the text (cf. Jameson), but to the area of "effect" most relevant to my inquiry: that is, to the potential and, to him, more significant, effects of the text on the human subject. It is this attention not only to the political aspects of the text, but also to the psychological aspects of its politics, that informs my own approach.

The second important sense of context for a criticism that hopes to avoid intellectual isolation and, using Merod's formulation, to bring critical authority into relation with "victims of power," is the critic's context: who is our audience? what communities are we a part of? how does our location in an academic institution affect our work? Critical work, if it is to have any sway in the transformation of social structures, must have both a pedagogical and a wider, more public agenda. Challenging students to think critically about how various powerful influences shape thought patterns, identities, and consensus is a logical first step, as Merod suggests in the passage on Jameson I cited above. Far too little criticism, it is worth noting, is of direct application to how students--
particularly undergraduates--conceptualize the world, themselves, and their social responsibilities. In a broader sense, though, expanding the critic's context means making the habits of critical thinking, of questioning received knowledge, accessible to a society that extends beyond the classroom and the university. Such accessibility involves rethinking critical authority itself in ways that are often difficult for intellectuals who are paid, and frequently privileged, precisely because of their status as expert authorities. Again, as Merod makes very clear, fulfilling this wider community role is a matter of crossing the arbitrary boundaries--motivated by attitudes of authority, order, knowledge and self-interest--that separate students and teachers, academics and nonacademics, critics and physicists. As he notes, "The effort of criticism is always, if it is committed to public welfare, a public act" (Merod 187).

This has implications for the substance, the style, and the forums we choose for critical discourse, but I think the most generalizable use of a public criticism is the establishment of a certain skeptical approach to "knowledge" itself. I have in mind a mentality of skepticism that would enable critics, students, and the general public to interrogate every posture of knowledge--assumption, stereotype, belief, cultural/media representation, social "consensus," received "truth," history, scientific fact--
with some form of the question, "How do you/I/we know?" What are the contexts in which such "truths" were formed and what are their consequences in the real human communities which they affect? Teaching such a questioning mentality to students, especially as it applies to assumptions about human identity, and making one's own criticism an example of it for both students and the citizenry of which academics themselves are members, may be the most basic task of the political critic and of the responsible humanist.

In the following pages, as I outline my own approach to the convergence of race and identity in twentieth-century literature, I will draw theoretical support from several cultural analysts who I think share the transgressive, context-conscious, and truth-questioning mindset I have described. Foucault has used a Nietzschean genealogical method to study the historical processes by which various types of human "subjects" were produced and to show how the "truths" we revere emerge at specific historical moments from specific historical circumstances, a methodology I adapt to the study of the racial subject and our accepted racial paradigms. Said, as already mentioned, has commented extensively on the need to pursue criticism outside of traditional limitations, and his thorough analysis of how one particular type of racialism evolved and functioned--Orientalism--provides a close and instructive parallel to the U.S. versions of racialism that interest me here. So
too, bell hooks has formulated her critiques of raced and
gendered patterns of thinking with particular attention to
how subjects are formed, defined, isolated, and constrained.
Moreover, her efforts to forge a criticism of both popular
culture and literary "art," using principles attentive to
both politics and aesthetics, and engaging the intellectual
community while remaining accessible to a wider public
audience, make her a model of the politically responsible
critic I described above. Each of these cultural theorists
challenges us to question accepted chronological, social,
and interpersonal boundaries when we approach human beings
and human culture. Just as importantly, they call us to
think about human beings when we think about human culture,
and that is the real political imperative of both their work
and mine. Like hooks, I am "most excited by writing and
reading cultural criticism that is linked with a concern for
transforming oppressive structures of domination" (hooks
12).

Politicizing identity

For both hooks and Foucault, as for many cultural
theorists since Frantz Fanon's groundbreaking psychocultural
critique of the postcolonial situation, it is clear that the
focal point for such transformative criticisms must be the
question of personal identity or subjectivity. In his
late essay, "Why Study Power: The Question of the Subject,"
Foucault pointed out that one of the defining impulses of struggles against oppression is precisely such a questioning of "the status of the individual":

on the one hand, they assert the right to be different and they underline everything which makes individuals truly individual. On the other hand, they attack everything which separates the individual, breaks his links with others, splits up community life, forces the individual back on himself and ties him to his own identity in a constraining way. These struggles are not exactly for or against the "individual," but rather they are struggles against the "government of individualization." ("Power" 211-12)

Foucault is referring here to various other "struggles" against power, but the concerns he expresses are exactly parallel to those that hooks identifies for African Americans. Although she notes that the theoretical distance of some postmodern approaches makes them somewhat problematic for the struggle against racism, hooks is nevertheless interested in making postmodern critiques of "essentialism" a part of the "identity politics" she views as central to black liberation. Specifically, she is interested in formulating a liberated, "radical black subjectivity" and making it a valid self paradigm for African Americans, a sense of self which must be fought for against a "pervasive politic of white supremacy" (26) which seeks to maintain pre-existing, stereotypical patterns of black identity. hooks sees a basic challenge to racism in reformulating such outmoded notions of identity. We have too long had imposed upon us from both the outside and the inside a narrow, constricting notion of blackness. Postmodern critiques of essentialism which challenge notions of universality and static over-determined
identity within mass culture and mass consciousness can open up new possibilities for the construction of self and the assertion of agency. (28)

The radicalized identity politics hooks is interested in pursuing demands the recognition of the multiple and diverse aspects of identity, a multiplicity and diversity that are exigencies of the self's emergence from a historical, experiential process. Only by repressing that historicity can stereotypical and one-dimensional notions of black identity be sustained. For hooks, "radical black subjectivity" is actively resistant to such notions, be they enforced by white culture or the black community itself. The radicalized identity she posits--historical, diverse, nonessentialized, complex--is committed to the exploration of marginal spaces "where we can best become whatever we want to be" (20).15

Indeed, the significance of such a complication of identity politics to liberatory racial struggle was anticipated, prior to the emergence of postmodern theorizations of the decentered subject, in the thought of writers like Ellison, whose fictional meditation on racial identity politics I will examine in chapter 3, Fanon, whose theorization of racial "narcissism" appeared the same year (1952) as Ellison's novel, and Albert Memmi, whose language of colonization hooks often applies to the constriction of African American identity. Like Memmi, hooks is insisting that a crucial step in the effort by colonized subjects to
decolonize themselves is, beyond the seizure of political power, to "cease defining [themselves] through the categories of the colonizers" (Memmi 152). Similarly, a central theme in Ellison's critical observations and autobiographical remarks is the assertion of his own eloquent version of "radical subjectivity"--self-experience viewed as a "sensitively focused process of opposites," a "delicately poised unity of divergencies"--against the cultural imposition of one-dimensional definitions of identity (Shadow 26). For Memmi, too, conceptualizing freedom for colonized peoples like African Americans (the American edition of The Colonizer and the Colonized was dedicated to "the American Negro, also colonized") focuses not only on the eradication of the colonial system, but also on recovering all the "dimensions" of a nonessential, historically dynamic, "whole" self (153). And Fanon, as Homi Bhabha puts it, stresses the necessary "hybrid identity" of "the liberatory people who initiate the productive instability of revolutionary cultural change" in the postcolonial moment (Culture 38).

Foucault's analysis of "subjectification" provides a specific framework for understanding the "colonization" of subjectivity that concerns these writers. Such "colonization," I argue, can often be read as a process of subjectification, a process, that is, in which defined and ordered "subjects" are produced through the application of
models of unified identity that are both individualizing, like Franklin's, and racially essentializing, like those that concern hooks. Foucault has suggested that both ethnic and feminist struggles against oppression are, like Fanon's version of postcolonial liberation, above all struggles for new formulations of subjectivity, new types of individuality, against this "government of individualization" that attempts to tie the individual to a particular, externally defined identity and to thereby "submit him to others":

This form of power applies itself to immediate everyday life which categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognize and which others have to recognize in him. It is a form of power which makes individuals subjects. ("Power" 212)

For Foucault, then, the focal point of the operations of power--and the point of application for oppression--is the category of subjectivity. Hence, his insistent interest was not power itself but the creation of "a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects" (208). We might say that the crucial question is, for both Foucault and hooks, "How are the potentially unlimited identities of human beings made into certain types of finite and constrained subjects?" That is, how (and why) do plural, contradictory, and indefinable potentialities of self experience get reduced to ordered, defined identities? How do hyperstructured and hypermoralized psychic models (like Franklin's, for example)
come to dominate our culture's attitudes toward identity? How and why do experientially plural psyches become "blacks," "women," "criminals," "sexual deviants"? Just as importantly, how and why do plural psyches become "whites," "men," "normal individuals"?

By applying Foucault's theorizations of the "modes of objectification" to literary texts which depict characters struggling with repressive, limited notions of identity, I hope to reveal the relations of such subjectification of human beings to the kinds of psychic fragmentation evoked in the literature of the U.S. experience of racialization. Most of all, by doing so I hope to show the urgency of hooks' agenda for rethinking, for "decolonizing" (hooks 28), the frameworks of subjectivity by which we conceptualize ourselves as individuals; for creating the spaces "where we can best become whatever we want to be" (hooks 20). Such an agenda was explicitly shared by Foucault, who, in a statement that comes as close as anything he ever wrote to formulating the political significance of his work, observed,

Maybe the target nowadays is not to discover what we are, but to refuse what we are. We have to imagine and to build up what we could be to get rid of this kind of political "double bind," which is the simultaneous individualization and totalization of modern power structures.

The conclusion would be that the political, ethical, social, philosophical problem of our days is not to try to liberate the individual from the state, and from the state's institutions, but to liberate us both from the state and the type of individualization which is linked to the state. We have to promote new forms of
subjectivity through the refusal of this kind of individuality which has been imposed on us for several centuries. ("Power" 216, emphasis mine)

The following studies of Stein, Ellison, Berryman and Morrison will make use of a Foucauldian vocabulary and approach to explore the horrors of the "government of individualization" in our society, while keeping the more radical and liberatory possibilities of human identity that Foucault alludes to here always in mind. Learning how modes of subjectification, particularly racial subjectification, have divided us from each other and within ourselves can be a step toward challenging how racism functions in the United States only if its ultimate goal is to overturn such modes, reestablish the forms of internal and interpersonal bonding they inhibit, and promote an entirely different way of imagining who I/you/we are.

Let me begin to make this reassessment of subjectivity more specific than the idea of a radicalized or hybridized cultural identity suggests, both by clarifying the terms I will apply to identity and by placing them within an explicitly psychological framework. I will use the terms "psyche" and "subjectivity" more or less interchangeably for the totality of possible psychic experience (memories, emotions, thoughts, aptitudes, sensory experiences, desires, etc.) that might potentially contribute to any person's "sense of self." Correlatively, I will use "self" to refer to whatever self-conception of personal identity prevails
for a person at a given time. Following certain bodies of psychoanalytic thought, this "self" might be conceptualized as a "container" for some limited, but flexible, portion of the wider psychic content mentioned above. In the post-Jungian depth psychology of Andrew Samuels, for example, the self is a temporarily structured sense of personality which changes interminably based on the interactions of a fluid infinitude of psychic components (drives, complexes, part-selves, self-objects, sectors, etc.), a conglomeration of psychic potentialities that Samuels terms the "plural psyche" (2-12). Even more useful to my analysis will be the post-Freudian self psychology of Heinz Kohut, in which, similarly, the self is "the center of the psychological universe" (Restoration xv), an experiential focal point flexibly structured by the psyche's various ambitions, aptitudes, ideals, identifications and, most crucially, ongoing interactions with environmental "self-objects."

While the term "subject" has passed into common critical usage as part of a Lacanian parlance for this self-function or "I," it will function as one of the central ideas in my discussion in a more Foucauldian sense, connoting a certain type of self: one which has been objectified and thereby delimited or defined according to some set of external constraints. Often this subject is formulated as some specific type of "identity"--the externally imposed notions of "black identity" critiqued by hooks, "masculine
identity," "criminal identity," and so on. As Foucault argues, however, the most powerful effect of such "identities" is there tendency to become "internalized" and thus to function as the self-monitored self-conceptions of the psyches they subjectify.\(^\text{16}\) We might say that Benjamin Franklin, for example, is engaged in transforming his own subjectivity, with all its potentiality for contradiction and change, into a particular subject by defining its components and objectifying it on paper. The "Art of Virtue" is a formula for the self-government of a sort of Kantian ethical subject, in the sense suggested by Foucault’s observation that "Kant introduces one more way in our tradition whereby the self is not merely given but is constituted in relationship to itself as subject" ("Ethics" 371-72).

While I rely on a Foucauldian approach to the subject as a framework for discussing what is done to the "plural psyche" in racialized societies, then, it is by means of a complementary psychoanalytic perspective that I attempt an understanding of what happens to the self in a racialized context. I will use several recent psychological approaches, which loosely overlap with one another and, in some instances, with Foucault’s study of subjectification, to provide both a background of clinical discourse on psychic problems like the ones which interest me here and a set of more specific models for what hooks, Ellison, and
Fanon variously allude to as a hybrid subjectivity. Indeed, these writers share a common interest in psychologizing the study of racism. Ellison, who once worked in the office of the psychiatrist Harry Stack Sullivan (a critical early voice in pushing ego psychology toward a more interpersonal paradigm), articulated the need to address the psychology of race in his 1948 essay "Harlem is Nowhere," which deals with the psychiatric needs of black Harlemites suffering from "personality damage" (*Shadow* 301). Fanon, himself a psychiatrist, insisted that "only a psychoanalytical interpretation" could "lay bare the anomalies of affect" associated with the "complexes" of what he called racial "narcissism" (10). And hooks pushes the problematization of identity in precisely this direction when she calls for more literature that "addresses the psychological impact" of the holocausts of racism and slavery in this country—a direction, as she notes, that Toni Morrison has already been pursuing in her fiction (216). The psychological damage caused by racism and the need for what hooks calls "self-recovery" of the "colonized" indeed demand the "racial politicization of mental health," as hooks puts it (220). Psychoanalysis and mental health, she argues, are "a central revolutionary frontier for black folks" (218). My readings of twentieth century representations of both "Africanism" and the black experience are intended as a critical gesture, from my own necessarily "white" cultural position, toward
"the production of a body of work on psychoanalysis and black experience" for which she calls (226).

My own "racially politicized" version of psychoanalytic criticism will proceed from a model of subjectivity I derive from various structuralist, poststructuralist, existentialist, psychoanalytic, object relations, and depth psychology approaches to identity, though it is perhaps more accurate to say that I will be employing several different, though correlative, models according to their explanatory value in different situations. I am particularly interested in theories of identity that have redefined both romanticist notions of the autonomous subject and the Freudian "drive/structure" or "ego" models in the direction of a subjectivity that is destabilized, open-ended, multiple, environmentally constituted (culturally, linguistically, and historically), and, finally, intersubjective. The philosophy of my approach is aligned with the "anti-ego" and "anti-oedipal" position taken up by Gilles Deleuze and Felix Guattari, though I have synthesized my own conception of an "ego-less" self from other psychological frameworks. Samuels' conception of a "plural psyche" provided a critical starting point, suggesting how the traditional Freudian structure of psychic agencies might be superseded by a broader definition of the "psyche" as a radically plural and fluid totality of psychological processes and phenomena. The plural psyche consists, according to the various
schemata that Samuels finds to be compatible, of conflicts, complexes, attitudes, functions, self-objects, part-selves, roles, sectors, and developmental phases. Discrete portions of this psychic makeup, he suggests, are "in a state of competition between themselves," and "personality, at any one moment, is the outcome of such competition" (2). According to this conception, the psyche has no fixed structure (i.e., there is no "subject" or "ego"), yet is structured and centered by its contents--and their interactions--at any given moment (hence, there is a "self").

The model Samuels develops is admirable for its pluralism and its destigmatization of psychic multiplicity and contradiction. It is also infused, however, with a modified Jungian conception of the "synchronous" and innate components of subjectivity (archetypes, gods, permanent features), elements which are extremely problematic for a concept of the self that emphasizes historical specificity and cultural context as determining factors in the construction of identity. Hence my model of identity will be centered on theories that have sought explanations for the multiplicitous and indefinite nature of the self more exclusively in the social and cultural contexts that constitute it. The post-Freudian linguistic psychoanalysis of Jacques Lacan, for example, articulates the importance of social and linguistic "others" in the formation of the
(Lacanian) "subject." Similarly, the post-Freudian "self psychology" of Heinz Kohut focuses on the "self" not as an agency (like the "ego") of a Freudian "mental apparatus" but as an irreducible "center" of experience that is fundamentally dependent on social and cultural "self-objects" (Restoration xv).

Lacan's model of a linguistically structured unconscious, the potentially self-alienating plurality and differentiability of which is kept at bay by a fiction of ego unity, was one of my first keys for understanding the sources of self-difference and internal "otherness" and multiplicity. For Lacan, the unconscious is manifested as a language-based "Other" whose "presence" is constantly "fading" down a multidirectional chain of differential linguistic signification, resulting in the perpetual instability of the fiction of "unified" identity--the Lacanian subject--whose roots extend into the depths of that very unconscious (Ecrits 299). Indeed, because of its dependence on the signifier, the constitution of personality in the Lacanian system bears a certain resemblance to Samuels's conception of identity as determined by the interaction and competition between discrete elements which reside within the psyche: for Lacan, "the signifier [and the subject dependent on it] is constituted only from a synchronic and enumerable collection of elements in which each is sustained only by the principle of its opposition to
each of the others" (Ecrits 304). Finally, Lacan's posing of this "linguistic" structure is broad enough to incorporate an entire spectrum of the subject's language-based connections with its ostensibly external environment, making his model adaptable to conceptions of identity as culturally based, intersubjective or interpersonal, and derived from interaction with parental figures.\(^{18}\)

Perhaps the most useful of recent psychological approaches that focus on the radical contextuality of the self and on identity as process, rather than on the coherence and autonomy of the traditional "subject," is the self psychology of Heinz Kohut. Self psychology provides what I view as a more realistic framework for healthy subjectivity and a more realistic approach to fragmented self-experiences than traditional ego-based conceptions. Kohut, in addition to formulating a reassessment of the Freudian emphasis on "drive" and "structural" interpretations, exhibits a consistent optimism about psychic experience that would lead him to eschew both Samuels's rhetoric of conflict and domination among the various part selves and Lacan's irrecoverably disintegrated and alienated subjectivity. According to Kohut's object-relations-based schema, the self is a fluid and evolving construct determined by the interaction between various portions of the psyche, usually figured as self-images or part-selves which can be, as for Samuels, internalized
images of other people (the salient example is the parental "selfobject"), societal or cultural identity constructs, and various developmental versions of the self. Indeed, Kohutian subjectivity, a fragmented yet unified agglomeration of coexistent versions of the self whose interactions shape the overall sense of identity, is one of the models Samuels incorporates in the plural psyche, though one that has little place for either inborn or static versions of the self. Kohut, similarly, would probably dismiss Samuels's Jungian idea of "conflict" between these fragments in favor of his postulation of a potential healthy and working balance or equilibrium among the various historically determined part selves, an equilibrium that entails full recognition of all the phases within as healthy and as fully "self."

As with Lacan, moreover, the self for Kohut is multiple and destabilized because it is fundamentally based on external elements of its experience, a sort of internal otherness evoked by the concept of the "linguistic Other" for Lacan and by the importance of the "self-object" for Kohut, who defines the latter as an object or image (developmentally, the parents) experienced as external to, yet incompletely separated from, the self. Indeed, the important contribution of object-relations-based psychoanalysts like Kohut is, as Henry Sussman puts it, "the reinscription of the constitutive role of the object (or the
other) in the primal scene of psychoanalysis" (50). As this may already be seen to imply, the Kohutian self is defined not merely as a discrete entity which interacts with "others," but as a fundamentally intersubjective experience. Like Lacan, Kohut is less interested in the idea of a unified, essential, or structured identity than he is in a self-in-process that is multiple and mutable because it is an intersubjective or relational process. Samuels, in fact, praises Kohut for envisioning identity, and the psychoanalytic process itself, as enmeshed in a fabric of relationship. Perhaps no theorist, however, has more usefully outlined the intersubjective aspects of the plural self than Jessica Benjamin, particularly insomuch as she asks us to consider the explicitly political implications of neglecting them. For Benjamin, an analysis of the social structures of (particularly sexist) domination and oppression is predicated on the conceptual move from an intrapsychic apparatus to an interpsychic matrix: "Whereas the intrapsychic perspective conceives of the person as a discrete unit with a complex internal structure, intersubjective theory describes capacities that emerge in the interaction between self and others" (20).

Kohut and Lacan are particularly useful for the study at hand because both have traced the psychopathology of disintegrative personalities and their typical symptomologies (as exhibited in dreams, imagery, enactments,
delusions, and anxieties), to the overly rigid fictions of ego unity that displace the relational features of the self. It is precisely such experiences of self-fragmentation, a feature of narcissistic personality disorder Kohut termed "disintegration anxiety," brought on by social codes of normative behavior and identity, that are most symptomatic of the representations created at the intersection of race and identity, which I study in the following chapters. Using Benjamin's work as a crucial precedent for how depoliticized psychologies like both the theoretical formulations of Lacan and the clinical observations of Kohut might be deployed within a racially politicized psychoanalytic criticism, I will, like her, explore how cultural and social modes of domination might be linked to our insufficiently intersubjective conceptualizations of the self.

In summarizing a "liberatory" reformulation of subjectivity, I should note that, though I posit a self that is fluid and multiple because it is fundamentally constituted by otherness, this does not imply the utter dispersal of the self that often marks poststructural or postmodern approaches. As Henry Sussman has noted, the kinds of redefinition of the self which I have been describing problematize the unity and consistency of the self's structure, but they need not imply its complete disintegration (152-53). Indeed, disintegrative
personalities should direct us to a questioning of the constricting models of singular and integrated selfhood that produced them, not to a pessimistic assumption that such fragmentation is a universal principle of the human experience. As Sussman points out, the terminology and concepts of contemporary critical theory's critique of presence and identity can be "readily interjected into descriptions by object-relations theorists of the clinical conditions facing them" (153), but I have deliberately avoided reference to the postmodern critique in the above discussion, primarily because I want to preserve considerable validity for the term "self" and maintain a conception of it that holds diversity and unity in balance. For Samuels, this "singular" sense of self is merely the temporarily dominant part-self or self-image, the impermanent point of an extended triangle which contains the many other possible versions of and parts of identity. According to this model, the self has a structure in the sense of a temporary, "ad hoc hierarchy," one of many, and changeable over time, as opposed to a "preconceived hierarchy" (subject) which mandates a permanent structure and identity (13). As Samuels admits, this model of self structure is derived from the fact that, regardless of what postmodern theory might tell us about identity, all of us need and experience a "sense of self," a structure in the psyche, of some kind (14). Sussman articulates a parallel
response to the postmodern decentering of the subject when he argues, in preparation for his literary applications of Kohut and other object-relations theorists, that

With all the qualifications regarding unity, identity, certainty, and essence that can be applied to it the notion of the self hovers about us, as, if nothing else, a perspectual framework, in a state of constant revision, through which we apprehend and articulate the world.

(152)

It is in a similar vein, and in a similar response to postmodernism, that Ihab Hassan has posited what he calls "virtual subjectivity" (12). Speculating that "identity" may at the very least cohere around an ongoing unique "style," Hassan suggests that our mere tendency to believe in an "identity" is enough to hold together its diverse elements: "Such an identity need not presume unity or coherence; nor does ego integrity preclude the linguistic qualities of the self" (12).22 Expanding our notion of "identity" so that it can include all our diverse elements was precisely Kohut's clinical approach to psychological health.21

Like Kohut, the psychophilosophsers Deleuze and Guattari posit the possibility of a psychoanalytic field in which the traditional Freudian discourse of the "absolute primacy of the value system correlated to the model of unconscious and conscious" (Kohut, Restoration 176) has been replaced by a discourse of reestablishing contacts and relationships between different, including previously stigmatized, sectors of the self. Though Deleuze and Guattari do not refer to
Kohut (they are more interested in an earlier critic of the autonomous ego, R.D. Laing), their respective approaches share a distaste for Freud's pseudomoral (Deleuze and Guattari characterize it as fascistic) superstructure of virtue, normalcy, and valuation, and the contrivances through which such social codes are applied to psychic experience: the ego, the drives, the Oedipal configurations, and the analyst's role as "interpreter." For Kohut, as for Deleuze and Guattari, the purpose of analysis would not be to determine and interpret the corrupt and guilt-ridden elements of the isolated ego's history and unconscious in order to effect a cure, but to facilitate the salutary acceptance of the psyche's inherent multiplicity and intersubjectivity. For Kohut, the analyst's role is therapeutic and facilitative, not educative and interpretive, and the goal of psychoanalysis is the enrichment of emotional life through the functional organization and acceptance of multiple psychic manifestations rather than an exorcism of stigmatized portions of the psychic makeup. Like self psychology, the "schizoanalysis" outlined by Deleuze and Guattari suggests that overcoming the tyranny of the ego will allow a reassemblage of the plural psyche:

...it is certain that neither men nor women are clearly defined personalities, but rather vibrations, flows, schizzes, and "knots."...The task of schizoanalysis is that of tirelessly taking apart egos and their presuppositions; liberating the prepersonal singularities they enclose and repress...establishing always further
and more sharply the schizzes and breaks well below conditions of identity; and assembling the desiring-machines that countersect everyone and group everyone with others. For everyone is a little group and must live as such. (Deleuze and Guattari 362)

For both Kohut and Deleuze and Guattari, the psychic miseries of modern times have much to do with the artificial imposition of the concept of the "clearly defined personality"--the autonomous ego--on psychic experiences that are constantly changing, multiply determined, and profoundly interpersonal.

These theorists are trying to liberate us, then, from exactly the kind of overly structured, overly moralized approach to identity so effectively illustrated, and idealized, by the literary Benjamin Franklin with whom I began. But they have also provided a specific and, in Kohut's case at least, a clinical model of the kind of "radical subjectivity" called for as an imperative of racial empowerment by bell hooks: de-essentialized, desire-based, contextual, historical, multiple, interpersonal. By returning to Foucault, I want to now develop an argument for the direct relationship between the Franklinian moment of conservative and repressive identity management, on the one hand, and the need for our contemporary moment of liberatory reformulation of identity as a means to confront the violence of race, on the other. I am suggesting that the speckles of disorder and moral failure which subtly slip into Franklin's conceptualization of the virtuous self are
illustrative of what "race" is, where it comes from, and what it is used for. As Franklin's anecdote suggests, it requires an agonizing and grinding effort of removal to shore up the boundaries and definitions of such a concretized individuality against the seeping, relentless, anxiety-producing presence of disorder, multiplicity, and otherness within. History, however, as Toni Morrison has argued, provided a powerful tool to help secure those boundaries, and that tool was the concept of "race." It is to the functioning and nature of that tool, and to hypotheses about its relation to both tentatively secured identities like Franklin's and violently discomposed identities like those to be found in twentieth-century representations of race, that I now want to turn my attention.

"Race" as discursive discipline

The plural psyche model of identity which I have sketched presents the "individual" as a hybrid and relational entity that would, for obvious reasons, escape rigid definition and thwart effective categorization, control, and management. It is easy to imagine, for example, even without sociological analysis, the difficulties involved in governmental management of a population that cannot be easily typed and enumerated according to race, gender, class, citizenship, ethnicity, health and so on. Or to
imagine the problems involved in corporate management of a consumer-base (or a labor-base) that cannot be divided and targeted according to distinctive income-levels, tastes, tendencies, aptitudes, attitudes, and, again, races. Indeed, Foucault has commented extensively on the ways in which the evolution of the modern, manageable subject was concomitant with the evolution of the modern state and modern capitalism. As such, Foucault's historical studies provide a conceptual framework for the ways in which the plural psyche might be restricted, defined, and subjectified (in both the sense of being "made subject to," and made into a "subject") by what he referred to generally as the "disciplinarity" of society and, later, as the "government of individualization." As Foucault detailed in *Madness and Civilization*, *Discipline and Punish*, and *The History of Sexuality*, it is in the interests of state power and order, and their procurement of public and personal welfare, to have a populace made up of subjects who are clearly and concretely identified as specific types of personalities with particular—and documented—sets of characteristics. Foucault variously referred to this superimposed personality structure—fabricated and nonessential, yet brutally real in its effects—as the "subject," "individuality," or "soul." It is further in the interests of power, Foucault surmised, to have this identificatory process of "subjectification" carried out by the individuals themselves. To cite my
earlier example, the consolidation of capitalism and the organization of the state and its power are facilitated by the creation of subject-citizens--well-wrought earners--like Franklin who have a clearly defined set of traits, characteristics, and identity categories--so defined that they can be outlined on paper--and who have so internalized the codes of virtue and normalcy around which those categories are organized that they can carry out the "government" of their identities themselves (including, as in Franklin's case, careful self-examination to ensure normativity and eradicate improper behavior). Indeed, my juxtaposition of the plural psyche with such "disciplinary technologies" which imprison it within a moral individual is not entirely whimsical: Foucault credits none other than Deleuze and Guattari for preceding him in the study of such "modes of subjection" (Discipline 309, n.2).

In what follows, I want to suggest that "race" can be treated as one of the disciplinary categories of identity, one which was critical to the establishment of the ostensibly "American," but implicitly "white-male-capitalist-individualist," subject which came to prominence in U.S. culture in the years following, and partly as a result of, Franklin's mythologization of the type. Although "race" emerges in Franklin's framing of his own identity only subtextually (his daily self-examination does not include the question, "Did I avoid acting like an African
today?"), and although the concept of "race" is a marginal and troubled one in Foucault's discussions of the disciplines of subjectification, "race" can be productively viewed as functioning in the U.S. "government of individualization" much like the categories of personality that Foucault does engage: criminality, sanity, sanctity, sexuality, hygiene, productivity. Each of these categories served as a disciplinary mode for the development of a given type of "subject" or "individuality," an entity to which could be ascribed distinct characteristics, and allowed the distribution of the affected populace along a continuum of normalcy/deviancy. In the same way as the penal system, for example, "fabricated" the idea of "delinquency" and attached a "delinquent subject"--a "biographical unity" with a defined essence, character, set of traits, and life history--to what before had been only a human being accused of a crime, we might say that the American system of chattel slavery fabricated the concept of "race" and developed a "racial subject" which could be attached to the generally darker skinned human beings it was victimizing. Like the delinquent, the essence of the racial (i.e., nonwhite) subject was its abnormality or deviance from an established norm (whiteness), and, like delinquency, "race" converted the complex, historically specific psyche into a "biographical unity" and a "type of anomaly" to which could be attached a whole bundle of
essential traits: "instincts, drives, tendencies, character" (Discipline 252-55).

"Race," then, might be said to create a certain type of essentialized, unified and permanent identity, like Foucault's "subject" or "soul" (criminal, sinful, insane, perverted, etc.) which could be carefully managed and manipulated by defining its relationship to the "norm" and its distinctive and static characteristics. Aside from the very telling fact that each of the categories Foucault analyzes in this way overlaps significantly with some specific aspect of the traditional U.S. racial stereotype, several intriguing similarities support such a comparison, similarities that also begin to suggest a broader definition of what "race" actually is--and what it isn't.28 The "black personality" is, as Foucault says of the "soul," "noncorporal" and nonessential, yet considerably more real than illusionary: "On the contrary, it exists; it has a reality; it is produced permanently around, on, within the body by the functioning of a power that is exercised" on those who are punished, supervised or "colonized" (Discipline 29). "Blackness," I would argue, like delinquency, was fabricated precisely as "a point of application of the power to punish" (Discipline 255), or in this case, enslave. And just as the delinquent "soul" was not born criminal and subject to punishment, but rather was born out of "methods of punishment, supervision, and
constraint" (Discipline 29), the "black" individual was not born in "blackness" and hence subject to enslavement, as the racial mythology later argued, but rather was a product itself of an economic system that needed cheap labor. "Blackness," like "delinquency," is a "reality reference," a construct of discourse and history. This "soul" is the element in which are articulated the effects of a certain type of power and the reference of a certain type of knowledge, the machinery by which the power relations give rise to a possible corpus of knowledge, and knowledge extends and reinforces the effects of this power. On this reality reference, various concepts have been constructed and domains of analysis carved out; psyche, subjectivity, personality, consciousness, etc. (Discipline 29)

By viewing racialized identity as one particularly useful type of "soul" or "personality," through which a complex self is turned into an object and a subject, we can begin to understand the elaboration of a whole body of knowledge--both folk knowledge and scientific knowledge--around a concept that has no innate basis in reality. More importantly for the study at hand, we can analyze the psychological consequences of having a racialized society in terms of the plural psyche that is imprisoned within a unitary, essentializing "personality" type like "blackness," and the superstructure of morality that such typing entails--in terms, that is, of the "government of individualization." We can see how the "black soul," like the criminal delinquent, the moral soul, and the sexual pervert before it, is only a creation and an effect of
political power; and how it therefore functions, like them, as "the prison of the body" (Discipline 30).

This formulation is commensurate with several recent theoretical approaches to the origin and nature of "race." For the balance of this study, I will treat "race" as a discursive, symbolic, and historical construct with no coherent biological or essential substrate which emerged during the sixteenth, seventeenth and eighteenth centuries as a function of the increasing commodification, individualization, and moralization of the human subject.29

While it is not my purpose here to create a comprehensive historical theory of "race," nor to evaluate the attempts of others to do so, I do want to elaborate briefly on two of the fundamental points I have drawn from such theories to establish a working definition of "race" that will facilitate my readings in U.S. literature. In addition to treating "race" as a category analogous to the categories of subjectification discussed by Foucault, my definition will be underpinned by two basic assumptions. I contend, following historical investigations like Thomas Gossett's and Stephen Jay Gould's, that neither "race," nor any of its signified categories like "black," "white," "Caucasian," etc., has any supportable genetic, physiognomical, or other biological basis or scientific validity, despite arduous attempts to establish such a material reference for the concepts. Secondly, this complete lack of empirical
grounding enables "race" to function as an arbitrary, flexible, self-contained, and circular signifying or discursive structure: an elaborate network of signifiers, metaphors and linguistically based assumptions with an endless intrareferentiality.

Gossett’s searching history of "race" in America supports the argument that the concept itself and its supporting theory did not even emerge and begin to solidify until well into the colonial period, probably not until after the institution of slavery had been 1) attacked as inhumane, and 2) formally codified (1660-1680). Moreover, Gossett suggests that the theories of separate human races and the innate inferiority of some of those races did not gain scientific or general consensual credibility in the U.S. until the nineteenth century. It was the nineteenth century, then, that saw a massive biological, anthropological and sociological effort to establish validity for the doctrines of "race" difference and white superiority. As both Gould and Gossett have documented, neither evidence nor even satisfactory criteria for either of these were ever found. More than anything else, Gossett’s history gives us the almost incredible story of a colossal effort to pin a linguistic chimera to the bedrock of fact--or, to cite the individual instance and borrow a term from Foucault, to pin a "soul" to flesh. All the "scientists" and theorists Gossett describes were trying to
explain and define something that literally did not exist (or rather, that only literally existed): the presence of three or five or eight or a dozen different "races." No grounds for defining these "races," or even for properly numbering them, could be made to hold water: efforts to establish different human groups on the bases of geographical origin, climactic influence, skin color, crania form, hair type, language use, cultural style, nationality, and psychological character have all been attempted with equal futility. Always such attempts have foundered on the inability to draw any but arbitrary lines between groups and on the unmanageable diversity within any proposed group. 31

Paradoxically, the inability to ground "race" in "reality" facilitated, rather than impeded, its ability to function as a "reality reference," its role as "the element in which are articulated the effects of a certain type of power and the reference of a certain type of knowledge" and as the machinery by which the "knowledge extends and reinforces the effects of this power" (Discipline 29). As Gossett argues, "The fact that race has no precise meaning has made it a powerful tool for the most diverse purposes" (118), allowing its exclusionary and identificatory force to be deployed politically, rather than empirically or scientifically. Indeed, the most stunning aspect of Gossett's study is the fact that the failure to find any scientific basis for "race" never really mattered (83): it
was nevertheless sustained and "supported" by other theories and concepts, utilized to prove still other theories and explain social phenomena, and extended throughout an enormous corpus of intellectual and popular discourse and knowledge, precisely as if it actually referred to something concrete. In short, "race" developed and (still) functions solely as a set of discursively transmitted assumptions and agreements, a linguistic structure in which any one term, from "black" to "white" to "nigger," has meaning only in reference to, and is literally supported by, the rest of the structure. Said's encyclopedic treatment of the particular version of racism he calls "orientalism" elucidates—and perhaps initiates—such a discursive definition of "race," though the discursive paradigm has also recently gained considerable legitimacy among theorists of "race" in general and African-American theorists of American racism in particular.32 Henry Louis Gates Jr., most notably, observing that biological categories of race have "long been recognized to be a fiction," has argued that, when we speak of "the white race" or "the black race," we speak "in metaphors" (Gates, "Writing" 4).

Said, drawing his notion of discursive formations from Foucault, approaches an entire body of writings, scholarly and popular, and assumptions (definitions, metaphors, idioms, stereotypes), scientific and folkloric, as a discursive field that is not merely about the "orient" but
is in fact constitutive of it. While Said refers explicitly to the "orient" and to "Orientalism" (the study and definition of the former, but also a type of racism) as existing discursively, the critical difference or "race" they create is also fundamentally a discursive structure. Indeed, Said later pointed out that European writers had discursively constituted not only a "geographical entity called the Orient" and a field of study devoted to it--"Orientalism"--but also "subject races" that emerged in the writings of Orientalists at the end of the nineteenth century (World 222). It is certainly significant for my conceptualization of "race" that Said defines "Oriental races" as a later product of an entire discursive discipline of "Orientalism," and not vice versa--"race," he argues, was produced historically and discursively as a function of the needs of European power (imperialist, cultural, and economic).

Moreover, the extension of this line of analysis into another category which Said does not discuss in detail is critical to my argument. This category is, of course, the "racial subject" itself, which I want to treat not only as a discursive structure but as an entity fabricated by the "disciplinary technologies" of racism and attached to human beings to provide a point of application for these same disciplines. As Said observes, one of the important uses of the "Orientalist" discipline was the power to make
statements about "the Oriental mentality," but I also want to extend this idea in the direction of his comment that "The parallel between Foucault's carceral system and Orientalism is striking" (World 223, 222). The penal discipline, for Foucault, produced the "criminal soul" and the law-abiding subject. The Orientalist discipline, for Said, produced the "Oriental" subject and the "European/Occidental" subject. In the same way, I will approach American white/black racism as a discipline constitutive of racial (black/white) difference and, more importantly, of a thoroughly racialized "soul" for everyone: a racial prison not only for the body, but for the psyche itself. Ralph Ellison's acute observations of the U.S. racial scene provide a succinct summary of "race" as a discursive structure. "Perhaps the most insidious and least understood segregation is that of the word," he noted in 1953. "For if the word has the potency to revive and make us free, it has also the power to blind, imprison and destroy" (Shadow 24).

Indeed, the U.S. racial discourse Ellison here intends--"by this I mean the word in all its complex formulations, from the proverb to the novel and stage play" (Shadow 24)--might also be most usefully elaborated through comparison to the "discursive field" of "Orientalism." The semantic network of "Orientalism" is a self-referential and "internally consistent" discursive structure. This
structure is the source of whatever meaning any one of its terms (or texts) might have, making it a closed "system of ideas" or "system of representations" on which the "real" has little influence:

the Orient was a word which later accrued to it a wide field of meanings, associations, and connotations, and ...these did not necessarily refer to the real Orient but to the field surrounding the word. (Orientalism 203)

Said's emphasis on the always repeated idioms, thoughts, imagery, "representative figures," and "tropes" that are the basis of the "orientalist" discursive structure—that are the basis, in fact, of a ridiculously broad and homogenized "race"—highlights the parallels between "Orientalism" and recent formulations of the black/white "race" difference in America, beginning with Gates' insightful definition of "race" as metaphorical: "Race has become a trope of ultimate, irreducible differences" between groups ("Writing" 5). Not only is the word "race" itself a metaphor for supposed difference, but any of its proposed categories is built out of a hidden structure of metaphors, figures, and tropes—all frozen into self-evident truths through linguistic circulation and constant reproduction. I began this essay with reference to just such a metaphorical system of "race": Toni Morrison's "Africanism," a term she uses to refer not to the characteristics or culture of any particular group of African people nor to the "study" of Africa per se, but to the "denotative and connotative blackness that African peoples have come to signify, as well
as the entire range of views, assumptions, readings, and misreadings that accompany Eurocentric learning about these people" (6-7). A crucial distinction must be made here between the possible existence of any real "black" community in America, which it is not Morrison's purpose either to deny or to define, and the discursively, and mainly literally, created "black race" she is discussing. "Sometimes allegorical, sometimes metaphorical" (Morrison 17), Africanism suggests the linguistic production of a new "race" which could be attached to the victims of American slavery and its descendants: a "trope" of blackness (7). Aldon Lynn Nielsen has elaborated in slightly greater detail a similarly based description of the American white/nonwhite racial distinction in terms of a "discursive structure within culture" (3), a "self-contained sphere of ideation" (5) revolving around a set of "frozen metaphors" about "race." Like Morrison's "Africanism," the "blackness" Nielsen refers to is a "structure of meanings, composed entirely out of language, which, like the elements of the phonetic system, have significance only in relationship to one another" (6).

Treating "race"--and specifically, "blackness" and "black" identity--as a discursive system like Said's "Orientalism" is absolutely fundamental to my "racially politicized psychoanalytic criticism" for a number of related reasons. The first is implicit throughout Said's
entire study and explicit in the remarks made by both Morrison and Nielsen as they outline their own versions of such a discursive structure: talking about the linguistic generation of "race difference" and its subset "races" is a means of focusing attention not on the supposed referents of such a signifying system but on its producers. In studying "race" as a discourse and a "discipline"--as a discursive discipline--we do not dismiss it as a fiction but insist on its importance as a social and psychological reality utilized by some human beings and inflicted on others for a purpose. That, as Morrison and Nielsen argue, makes the real object of study "whiteness," and my own inquiry, like theirs, involves an investigation of the manipulation of the racial discourse, the deployment of Africanism, by those who are able to designate themselves as "white." What interests does "whiteness" have in the literary, scientific, and linguistic creation of "blackness"? "What Africanism became for, and how it functioned in, the literary imagination is of paramount interest because it may be possible to discover, through a close look at literary 'blackness,' the nature--even the cause--of literary 'whiteness'" (Morrison, Playing 9).

My second motivation for studying "race" as a discursive discipline involves my interest in transforming oppressive social structures. While valid cases might be made, and have been made, for affirming "blackness" in the sense of a
"black" community with a shared cultural heritage, a shared "black" ethnicity, and/or a shared geopolitical history, the privileging of such "positive" black-authored re-versions of "blackness" to the exclusion of the study of the "white" discourse of "race" and "racism" is counterproductive on at least two levels. First, such definitions of "blackness" share the same tendencies toward separatism and essentialism that were the basis of the "race" system, leaving the "manichean allegory" that structures violence in place (even if reversed), rather than denaturalized. Focusing on the shared cultural experience of being "black" without attending to the fiction of "race" that historically produced the former category can lead to overlooking the diversity within any formulation of "blackness" and to an unintended reinscription of a "black" essence onto its spurious biological signifier. Talking about the positive aspects of ethnic culture is productive, that is, but not if it is merely a way of avoiding discussion of a history of "race" and racism, or, worse yet, ignoring the practice of "race" and racism today. Discussions of experienced "blackness," ethnicity, and the value of a multiracial culture must not be, as bell hooks puts it, "neatly divorced from a recognition of racism, of the continuing domination of blacks by whites, and...of the continued suffering and pain in black life" (52).
Ultimately, then, I am interested in studying the discursive discipline of "race" in its function as a "white" political strategy, a study that facilitates the crucial task of "interrogating whiteness" (hooks 54). Denying the essentiality of "race," however, is not to deny the possibility of a lived experience of "blackness"--another potential object of study, literary and otherwise--any more than my theorization of the linguistic and deterritorialized "self" precludes the possibility of a lived experience of "selfness." On the contrary, though my interest here is in the tragic psychological effects produced by the spurious racialization of society which I have sketched, there is an identifiable, experiential "African-American culture," albeit one that is necessarily provisional, historically produced, nonessential, and contradictory. I believe that Ralph Ellison had such a lived "African Americanness" in mind when he commented that

> It is not skin color which makes the Negro American but cultural heritage as shaped by the American experience, the social and political predicament; a sharing of that "concord of sensibilities" which the group expressed through historical circumstance. (Shadow 131)

As Ellison's definition implies, such a "cultural heritage" acknowledges, rather than denies, the way it has been shaped by a "political predicament" that includes "race" and racism. More recently, Hazel Carby has summarized the distinction I am making with remarkable precision:

> Though we can delineate the racialized structuring of society in terms of which there is an Afro-American
culture that has been racialized and defined as black...neither its rhetoric nor its boundaries are strictly of "race." Afro-American culture is not completely autonomous...[and] it is always subject to the influence and power of the dominant culture. (43)

Taken together with the fact that the dominant culture is also always subject to the influence and subversion of the marginalized culture, this definition directs us to a recognition that any culture is the "terrain of struggle between groups" (Carby 43). Like identities, we should approach cultures as intertextual, plural and provisional, never as essential, autonomous and timeless. It is my project to join Carby in insisting that, "instead of searching for cultural purity"--black, white, American, or whatever--"we acknowledge cultural complexity" (42). Neither "American culture" nor any particular subculture belongs to any particular melanin-content based grouping; together, all of us make cultures.

To put this another way, "race" does not inhere in the difference between distinct cultures or groups--it is itself the establishment and hierarchization of that difference. As such, it conceals the complexity of the cultures it differentiates and, in the individual instance, of identities, and idealizes purity on all fronts--the concept of "race" is dependent on the establishment of pure difference. Defining "race" as a trope of difference--really an elaborate network of tropes of difference--should turn our attention from determining the accuracy or
authenticity of the overall trope, or of any of the component tropes, to an analysis of these "purity" effects. As I have been suggesting, analyzing "race" as a cultural practice puts the focus on the more politically engaged and socially useful questions of what it is being used for, and by whom. According to Foucault, the function of the entire culture of discipline was precisely this: to manage multiplicity by reducing it to a set of definable unities, and to hierarchize those unities evaluatively: "Generally speaking, it might be said that the disciplines are techniques for assuring the ordering of human multiplicities...the disciplines characterize, classify, specialize; they distribute along a scale, around a norm, hierarchize individuals in relation to one another" (Discipline 218, 223). Foucault does not analyze the racialization of society as a discipline, but he does hint occasionally at their similarity in function, particularly as a technique for forging a cultural illusion of purity out of a reality of disorder and multiplicity. In his essay on Nietzschean genealogy, for example, he alludes to the fictions about "German" identity to which the Germans were forced to resort in defending the idea of a pure German "race" against the anxieties of a felt complexity. Such fictions, Foucault comments, were simply the ideas by which they tried to "master the racial disorder from which they had formed themselves" as a pure "race" ("Nietzsche" 81).
The genealogist's task is to disintegrate such fictions of unity and purity by unearthing the complexity and disorder at their point of origin--the multiplicity which they are meant to cover up. This example is particularly relevant to my own purposes because Foucault is speaking of "race" here specifically as a category of identity or "soul," and he immediately translates his point about a national culture into a point about the individual: "Where the soul pretends unification or the self fabricates a coherent identity, the genealogist sets out to study the beginning--numberless beginnings, whose faint traces and hints of color are readily seen by a historical eye" ("Nietzsche" 81).

**Fragmentation and the racial mirror stage**

As I have suggested, in turning a genealogical eye on the central myth of the white American individualist--the self-made Ben Franklin--we find precisely the "faint traces and hints of color" that mark the unspoken entrance of a category of "race" into the project of fabricating a "coherent identity" or "unified soul." Franklin provides for us a convenient illustration of the genealogical moment at which a culture of "race" and a psychology of unified individuality emerge symbiotically. In other words, defining "race" as a discursive discipline and focusing on what it is being used for encourages us to explore the psychology of "race" because, as both Morrison and Nielsen
insist, what is most urgently at stake in the production of the racial signifying system is the concretization of a "white subject"—by way of describing and reifying a "black subject" whose qualities can be removed from, separated from, and opposed to the "white." The "dark speckles" on Franklin’s diagram of his own soul might be considered to be a formative instance of the elaborate significatory system attached to dark-skinned Americans, an instance of the repressed darkness onto which "artists--and the society that bred them--transferred internal conflicts" (Playing 38). That process of psychological projection, of "othering," enabled the concretization of what Morrison calls the "new white man" in America, an identity construct that included all of the Franklinian traits—autonomy, authority, isolation, independence, freedom, individualism, economic vigor—and quickly became synonymous with "American identity" in general. As Morrison argues, that construct of white subjectivity was, from the very beginning and throughout its history of literary representations, staged against a backdrop of darkness, disorder, and contradiction that became discursively elaborated as the network of metaphors, images, stereotypes and idioms associated with darker-skinned Americans: the extended trope of difference she calls "Africanism." The unified white ego, that is, was ever structured in opposition to the "ego-reinforcing presence of an Africanist population" (45)—onto which could
be transferred, and distanced from the self, the internal disorder the ego denies: "It was this Africanism, deployed as rawness and savagery, that provided the staging ground and arena for the elaboration of the quintessential American identity....This population is convenient in every way, not the least of which is self-definition. This new white male can now persuade himself that savagery is 'out there'" (Playing 44-45). "Race" is a tool for ego construction, for imaginatively banishing the disorder and multiplicity within to a locus safely outside the bounds of the self.

Nielsen has helpfully described this cultural process, the self-constitution of "whiteness" through a discursive creation of "blackness," in explicitly psychological terms, as a sort of Lacanian "racial mirror stage." For Lacan, the "mirror stage" is that point when the developing subject, cognizant for the first time of its own image reflected in a mirror or in the shape of other human beings, initiates an illusion of unity and autonomy. Ego formation, based on the bodily unity of this reflected image, occurs as a suppression of the fragmented, multiplicitous, and undifferentiated psychic experience of infancy (Lacan, Ecrits 1-7). Nielsen suggests that the "white" subject in America was constituted through a similar process: "The language of white thought has had to create the boundaries of its existence and to determine what will not be allowed inside. The white subject has spoken to itself, and in so
speaking has created its own racial consciousness" (5). The point is, of course, that this process of ego-formation, which can be considered as occurring in both individual psychic and collective cultural instances, is carried out not only in discursive, but also largely in negative, terms. As Nielsen puts it, "The ability to constitute a structure of whiteness assumes, more often than not, the form of the constitution of antiwhiteness, the creation of some bad, other thing out of the mass of humanity" (5). For Foucault, the disciplinary creation of madmen, criminals, and perverts had little to do with discovering truths about humanity gone wrong and everything to do with defining, securing, and managing normalcy. Said has made exactly this connection in discussing the literary creation of the "white subject" in another context:

If we believe that Kipling's jingoistic White Man was simply an aberration, then we cannot see the extent to which the White Man was merely one expression of a science--like that of penal discipline--whose goal was to understand and to confine non-Whites in their status as non-Whites, in order to make the notion of Whiteness clearer, purer, and stronger.

(World 224, emphasis mine)

The constitution of the "white" subject is not only, as Nielsen observes, "a literary project" (10), but also a disciplinary one.

The theorizations of "race" I have outlined, then, provide a framework for analyzing two distinct types of "individual": "black" and "white." Specifically, they provide means for understanding how "race" functions as a
particular category of "personality" in the "government of individualization" which characterizes our culture. "Race" works to reify and secure well-managed subjective structures for those who are self-authorized and self-constituted by identifying its negative terms as "other," on the one hand, and by providing an externally imposed and coercive subjective structure for those who are so identified, on the other. For the latter, "blackness" becomes a binding sheath of identity behind which the real person cannot be seen—the "narrow, constricting notion of blackness" referred to by hooks (28), but also the discursive "veil" described by Nielsen. Because of this "veil" of discursive agreements about the "black" other, its "white" creators "cannot clearly see who or what is within" (Nielsen 2), a variant description of the operation of Africanism that will be most resonant when I turn my attention to the experience of "black" (non)identity as one of "invisibility" in chapter 3. This "black subject" or "black soul," then, so similar in derivation and function to the Foucauldian "subject" of discipline, represents the "black object not as itself but in its status as fictive signifier of the nonwhite" (Nielsen 10):

That is to say quite simply that we are unlikely to find many actual black people who correspond at all closely to that image system known popularly as the stereotype. In this sense Félix Guattari is quite right to assert as "an example of a structure functioning as a subject...the fact that the black community in the United States represents an identification imposed by the white order." (Nielsen 6)
This is subjectivity imprisoned within a structure; more precisely, within the "black subject" as discursive structure. Such a subject, such a "soul," imposed in every crack of society where the racial discipline reaches, leaves the plural, contradictory, historically produced psyche I have described violently unified, dehistoricized, and essentialized beyond recognition. Hortense J. Spillers, using perhaps the most influential literary deployment of Africanism of all time as her example, describes how the "telos of African persons in the United States" has been precisely this conversion from real person into "the negro,"

...as Tom becomes in Stowe's text the negro--this existence of a him/her in a subject-position that unfolds according to a transparent, self-evidentiary motif. In other words, to rob the subject of its dynamic character, to captivate it in a fictionalized scheme whose outcome is already inscribed by a higher, different, other, power, freezes it in the ahistorical.

"The negro," in Spillers' politicized sense, is the prison of the African American plural psyche, and though that imprisonment is a forceful and effective one, its maintenance is ever tenuous, ever productive of psychic stresses and anxieties of the most chronic variety. It is to the form of these resistances that I now wish to turn my attention.

To a very large extent, the focus of my succeeding chapters will be on the literary response, in the twentieth century, to the articulation of Africanism of which Harriet Beecher Stowe's depiction of "blackness" is perhaps the
signal moment. Ralph Ellison's Invisible Man is certainly responding, for example, in his fruitless, boomeranging search for an authentic identity, to the discursive structuring of the "negro subject." His search is futile precisely because the discursive racialization of U.S. society is so complete and the veil is so impenetrable: no matter what identity he authors for himself, no person on the other side of the veil--the "white" side of the veil--will ever see him, will ever see anything but the veil of assumptions about "blackness." Intriguingly, the anxieties and the imagery by which the Invisible Man evokes his psychic experience within this "prison" are reminiscent of the key feature of Franklin's psychic discomfort: they register an encroaching sense of a disordered identity. The Invisible Man's persistent anxiety is not merely one of invisibility but of the dissonance and contradiction among the multiple voices within his head: "If only all the contradictory voices shouting inside my head would calm down and sing a song in unison" (253). His quest for identity forces him to grasp at the concreteness of traditional "black" roles, like that offered to him by "the Brotherhood," because, as he intones, "How else could I save myself from disintegration?" (345). This anxiety of self-disintegration, so typical of the literature of the racial experience that I will comment on in the chapters to follow, is a direct result, I argue, of the disciplinary conversion
of plural psyches into unified subjects. Moreover, the disciplinary enforcement of the racial "structure as subject" has effects on the "white" subject that are the tell-tale reflection of its effects on the "black" subject, a phenomenon covertly suggested by Franklin's *Autobiography* and deeply inscribed in the poetry of John Berryman, as I argue in chapter 4.

Berryman's poetry instances one of the primary thematics of modernity: it chronicles the complexity—even the multiplicity and alienation—of experience and identity, in opposition to the autonomy and power of the traditional Enlightenment and Romantic subject position. The representations of this type of experience that concern me here, however, emphasize the point at which the modern mode of experiencing environmental and psychic reality, always disconcerting, crosses over into the realm of outright psychic crisis, precipitating a psychopathology of alienation and disintegration that is shared by numerous literary personalities. They are characterized by a perceived inability to connect authentically with other people; a sense of internal confusion and contradiction; a disconcerting awareness of multiple aspects of identity that, if chronic enough, borders on a fear of having no identity at all; a sense of identity fragmentation that, if chronic enough, merges with neurotic visions of bodily
disintegration and mutilation. As Berryman's Henry so glibly puts it, "things are going to pieces" (Song 137).

Such psychopathologies, I argue, result not directly from the complexity of experience but from the massive disparity between internalized ideals of unified identity, like the disciplinarily produced ones I have been describing, and that complexity—the contradictory and multiplicitous emissions, if you will, of the plural psyche. I would formulate the following initial diagnosis for victims of race-based anxieties of self-disintegration, like the Invisible Man: they have so internalized the ideal of a unified racial identity that they are terrorized by their own lived experience of multiplicity and internal dissonance. Moreover, this diagnosis is the beginning of an explanation for a phenomenon my literary investigations—particularly my comparison of Berryman and Morrison—will engage: the fact that the codes of "black" and "white" identity have similar disintegrative effects for both the denigrated "black" victims of the racial system and its privileged "white" perpetrators. The imposition of a unified "white" subject structure requires the suppression of daily "disorder" for the individualistic Franklin, just as surely as the imposition of the "nigger with rhythm" persona demands that a plethora of dissonant internal voices be shouted down for the Invisible Man. What Morrison calls the "effect of racist inflection on the subject" (Playing...
11) can be as psychically disturbing as the effect of "race" on its inflected objects.

The psychocultural diagnosis I am suggesting takes on particular resonance within the psychoanalytic context that has framed my discussion of "race" and fragmentation. If we follow Nielsen's conception of a racial mirror stage--both cultural and personal--through which an illusory "white" ego structure was concretized out of its primordial racial disorder by defining the disorder as "non-white" and other, we can think of the importance of the disintegration motif of "racialized" literature in terms of the Lacanian mirror stage and its consequences. The mirror stage is not merely a discrete moment in infantile development but also has a certain metaphorical valence for ongoing processes of identity formation and, indeed, initiates "the assumption of the armour of an alienating identity, which will mark with its rigid structure the subject's entire mental development" (Lacan, Ecrits 4). The primordial "I" of the mirror stage, in Lacan's formulation, is the "phantasy" of power, totality, and coherence by which the individual emerges from "primordial Discord" (4), inaugurating a "succession of phantasies" of unity that eventuates in the "subject." This fiction of unity, however, is ever subject to the encroachment of the multiplicities of psychic experience which it only tenuously masks. In cases of psychopathology, that encroachment can erupt as "a certain level of
aggressive disintegration in the individual" and even as horrific visions of bodily disintegration and mutilation (4). As Anthony Wilden has remarked, perhaps the most interesting aspect of Lacan's enigmatic theory of the mirror stage is that it suggests a dramatic explanation for the widespread literary motif of emotional and physical disintegration:

...Lacan regards the stade du miroir...as at the origin of the phantasy or dream of the corps morcelé. The image of the "body in bits and pieces," or as put together like a mismatched jigsaw puzzle, is one of the most common phenomena in our normal dreams and phantasies, and also in certain forms of schizophrenia and of course in the LSD "trip," to say nothing of literature, from Romanticism to existentialism. For Lacan, the paranoid twist of the moi [at the mirror stage] is directly related to the peculiar twists we give to our own body image.

The prominence of the corps morcelé at the intersection of "race" and identity in the writing of Berryman and Morrison, as well as in other artistic evocations of the experience of racial oppression, is perhaps the most provocative evidence for the idea, first introduced by Fanon in Black Skin, White Masque, that one of the "mirror stages" that contribute to identity formation in a racialized society must, inevitably, be a racial mirror stage. Indeed, it is the paranoid constitution of the "white" subject, suggested by both Morrison and Nielsen and so vividly illustrated by Franklin at the outset of our literature, that precipitates the twisted legacy of emotional fragmentation and dismemberment images we are about to sample.
The violent eruption of what Kohut called "disintegration anxiety" and its associated visions of bodily fragmentation at the intersection of "race" and identity is not inexplicable, nor is it an aberration of a few obscure texts or the postmodern moment. As Toni Morrison has observed, the vast canon of U.S. literature can be read as a legacy to this country's efforts to quell its internal discord--both as individuals and as a "unified" culture--by creating a continuing, distanced Africanist presence and constituting in opposition to it a privileged "whiteness" made up of pure "white" subjects. The hierarchized dichotomy will not hold, however, without considerable propping up, a sustenance that involves the insistent violence of social subjection and separation, to be sure, but also the constant discursive reiteration of the "white" subject and the "black" subject. The literary project of subject formation that concerns Morrison is a function of that discursivity. And while that literature repeatedly records the "successful" architectures of the "white" subject, like Franklin's (even as it represses the moments of failure), it also records the twisted consequences of the racial mirror stage, of its assertion of hierarchy, and of its production of "whiteness."

As Morrison has insightfully observed, this hierarchy based on "white" and "black," this ideology of "whiteness" with which we have for so long combatted our psychological
and cultural doubts, was a concept distinctly original to the first fifty years of our nation's history. Within such a context, she urges, we can hardly miss the allegorical significance of the most imposing symbol of "whiteness" in U.S. literature: Melville's whale. Indeed, the symbology Morrison finds in Moby-Dick—a dismembered human being obsessed with the force that has mutilated him—forms a central motif in the twentieth century tradition of which her own work is exemplary. That force, we are led to understand, is not Nature or God or Fate or even social violence: it is "whiteness;" it is "whiteness as ideology;" it is the ideology of "race" itself. Ultimately, it is with Morrison's own hypothesis about "race" and psychology always in mind that I want to present the following readings of texts that connect our persistent psychic traumas to the nature of our life in a violently racialized society:

...if the white whale is the ideology of race, what Ahab has lost to it is personal dismemberment and family and society and his own place as a human in the world. The trauma of racism is, for the racist and the victim, the severe fragmentation of the self, and has always seemed to me a cause (not a symptom) of psychosis.  
("Unspeakable" 15-16, emphasis mine)

Here, Morrison fuses into a single psychology of "race" the dynamic I have tried to illustrate by employing a series of psychoanalytic and genealogical paradigms. But whether we consider "race," finally, as a discipline, a discourse, an ideology, or a psychological category, studying how it originated and what it is used for is the most effective
strategy we have as, Ahab-like, we seek to destroy it. Such study is the most effective strategy we have, that is, as we seek to undermine the dynamics of the racial mirror stage and subvert the disciplinary enforcement of its "white" and "black" personality constructs by radically reformulating the "government of individualization" in this country. What is at stake for such a racially politicized psychoanalytic criticism, finally, is nothing less than the continued dismemberment of our "selves" and our society.

Notes

1. For the importance of this particular cult of the individual to American culture, and Franklin's centrality to its origin and his inspiration of its nineteenth-century devotees, see Cawelti and Wyllie. As Cawelti argues, "Franklin was not the first self-made man, but certainly he was the archetypal self-made man for Americans" (9), and the self-made man soon became "an archetype of American society" (12).


3. Morrison uses "Africanism" as "a term for the denotative and connotative blackness that African peoples have come to signify, as well as the entire range of views, assumptions, readings, and misreadings that accompany Eurocentric learning about these people" (Playing 6-7).

4. One might note in passing that there is certainly no shortage of references to the more overtly racialized savage "other"/"out there" in Franklin's writing. In the Autobiography, see his horrified description of the drunken, "disorderly," "dark-coloured" and demonic Indians at Carlisle (112-13), including his meditation on God's plan to "extirpate these savages" to make room for civilization, and his later anecdote about governing "blacks," where he poses the very condition of "blackness" as the difference in opposition to which the use of power itself is possible (123). Carla Mulford has analyzed Franklin's "Narrative of the Late Massacres" as a discourse which similarly, despite
its overt sympathizing with Native Americans, reinforces Franklin's white bourgeois identity—specifically by posing Native Americans in the position of socially subordinated, politically and economically inactive "subject-receiver[s] of the beneficence" of moral, economically and politically active white gentlemen (Mulford 353).

5. This summation refers generally to a set of concerns delineated in The Order of Things (1966), Madness and Civilization (1961), Discipline and Punish (1975), and The History of Sexuality (1977): namely, the new ways in which human beings began to be studied and manipulated as "subjects" and the evolution of what Foucault calls "bio-power," a set of procedures for ordering and controlling virtually every aspect of human life in the name of both individual and state welfare. Franklin's exacting attempt at self-definition and self-control is symptomatic of an era that presided over the emergence of bio-power and the disciplinary technologies through which it functions. These technologies, as Foucault details them in the aforementioned studies, are devoted to ordering and systematizing human life, isolating and normalizing individuals, and ensuring the internalization of the principles of order, individuality, and normalcy. The "Art of Virtue" is an exemplary instance of such disciplinary technology at work. Foucault's description of the "examination" as one of these technologies provides a pointed comparison: "These small techniques of notation, of registration, of constituting files, of arranging facts in columns and tables that are so familiar to us now, were of decisive importance in the epistemological 'thaw' of the sciences of the individual." See Discipline and Punish 190-91.

6. I would argue that all writing, including all statements about writing, has "political" ramifications. My conviction in this regard, though not my particular politicized approach, follows Jameson, who "conceives of the political perspective not as some supplementary method, not as an optional auxiliary to other interpretive methods current today...but rather as the absolute horizon of all reading and all interpretation....[T]here is nothing that is not social and historical--indeed,...everything is 'in the last analysis' political" (17-20).

7. Moreover, Franklin's case is equally representative of the third "mode of objectification" mentioned by Foucault, the process of internalization of this very objectification—"the way a human being turns him- or herself into a subject" ("Power" 208). Both the dividing practices and the internalization of subjectification are extremely useful concepts for exploring the way in which racial subjects are produced and the psychopathologies such a process involves.
8. Lentricchia distinguishes the conservative from the radical critic along the lines of a distinction made by Kenneth Burke: the conservative is at home in the normalcy of society and views "education as a function of society"; the radical feels alienated by the "unreasonableness" of society and views "society as a function of education." Like Lentricchia, my hope is that education, and criticism, can remake society along more "reasonable," and more humane, lines. According to Burke's formulation, "To say that 'society' should be a function of 'education' is to say, in effect, that the principles and directives of the prevailing society are radically askew (that the society has been despoiled of its reasonableness) and that education must serve to remake it accordingly" (332).

9. See especially Chapters 5-7 of The Political Responsibility of the Critic for Merod's analyses of the relative social effectiveness of various "left" intellectuals, including Stanley Fish, Paul de Man, Jacques Derrida, Noam Chomsky, Jameson, Foucault and Said. The oppositionality of each of these writers is compromised to some extent, Merod argues, but he is quite discerning about finding the elements in the thought of each that are still of use to the politically engaged critic. Perhaps Merod's critique of Fish is most relevant to the issues of context and community I am about to discuss. The social value of Fish's "interpretive community," Merod points out, though it has liberating implications for the idea of textual meaning and interpretive interaction, tends to be liquidated by its dependence on a traditional and elitist model of authority and intellectual expertise, on the "priestly function of the authoritative interpreter" (109). Still, it is an expanded idea of community that is most central to Merod's own conception of critical radicalism (see, for example, 116-17).

10. Said takes as his point of departure for these remarks Foucault's problematization of the question "What is a text?" in The Archaeology of Knowledge.

11. Merod argues that in large measure the humanities teacher's mission is to counteract the disabling forces that produce helplessness, apathy, and homogeneity in our society: "The teacher's job is to breed the kind of critical capacities that allow students to resist such disabling forces," leading them to "the process of questioning received assumptions and conventional practices, to challenge authority not by temporary (and mostly futile) rebellion but by working wherever they work in the long-drawn-out effort to create resistance to domination and cultural indoctrination" (128-29). Developing this critical mindset in students involves teaching them both how to
question "truth" and consensus and how, as Lentricchia puts it, to "spot, confront and work against the political horrors of one’s time" (12).

12. This line of thought also owes much to Said, who asks us "to consider that the audience for literacy is not a closed circle of three thousand professional critics but the community of human beings living in society." Addressing such an audience and making critical work socially relevant will thus entail "a crossing of borders and obstacles, a determined attempt to generalize exactly at those points where generalizations seem impossible to make." See Said ("Opponents" 24) and Merod 193-95.

13. This may be an important qualification of Lentricchia’s injunction to "work against the political horrors of one’s time," if for no other reason than that there may be disagreements about what constitute the "political horrors" of our time. Different students may find different problems to "confront," but if we have fostered this stance of aggressive critical thinking, we are already on the road to a more informed, and more humane, society. As Merod comments, "The job of the radical critic is not so much to make [particular] realities known as to challenge the conceptual basis for maintaining such ignorance. The radical’s job is to prepare intellectual access for anyone who wants to comprehend the actual conditions...that separate people from the democratic control of their environments" (188).

14. Fanon’s theorization of the psychology of colonialist racism is articulated in Black Skin, White Masks (1952). For an insightful perspective on the significance of Fanon’s ideas, see Homi K. Bhabha’s "Interrogating Identity: The Postcolonial Prerogative," in Goldberg. As Bhabha notes, "In shifting the focus of cultural racism from the politics of nationalism to the politics of narcissism, Fanon opens up a margin of interrogation that causes a subversive slippage of identity and authority" (206).

15. See hooks 19-20 and 27-29. As hooks notes, referring to Linda Alcoff’s discussion, the importance of this version of identity politics to black liberation struggle is similar to its importance within feminist theory, where a conception of the subject as nonessentialized and emergent from a historical experience has also been emphasized. In a prominent example outlined by Rachel Blau DuPlessis, Virginia Woolf began "reevaluating the canons of...proper subject" in "Professions for Women" by overturning narrow definitions of female identity like the "Angel in the House" and creating a self more true to the "contradictions of consciousness" (123). Blau DuPlessis traces this
redefinition of the subject through the work of several later woman poets.

16. The terms of this discussion are at best slippery and, partly because of their simultaneous use in different theoretical frameworks, partly because of their cultural manipulation, can have meanings that diverge to the point of direct contradiction. The term "identity," for example, might refer to either a specific type of "subjectified" identity or to the more fluid, more individuated "hybrid" sense of self which is possible in the absence of any externally defined type. And as this description suggests, the term "individualize," which Foucault applies (very usefully, I think) to the definition and typing of a "subject," might also be recovered to speak of the true, unypeable individuality of the historically situated, socially determined self. The term "subject" is similarly vexed, especially since Foucault is using it here for a version of what, in another philosophical framework, would be called "object." Indeed, in Jessica Benjamin's adaptation of the subject/object dichotomy, the position of "subject" corresponds to the fullness of intersubjective experience possible for those who are not objectified by others. I will try to note the occasional shifts in such usages that facilitate my discussion, as when I take up Benjamin's empowering version of the "subject" in chapter 5.

17. My summary is based particularly on Lacan's essays "The mirror stage as formative of the function of the I," "The agency of the letter in the unconscious," "The subversion of the subject and the dialectic of desire in the Freudian unconscious," and "The function and field of speech and language in psychoanalysis," all in Ecrits: A Selection. My reading of the Lacanian self is also indebted to Gallop's, Brivic's, and Bannet's instructive commentaries.

18. Ellie Ragland-Sullivan, for example, argues that the Lacanian Other on which identity depends can be defined as "the discourse of the mother, father, culture and language itself" (191), while Sheldon Brivic notes that "Lacan maintains that the unconscious is generated by an interplay of the situations of personal relations, culture, and language and cannot have any inherent content" (62).

19. My description is indebted to Henry Sussman's succinct and evocative summary of the Kohutian model: "In the universe of Kohutian psychoanalysis, the subject is a palimpsest, a stuck-together agglomeration of more and less recent versions of a draft in progress, the self. Psychological experience for Kohut is a slippage or 'snapping in' and 'out' of these prose versions of the self in response to a variety of stressors" (65). Kohut's own
most detailed formulations of his approach, difficult to encapsulate because they are conscientiously empirical and descriptive, are contained in *The Analysis of the Self* (1971) and *The Restoration of the Self* (1977).

20. Kohut himself was aware of many of the similarities between Lacan's ideas and his own. He acknowledged, for example, that the self-object concept, along with the ideas of mirroring and mirror transference, were paralleled by Lacan's conceptualization of the developmental "mirror stage" (*Analysis* 123-24, *Restoration* xx). Joseph H. Smith has also remarked on the connections between Lacan and Kohut, due perhaps to their mutual Freudian roots (Smith 49, 66, 70, 110). Sussman, meanwhile, has elucidated the extensive and intriguing similarities between Kohut's ideas and those of Otto Kernberg, placing those similarities in the context of a post-Freudian object-relations emphasis that encompasses Lacan, Winnicott, Klein, and Sullivan, among others.

21. The Kohutian clinician, for example, does not treat a patient per se so much as he or she engages in an ongoing process of analyst/analysand empathic intersubjectivity, in which neither "self" is wholly distinct from the other. Jane Gallop has summarized the similar Lacanian critique: "Through his emphasis on the intersubjective dialogue of the analytic experience as well as his discovery that the ego itself is constituted in an intersubjective relation, Lacan has shifted the object of psychoanalysis from the individual person taken as a separate monad to the intersubjective dialectic" (117).

22. The mediation I am suggesting here is similar to the one discussed recently by Fabienne Worth, derived from Gramsci's theorization of a historical process which deposits an infinite number of traces within the developing self. The historical process is then erased from awareness, leaving an externally derived, but internally autonomous construct of identity. The process of reconstructing one's subjective position, creating an "inventory" of the historical traces, then, is a mediation "between a humanistic identity (in which the subject signifies the object) and a postmodernist identity (in which the subject is constructed by the signifying object)" (Worth 7).

23. Even in the decentered, infinitely multiplicitous, object-desiring consciousness theorized by Deleuze and Guattari there is room for a "peripheral totality," a unity which exists along with all the fragments of the self, but does not "unify" them (42). While this description sounds much like the "perspectual unity" proposed by Sussman, at other places in *The Anti-Oedipus* this "subject" resembles
Samuels' self-structure based on its own changing phases: "This subject itself is not at the center, which is occupied by the machine, but on the periphery, with no fixed identity, forever decentered, defined by the states through which it passes" (20).

24. "[I]t is not the aim of analysis to confront the patient with a now supposedly fully uncovered drive so that he can learn to suppress it, to sublimate it, or to integrate it in other ways with his total personality. The deepest level to be reached is not the drive, but the threat to the organization of the self" (Kohut, Restoration 123).

25. These aspects of the "disciplinary" production of the "subject," and how they relate to Franklin's proclivities for self-examination and self-writing, are captured with particular succinctness in the following passage: "Thanks to the whole apparatus of writing that accompanied it, the examination opened up two correlative possibilities: first the constitution of the individual as a describable, analyzable object...in order to maintain him in his individual features, in his particular evolution, in his own aptitudes or abilities, under the gaze of a permanent corpus of knowledge; and, second, the constitution of a comparative system that made possible the measurement of overall phenomena, the description of groups, the characterization of collective facts, the calculation of the gaps between individuals, their distribution in a given 'population'" (Discipline 190).

26. As Homi Bhabha points out, Foucault tends to treat "race" as an anomaly on the historical scene, ignoring the impact it surely had in the intercultural deployment of colonial "bio-power": "Foucault's spatial notion of the conceptual contemporaneity of power-as-sexuality limits him from seeing the double and overdetermined structure of race and sexuality that has a long history in the peuplement (politics of settlement) of colonial societies" (Bhabha, Culture 248).

27. I refer specifically to Foucault's discussion of "delinquency" and its fabrication as a method of making an object and, hence, an "individual" and a "subject," of the offender (Discipline 251-256). The entire discussion of the structure and function of penalty in the sections "Panopticism" and "Complete and austere institutions" is also relevant to my argument.

28. I refer to the traditional attribution of such qualities as criminality, immorality, lunacy, hypersexuality, dirtiness, and laziness to the "black" personality construct in America. The evolution of these stereotypical image
structures, as David R. Roediger has detailed, took place in the context of a consolidation of "whiteness" in terms of the disciplines of the body and the workplace. See especially Roediger's discussion of the mid-nineteenth-century Irish-American working class, which defined itself as "white" by projecting the negative terms of precisely these disciplinary categories onto the "black" "other" (150-56).

29. Important support for such a summation can be found in David Theo Goldberg's "Introduction" and "The Social Formation of Racist Discourse" in Goldberg, ed., Anatomy of Racism, and his "Modernity, Race, and Morality"; Michael Omi and Howard Winant's "By the Rivers of Babylon: Race in the United States (Part One)"; Henry Louis Gates Jr.'s "Writing 'Race' and the Difference it Makes"; and in Gossett.

30. Even the earliest formulations of anything that could be called "racial" distinctions among classes of human beings date back only to the middle of the eighteenth century. The taxonomical classifications of Linnaeus (1758) were perhaps the first attempt to formalize "race" scientifically, while the philosopher David Hume attempted to naturalize the theories of "race" differentiation and "Negro" inferiority in 1753: "I am apt to suspect the negroes, and in general all the other species of men (for there are four or five different kinds) to be naturally inferior to the whites" (from "Of National Characters"; quoted in Gates, "Writing").

31. "The nineteenth century was a period of exhaustive and--as it turned out--futile search for criteria to define and describe race difference" (Gossett 69). See also Gossett 62, 77, 82, 125, and 140. Chapters III and IV in Gossett are particularly informative about the "scientific" and anthropological efforts to validate "race," as is chapter 2 in Gould. See also Nancy Stepan, The Idea of Race in Science: Great Britain, 1800-1960 (Hamden, Conn.: Archon Books, 1982) and "Race and Gender: The Role of Analogy in Science" in Goldberg, ed.

are the literary applications that Aldon Lynn Nielsen and Toni Morrison have made of such a theorization of "race." Cf. Morrison's "Africanism," discussed above and below.

33. My use of Said's analysis of "Orientalism" as a model for an analysis of American "Africanism" gains considerable credence from the fact that, at certain points, "Orientalism" not only parallels but intersects with the discursive construction of "blackness" in America. Hortense J. Spillers, for example, has noted how Harriet Beecher Stowe quite deliberately and unselfconsciously conflated what it means to be "oriental" with what it means to be "African," hopelessly complicating the possibility of any distinctive meaning for either term but making the utility of both abundantly clear: whatever they signified could be starkly opposed to what they did not--Anglo-European whiteness (Spillers, "Changing" 26-27).

34. "Underlying all the different units of Orientalist discourse--by which I mean simply the vocabulary employed whenever the Orient is spoken or written about--is a set of representative figures, or tropes" (Said, Orientalism 71). Elsewhere, Said stresses the "idiomatic" nature of "orientalism," of "orientalness," and of the "oriental" person: "For the Orient idioms became frequent, and these idioms took firm hold in European discourse. Beneath the idioms there was a layer of doctrine about the Orient; this doctrine was fashioned out of the experiences of many Europeans, all of them converging upon such essential aspects of the Orient as the Oriental character, Oriental despotism, Oriental sensuality, and the like" (203).

35. Three stories that surfaced in the news in late 1993 are suggestive of the pernicious extremes to which essentialism, even if based on "black" pride and ethnicity, can quickly escalate: the first involved an organized movement by members of the "black" community to ban "white" parents from adopting and raising "black" children; the second involved the ejection from a Kwanzaa celebration of a "white" mother who had brought her "white/black" children to the event, on the grounds that Kwanzaa was for "blacks" only; the third involved protests by "black" students against the teaching of African-American history by "white" university professors (see Pope). All three actions are based on the assumption that "black" and "white" people can be defined, not merely that certain features of behavior or culture can be experientially characterized as "black." Such definitions must be rooted in the original system of "race" and "racism," with all its concern for exclusion and its blindness to both intragroup and intrapersonal diversity.
The self became an increasingly problematic, increasingly contested idea with the "end" of romanticism and the advent of modernism. I am thinking primarily of fiction, like that of James Joyce and Virginia Woolf, in which identity is represented as fluctuating, multiplicitous, intersubjective, and, perhaps most significantly, constituted by a surrounding cultural and material substrate. For Leopold Bloom and Stephen Dedalus, as Sheldon Brivic has commented, the self is not only materially based but takes the form of a continuous loop or spiral: identity is an ongoing process of perception moving outward to engulf the "Other" and self-consciousness moving inward to sense its (constantly renewed) self, a dynamic that Brivic connects to both Hegel and Lacan. For Joyce, as for Hegel and Lacan, identity was a "succession of phases" (Brivic 48). Similarly, Woolf explored the tenuous, environmentally constituted nature of identity in novels like Mrs. Dalloway and The Waves, and in fact extended her exploration to its psychopathological implications with her creation of the character Rhoda, who cannot see her face in the mirror and laments, "I am broken into separate pieces; I am no longer one" (Waves 106). For discussions of similar literary identities from a distinctly Kohutian perspective, see Sussman and Bouson. A broader discussion of this "modernist" self in literature can be found, for example, in Sypher.
Chapter Two
Proper Conduct and Negro Sunshine:
Disciplines of Self and Text in Stein's Melanctha

Approached from almost every angle, Gertrude Stein's Melanctha seems to reflect a fundamental concern with the clarification of identity. Within the text, characters struggle to quell internal discord by asserting, fixing, and coming to "know" the "real" selves inside them and inside other characters. As a representation, the text has been read as a mimetic icon of consciousness in process, as an artistically coherent depiction of the conflictual, repetitive, disordered elements of unfolding identity. As a text about Americans of African descent, Stein's story has been read as an attempt at psychological realism that seeks to define racial identities according to a crude schema of skin color and blood mix. Finally, the way Melanctha inscribes elements of Stein's own life suggests possible readings of the story as an artistic exorcism of demonized anxieties about Stein's own social and emotional identity.

These related concerns with clarifying identity share a significant common thread: each develops around issues of morality, conformity, and propriety. Individual identity is managed, in Melanctha, through the management of proper conduct: applying the rule of "the right way to do" (235) to the verbal or observable record of what has been done, determines who and what one "really" is. The rules of
rectitude, however, are insistently referenced to codes of sexuality, race, and class, so that constructs of coherent identity are always built out of a compound of conformity and category. Hence, Melanctha's romantic interest, Dr. Jefferson Campbell, is preoccupied with outlining what living "regular" means for working class "colored people" (117).

The tragic proportions of Melanctha's life, conversely, are a product of her inability to fit into any such socially defined role. Taken in this light, Stein's story reads as an explication of the violence of constricting the contradiction and complexity of the plural psyche within simplistic, superficial constructs of race, sexuality, and propriety. Melanctha is a character whose yearning, noncomformity, and discontent expose the inadequacy of the identity roles available within a society which manages individuality by managing conduct and conformity. What interests me particularly, however, is the exaggerated emphasis this concern places on both morality and race. Indeed, if one sets aside the stylistic and aesthetic innovations which have traditionally riveted the attention of Stein critics, these topical elements may be the two most dramatic features of *Melanctha*: the seemingly clumsy and contrived structure of race and color which governs the narrative commentary and the character descriptions; and the remarkably extended depiction of the interpersonal
operations of what Michel Foucault would analyze as a "disciplinary society," obsessed with the normalization of behavior. I want to suggest that this intersection of themes is not incidental, but can be traced to the intimate relationship of "race" and morality alluded to in recent cultural analyses like David Theo Goldberg's study of the racial subtext of Enlightenment moral philosophy (Goldberg, "Modernity"), and David Roediger's and Eric Lott's studies of the moral subtext of the nineteenth-century racialization of U.S. society (Roediger 95-97, 133-63; Lott 67-71).

Placing Melanctha in the context of that relationship between "race," morality, and identity, I think, can help us to understand why the racial code embedded in Melanctha has inspired such contradictory responses. Richard Wright pronounced the story a profoundly realistic rendering of African American life and speech, claiming that he had read Melanctha aloud to "a group of semi-literate Negro stockyard workers," who were delighted, understanding, and "enthralled." 1 James Weldon Johnson and Nella Larsen were also among the African American writers who praised the text for its humane and realistic depiction of African Americans (Brinnin 121). In contrast, other commentators have found the portrayal of "blacks" in Melanctha to be utterly generic, if not patently demeaning and racist. "I found nothing striking and informative about Negro life,"
wrote the African American poet Claude McKay. "Melanctha, the mulatress, might have been a Jewess" (248). And Richard Bridgman, correcting numerous instances of blind appreciation of the realism of the portrayals by white critics, has bluntly described Stein's treatment of "blacks" as condescending, false, and thoroughly stereotyped ( Pieces 52, "Melanctha" 352). All too often, however, the potential political issues raised by Stein's language of race have been largely slighted or ignored in favor of analyses of more aesthetic or "universal" concerns: the text as an example of modernism, realism, stylistic experimentation, romantic narrative, epistemological inquiry, or psychological analysis. Even explicitly politicized approaches to Melanctha, like those which have sought to elucidate the latent feminism of the narrative, have only cursorily engaged the racial discourse and imagery, when they engage it at all.² Such critics, as Sonia Saldivar-Hull points out, in their efforts to establish Stein as a legitimate force within the received modernist canon, or to install her as one of the feminist matriarchs of an alternative canon, have sidestepped the upper-class, white supremacism that Melanctha might be seen to exhibit.

I want to redirect attention to this often ignored aspect of Melanctha by placing it in a context that complicates the strict dualism of this realism-or-racism
debate. A reading of the elaborate system of racial discourse and imagery in the story certainly needs to take into account how that system insistently tries to pin the behavioral and psychological characteristics it is describing to racial identity, an effect that must at least be defined as racializing, if not implicitly racist. In this aspect, the narrative functions as an instance of what Toni Morrison calls "Africanism," a representation of "blackness" that underwrites both cultural and personal definitions of "white" (in this case Stein's) identity. But the potentially racist implications of this deployment of rhetoric and stereotypes is extensively complicated by two crucial aspects of Stein's creative method: first, the "realism" of an artistic mode that apparently drew at least some of this material from a genuinely African American cultural milieu; and, second, her self-conscious intention to represent not "real" "blacks," but the very discursive system, including its Africanism, in which her own identity was constructed. Taking such features of Stein's creative process into account does not mean dismissing either the psychological function the text might have had for her as Africanism or the contribution the text makes to the extension of such symbolic racialization, but it does mean positioning Melanctha as an irresolvably ambivalent statement about "race." Derived in part from the hugely influential cultural structure of the minstrel show, as I
suggest below, Stein's discourse of "race" exhibits precisely the kind of complex mix of "contradictory racial impulses" that Eric Lott has recently attributed to that most popular of all nineteenth-century entertainments (Lott 4). Stein's ventriloquization of "blackness," like the minstrel show's, cannot be categorized as "inauthentic" or "racist" in any simple way, both because some elements of her text derive from a cultural discourse that was already interracial in its own right and because her art was rooted in what Lott has called a "contradictory structure" of racial feeling in nineteenth-century U.S. society.

We can begin to read this political ambivalence precisely in Stein's representation of Melanctha's struggle against the "government" of racial and moral "individualization." In the first section of my argument, I assess this "intratextual" dimension of the text--the plot itself--as radical or liberatory in that it encourages readers to question the normalizing strategies, centered on codes of both "race" and conformity, that radiate through the social structure it represents. The dual emphasis on "race" and morality, indeed, in a text in which the characters struggle to "know" each other "truly" as intelligible subjects, suggests that "race" and morality might both be categories of identity within a larger project of disciplinary "government of individualization," using "discipline" especially in its sense of "making"
individuals (Foucault, *Discipline* 170). Both the discourse about racial natures and the continuing surveillance, comparative assessment, and categorization of characters' sexual and/or moral "identities," in other words, depict the specific mechanisms through which discipline operates, an operation implicitly challenged by the trajectory of Melanctha's life. Insomuch as the story analyzes the disciplinary effects of the characters' discourse, then, it bears a certain progressive political effectivity.

If, by reading with the grain of the text, so to speak, we can see Stein critiquing a disciplinary society that deploys such codes of individualization, by reading against the grain of the text--reading the text as Africanist--we can also see the important ways that Stein herself is contradictorily enmeshed in such a disciplinary society, as both subject and agent of discipline. Thus, in the second segment of my reading, I suggest how Stein was using her writing during this early phase of her career to work out profound anxieties about her own sense of self. These anxieties are precipitated by the normalizing and individualizing strictures of "white," middle-class moral conformity, I argue, and are exorcized in *Melanctha* through a process of self-fortification that projects the psychic disorder Stein was feeling onto a thoroughly racialized other. If the extended thematization in the story of how disciplinary sexual and moral individuality are enforced at
the microsocial level indicates what was "eating" Stein as she made her expatriacy permanent and began her artistic career, her method of encoding that concern nevertheless witnesses the reproduction of disciplinary tendencies in her own text.

It is this secondary dimension of Melanctha, then, that reads as an elaborate instance of the ego-reinforcing and chaos-exorcising Africanism to which Morrison has ascribed a key role in the structuring of "whiteness" and "white" identity. Drawing on a culturally established network of discursive agreements about "blackness," Stein was working out the disorder of her own identity--and most prevalently its sexual "disorder"--by projecting disorder, and sexuality itself, onto a racialized other. Melanctha, from this perspective, can be productively read as a metaphor for Stein's own psychological alienation during the first few years of the twentieth century--Melanctha's "blueness," but also her "blackness," providing a metaphor through which Stein externalized experiences of disorder, incoherence and moral impropriety.3 In its dimension as text, then, Melanctha provides a signal twentieth-century example of the racial mirror stage in which a culturally dominating "white" identity is established and reified through the cultural creation of a degraded "blackness."

If we attend to the disciplinary effects of Stein's discourse, that is, Melanctha carries a politically
regressive and racially reactionary symbolic valence that distinctively problematizes the potential radicalism of the content.

In my concluding remarks, however, I want to present the text in a third, more contextualized or "extratextual" dimension, a reading that, by focusing on Stein's particular compositional technique, leaves these contradictory impulses in tension. As Carla Peterson's recent attempt to historicize the story suggests, the racial rhetoric in *Melanctha* is realistic to the extent that Stein drew at least part of it from elements of minstrelsy, "coon" songs, and blues music that she heard in the African American communities she lived near in Baltimore during the late 1890s. These forms, before we even consider the complexities of intention and desire Stein may have brought to them, were already radically interracial in usage and deeply conflicted in political inflection (compromised by their racist origins, yet subversively reappropriated). Ultimately, however, it is by complicating the idea of "realism" itself that Stein most profoundly inflects her story with such conflicted elements of the symbolic order. In formulating *Melanctha* as a "realism of the composition," a "realism of the composition of [her] thoughts," rather than as a "realism" of objects, events, or characters, Stein problematizes the very distinctions between textual content, textual surface,
and textual context on which a totalizing interpretation of the story might depend. In Stein's metarepresentational composition, the material surface of the surrounding discursive system itself is incorporated directly into the "realism" of the representation. Instead of representing "black" Americans, as I argue in my conclusion, the story literally represents how culture trains "whites" to think about "black" Americans. Or, more accurately, in addition to representing "blackness," the story represents how the representation of "blackness" takes place. Insomuch as the text thus thematizes what we might call the disciplinarity of culture's racial discourse, it remains an irresolvably ambivalent statement about "race" that holds both liberatory and oppressive significations in tension.

The sense of proper conduct

The obsession with moral propriety in Melanctha might be read as a direct response to the emergent, oppressively disciplinary U.S. middle-class atmosphere in which Stein grew up. I am referring to what Lott has called, drawing on the work of historians like Roediger, Mary Ryan, and Paul Boyer, the emergence of a "rationalized society" with a "new moral order" of both bourgeois and working-class "respectability" between about 1830 and 1860 (Lott 148). The formation of a U.S. class hierarchy during this period, Lott observes, was accompanied and managed by the
development of a "culture of moral reform" and other "fresh repertoires of domination," including new social discourses of "criminality" and "race" (69-70). Moreover, the cultural production of "blackness" in nineteenth-century minstrelsy tended to both encode these social formations and to symbolically resolve the tensions and anxieties they created. It is in this context that I want to read Stein's later production of a related, though different version of "blackness," eventually treating Melanctha as a sort of racialized projection of "white" middle-class disciplinarity. I begin, however, by examining it as an illustration of what we might think of, in Foucauldian terms, as the intensive "formalization of the individual within power relations" (Discipline 190) and the networks of petty disciplinarians that radiated through various levels and sectors of society during the nineteenth century.

The "race" and morality that pervade Stein's story, I am suggesting, might be most productively interpreted as "disciplinary technologies" through which, as Foucault argues, disciplinary power applies itself to immediate everyday life which categorizes the individual, marks him by his own individuality, attaches him to his own identity, imposes a law of truth on him which he must recognize and which others have to recognize in him. It is the form of power which makes individuals subjects. ("Power" 212)
As this passage suggests, the discipline Foucault theorizes is not confined merely to operation as a corrective or formative device in the prisons, asylums, schools, and clinics which form the heart of his historical inquiries, but also "applies itself to immediate everyday life." In fact, he hypothesizes the infinite extension of a generalized disciplinary power throughout a network or continuum of relations that affects every member of society and penetrates to the most miniscule levels of interpersonal behavior, and it is this prospect of a "disciplinary regime" or "disciplinary society" (Discipline 193, 209) that I find most interesting for my reading of Melanctha. Melanctha, and in a similar way the other two stories in Three Lives, might be read as an extended portrayal of a society characterized by "the universal reign of the normative": a social structure in which "the judges of normality" and the "mechanisms of discipline" are omnipresent and subtly exert their coercive force on "each individual, wherever he may find himself" (Discipline 304).8

In Three Lives, this disciplinary power is represented as being transmitted through the capillaries of everyday life by every person who has internalized the codes of conduct, class, and "race"--by the evaluative and judgmental functions of an entire social fabric of "supervisors, perpetually supervised" (Discipline 177).9
Each of the stories depicts a microsociety riddled with moral monitoring, chastising, and petty penalty. Stein focuses on characters, like Melanctha's friend Rose, who are not only supervised by the rules of regularity and rectitude, but also participate in supervising, managing the compliance of both themselves and others. Thus the "good" Anna, who "had always a firm old world sense of what was the right way for a girl to do" (24), constantly monitors the sexual behavior of her young co-worker, Sallie, insistently "scolding" her and even resorting to surveillance. "Sallie is a good girl but I got to watch her all the time," says Anna (20). The "gentle" Lena's aunt, Mrs. Haydon, carefully manages Lena's leisure time and administrates a proper marriage for her, a marriage motivated not by desire but by Mrs. Haydon's conception of "decent" identity for a working girl. "I do whatever you tell me it's right for me to do," says the compliant Lena to her moral supervisor (253). Similarly, in Melanctha, Jeff and Rose monitor, categorize, and ultimately censor Melanctha for her failures in the "right way to do" and for acting like a "common nigger," (86) a classification I take to have both a class and a racial dimension. In this respect, Three Lives incisively illustrates an almost comprehensive supervision of conformity, by which, through a "micro-physics of power" (Discipline 26-27), individual identities are created, insisted upon, and constrained.
The management of proper conduct, then, represents the primary "ritual of truth" and objectification by which characters in Stein's story attempt to reduce identity to a manageable, individualistic, "fictitious atom" attached to human self-experience—it is the basic instrument by which "discipline 'makes' individuals" in Melanctha. Through the strict application of a moral code—often, but not always, a code of sexual morality—to observed behavior, characters like Rose and Jeff seek to define each person's individuality, to evaluate hierarchically the individuals so created, and in so doing to enforce normativity and conformity. Melanctha's friend Rose exemplifies this dynamic of the moral code in the opening pages of the story: she is described as "promiscuous," but as maintaining her place—and her secure identity—in the social order by being properly engaged to each of the men she "keeps company" with, "for Rose had strong the sense of proper conduct" (88). While Rose's maneuver might seem to make a mockery of sexual morality, it is clear that, within the code of conduct and identity that obtains in this society, she is on solid ground: she is able to avoid being categorized as a "common nigger" (88) and, because she has observed the rules of social propriety, she is able to advance to the next stage of decency and conformity, deciding to become "regularly married" (88). Indeed, we might be tempted to assess this merely as hypocrisy on
Rose's part, and as her clever ability to slip through the code of proper conduct, were it not for the fact that the text has already tagged Melanctha's social shortcoming in precisely this respect and, hence, her social identity: her distinguishing feature in terms of the code of proper conduct is that she "had not yet been really married" (85, 86), a tag that will be reiterated throughout the story. Rose may indeed be immoral by a strictly religious standard, but she is operating within the framework of her society's regulations about decency and conformity. Indeed, she is herself one of the arbiters of the code of conduct, evaluating Melanctha's position in relationship to the code (she is "not a common nigger either") and serving as a counselor to Melanctha, in these opening pages, on "what was the right way for her to do" (88).

The recurrence of the "right way to do" as a refrain that governs both the behavior and the self-images of the characters in each of the stories of *Three Lives* accentuates its importance to Stein's conception of the oppression of the working-class lives she represents. I have suggested, in defining "race" in chapter 1, that one of the vehicles of the microsocial extension of the disciplines is their linguistic circulation: the racialization of society sustains, extends and applies itself to its subjects effectively because it is a *discursive* discipline. It is always transmitted,
elaborated, and rehearsed by the linguistic acts and concepts that become the vocabulary and self-concepts that organize the subjectivities that communicate with the given linguistic circuit. David Theo Goldberg describes the operation of social normativity and morality in similar terms, concisely summarizing the identity management that such codes entail as well:

The social formation of the subject involves, in large part, thinking (of) oneself in terms of--literally as--the image projected in prevailing concepts of the discursive order. These concepts incorporate norms of behavior, rules of interaction, and principles of social organization. The values inherent in these norms, rules, and principles exercise themselves upon individual and social being as they are assumed, molded, indeed sometimes transformed in their individual and social articulation. ("Modernity" 193)

Following Goldberg's analysis, "the right way to do" serves as the key example in Melanctha of a discursive encapsulation of social norms that, in turn, provides the basis for "the social formation of the subject." The phrase "right way to do" literally becomes a linguistically communicated self-image that particular subjects attempt to conform to or, at the risk of considerable anxiety and social censure, as we shall see, resist. This reductive and normative discursive structuring of the subject, as Jayne Walker suggests in her insightful reading of Stein, supplies much of the tragic undertone of the "three lives": the "repetition of the same judgmental words" about morality and character are the key feature in Stein's
creation of what amounts to a "story of victimization by language and the social conventions it enforces" (Walker 26, 27).

In what follows, I want to extend Walker's intriguing emphasis on the reductive function of compartmentalized social discourse in *Melanctha*--the inadequacy of Jeff's "rigid set of moral labels" for describing either experience or personality, for example (Walker 33)--to an engagement with the distinctly racial language that forms a part of this discourse but that, like many commentators, Walker ignores. Like Rose, Jeff has thoroughly internalized the "norm" that governs social behavior in the "black," working-class culture Stein depicts, and he is an ardent and vocal supporter of the "regularity" and "quiet" living it dictates. For Jeff, this behavioral code is explicitly referenced to his racial identity, and conformity to it is a crucial component in his program for improving the life of "the colored people":

"I am a colored man and I ain't sorry, and I want to see the colored people like what is good and what I want them to have, and that's to live regular and work hard and understand things, and that's enough to keep any decent man excited"....It was the life he wanted that he spoke to, and the way he wanted things to be with the colored people. (117, emphasis mine)

According to this reductive linguistic grid, Jeff initially defines Melanctha as a type. That type is clearly "bad," for we learn that "he did not like Melanctha's ways and he did not think that she would ever come to any good" (112,
emphasis mine). We might conceptualize the two lovers' subsequent interaction in terms of Jeff's continuing efforts to secure not only the semantic and moral, but also the racial integrity of his terminology of "good" and "bad," and, simultaneously, to position Melanctha's identity within his linguistic grid and his code of "decent" behavior for "colored people." The wild vicissitudes of Jeff's frustrated, repetitive involvement with Melanctha, then, correspond to his movements between brief periods of sharing in the semantic, experiential, psychological and sexual "wandering" that Melanctha represents, and renewed efforts to restore semantic, psychological, and moral "regularity," where "regularity" is defined within a socially dominant conception of "blackness." (I will return below to the complex influence of "white" ideas of "blackness" on that conception.)

Which is the way that is you really?

Above all, Jeff manipulates the linguistic units and self-images circulating through the codes of "regularity" and "good" in order to secure and define subjectivity, an insistence on essentialized individuality most prominently thematized by his enduring rhetoric of "really knowing" both his and Melanctha's identities. Melanctha, in simply struggling for a social and psychological existence that respects the various emotional and intellectual impulses
she feels, is unconsciously struggling against a "government of individualization" that ever pulls her toward a unified, static, and describable individuality. Her tendency to "wander" away from the socially constructed identities available to her--like the social positions reverence by her friend Rose--is, indeed, what initially seems to attract Jeff, the young, upstanding doctor, but he is eventually repulsed by the threat such "freedom" entails and moves violently back toward a reassertion of the moral code and, significantly, a strict doctrine of individualism.

Throughout Jeff's repetitive cycle from strict "decency" to brief dalliances with wandering and back to a sense of rigid individualism, a romantic journey that consumes the central 100 pages of the 150-page narrative, Melanctha and Jeff link their contrasting concerns with identity management to a specifically linguistic sense of self-constitution and to their differing epistemological orientations--their different ways of knowing the world. When Melanctha meets the young "mulatto" (108) doctor at her mother's deathbed, he is a man with a rigid, simply defined self-conception committed to an austere lifestyle (no "excitements") and a carefully defined existence. He is given to long, elaborate sessions of "thinking" things through and talking things out. He believes in always learning to know his world through careful thought, and, as
Melanctha puts it later, in "always wanting to have it all clear out in words always" (171).

In contrast to this existence based on definition and rigid security, Melanctha has a "complex, desiring" (87) identity, "always full with mystery and subtle movements and denials and vague distrusts and complicated disillusionments" (89). Her complexity and vagueness counterpoint, but also counteract, Jeff's propensity for clarity and definition. Melanctha has little use for talking and thinking; her mode of interacting with the world and with other people is both material and affective. "Melanctha always had strong the sense for real experience. Melanctha Herbert did not think much of [Jeff's] way of coming to real wisdom" (116). Early on in their relationship, she condemns Jeff's narrow and quiet approach to life as an avoidance of "really feeling things way down in you" (123), stressing the characterological dichotomy between Melanctha's sensibility of feeling and Jeff's sensibility of thinking.12

The "thinking" and "feeling" types represented by Jeff and Melanctha, respectively, resemble the poles of a dichotomy of human nature that long occupied Stein's attention, beginning perhaps with the research article she published as a psychology student at Harvard, "Cultivated Motor Automatism."13 Of more direct relevance to my argument here, however, is the connection Lisa Ruddick
convincingly shows between Stein's representation of these personality types and the work of her college psychology mentor, William James. Numerous critics have explored the influence of Jamesian psychology on Stein's writing, most notably in terms of her efforts to render in fictional form the Jamesian concept of a "stream of consciousness." Ruddick, by contrast, delineates how James's discussion in *Principles of Psychology* of what he called "habits of attention" may have provided the conceptual basis for Stein's personality types in *Melanctha*. Ruddick's focus is particularly useful here because it elucidates how the "feeling" and "thinking" types might be related to another apparent theme in the story: how the words and concepts available to us limit our interactions with the experiential world. That is, the concept of "habits of attention" may have been the model that Stein herself was working with in creating characters whose language, as Walker puts it, "controls--and impedes--their perceptions and judgments" (37).

Briefly, James believed that each of us makes sense of, and limits, the multitude of sensory experience by selecting what we will actually "pay attention" to according to distinctive "habits of attention." These modes of selective attention, he reasoned, are predominantly linguistic and conceptual in nature. Adults, James theorized, would be quite fixed in their habit of
attention, able to shut out the plethora of incoming impressions and limit their actual perceptions to data relevant to a limited set of permanent interests, needs, and familiar words and concepts. Children, on the other hand, might be more capable of simply "wandering" in the sensory continuum from one item of immediate excitement to another, making fewer "selections" based on acquired concepts and personal use value. Stein's emphasis on the vague descriptor "wandering" to describe a broad range of Melanctha's experiential activities (including, but not only, sexual experiences), suggests that we might read the personality types in Melanctha as an opposition between the two extremes of the character range suggested by James's framework. At one extreme is Melanctha's "childlike" "wandering attention," with little concern for practicality and little limitation by received concepts; at the other is Jeff's more "adult"--or, to use a phrase more amenable to the cultural framework of this discussion, more socialized--tendency toward practical perceptual selectivity and the linguistic encapsulation of experience.

Reformulating the thinking/feeling typology in terms of the Jamesian habits of attention which Stein may have been adapting, then, clarifies her thematization of the linguistic dimensions of perception and personality. As James suggests, our available repertoire of words and concepts not only limits what sensory data we actually
perceive, but how we perceive those data that do filter through our attention. Thus, our actual perceptual mode is significantly determined by our previously acquired, and largely linguistic, consciousness; or, as James put it, "whilst part of what we perceive comes through our senses from the object before us, another part (and it may be the larger part) always comes out of our own mind."16 To be obsessed with thinking everything out and "having it clear in words," as Jeff is, is to have a relatively rigid and selective "habit of attention"; to be more interested in what "excites" (119), to "have strong the sense for real experience" (116), and to prefer feeling things deeply, as does Melanctha, is to have a less conceptually and linguistically fixed "habit of attention." These, finally, were the key characteristics defining what Stein apparently conceived of as two basic "identity" types. As she observed later, "habits of attention are reflexes of the complete character of the individual."17 Stein's recourse to the reductive dualism of such a typology, as I argue below, might be taken as one indication of her own attempt at this point in her career to manage anxieties about the disorder and multiplicity of human behavior and identity.

When Jeff and Melanctha meet, her less fixed habit of attention immediately begins to expose the inadequacy of his linguistic rigidity. Most significantly, Jeff's carefully structured sense of self, literally constructed
out of a set of stock phrases about behavior and morality, begins to deteriorate under Melanctha's destabilizing influence. Jeff's self-image is directly cued by his community's behavioral norms as they are communicated in words like "quiet," "good," "regular," and "avoid excitements." Following Goldberg, we might analyze this formation of Jeff's "subject" as his "thinking (of) [him]self in terms of--literally as--the image projected in prevailing concepts of the discursive order" ("Modernity" 193). The text itself seems to focus on how Melanctha's problematization of the discursive order traumatizes the subject as cultural structure. As the two begin to discuss morality and conduct (116-135), Melanctha repeatedly forces qualifications in the "meaning" of Jeff's statements, undercutting both the concepts on which he bases his ideas and his confidence in the transparency of semantic reference, as when she asserts that "it certainly does seem to me you don't know very well yourself, what you mean, when you are talking" (118). Repeatedly Melanctha points out the shortcomings of Jeff's narrow formulations, finally observing that Jeff's ideas of goodness and regularity seem to preclude the possibility of "real" love and of "really feeling things way down in you," which "certainly ain't really to me being very good" (122-23). Jeff tries to retrench by more carefully defining "love," forwarding a narrow formulation of two possible types of love: good,
regular "family" love, on the one hand, and "animal" love, on the other (124). With a perceptual grid based on such narrow concepts, Melanctha observes, Jeff can "talk big" but has little capacity for "being really very understanding" of the world, and his ethics of "goodness" "don't amount to very much" (124).

While Melanctha pursues the relationship despite her awareness that Jeff's "good" might not be all "good," Jeff's interest seems contingent on his establishment of a clearly defined character for Melanctha: he is hesitant to proceed in the affair until he has pinned down precisely "who" she "is." Originally, Jeff had Melanctha neatly categorized as a type and wanted nothing to do with a personality "who wandered" and hence "would never come to any good" (110). After encountering her "feeling" mentality, however, he is beset by both semantic and characterological doubt: "If Jefferson only knew better just what Melanctha meant by what she said....Now he found that really he knew nothing. He did not know the least bit about Melanctha" (130). From Melanctha's perspective, of course, mere words are inadequate to "what a woman is really feeling in her," and she urges Jeff to abandon his talking in favor of "really feeling" (135). Jeff admits that "[p]erhaps what I call my thinking ain't really so very understanding" (135), but there is considerably more at stake in this realization than a mere shift from a
"thinking" to a "feeling" mentality. Rather, his engagement with Melanctha's mode of "knowing" precipitates a state of uncertainty characterized by the deterioration of linguistic integrity and a sense of internal discord:

These months had been an uncertain time for Jeff Campbell. He never knew how much he really knew about Melanctha....he did not seem to himself to know very much about her....He now never thought about all this in real words any more. He was always letting it fight itself out in him. He was now never taking any part in this fighting that was always going on inside him. (136)

Significantly, Jeff's loss of a coherent sense of self and his anxiety that both his and Melanctha's identities may be complex and contradictory, is linked to an inability to use "words" to encapsulate experience. Alerted by Melanctha to the possibilities of an endless series of qualifications and nuances that might underlie the surface signification of words, and aware that the solidity of his identity was built on the solidity of his language, Jeff slips into a state of Lacanian alienation, where the contradictions of his unconscious and the chain of linguistic signification threaten the ego integrity he had previously assumed.

Indeed, a few episodes later this threat of psychic disintegration becomes even more explicit, as the wandering habit of attention that characterizes his relationship with Melanctha begins to threaten the dissolution of both their "selves" into an intersubjective fabric of "little pieces all different" (158). This disintegration of clear ego
boundaries is, for Jeff, both a "good big feeling" and a source of immense anxiety (158-59), a psychological ambivalence that mirrors the moral ambivalence that leads to his on-again, off-again involvement in the affair. The crisis centers, in either case, around insecurity about the definition of Melanctha's identity ("I don't know anything real about you Melanctha") and about the disturbance of his moral and racial self-conceptions, as is suggested by his almost desperate rehearsal in this context of the formulaic linguistic units through which he has internalized these self-images: "the right way," "live regular," "all the colored people," "a bad one," "having excitements" (159). Representative of what he calls his "old thinking" (156, 159), these formulae bespeak both the behavioral code and the semantic order on which Jeff's sense of a clearly bounded identity depend. Without them, and the clear definition of Melanctha they enforce, Jeff feels himself to be in danger, like Melanctha's "wandering," alcoholic friend, Jane, of literally "[going] to pieces" (108).18

Melanctha immediately reads this individualizing dynamic in their first disagreement, recognizing that what is really at issue in Jeff's semantic doubt is his attempt to define her moral identity. Jeff, who has begun to wonder if his initial assessment of Melanctha as a "bad" wanderer is correct, is attempting to bring her "real" self to the surface by making subtle suggestions about the difficulty
of knowing "what each other is really thinking" and "what each other means by what we are always saying" (128). Instead of showing her hand, Melanctha calls his, recognizing that he is only trying to get her to speak so that he can judge her according to the terms he already believes in: "That certainly do mean, by what you say, that you think I am a bad one, Jeff Campbell" (128).

Jeff dodges the truth in this assertion this time, but the cat-and-mouse game between them continues. Only by encouraging Melanctha to speak her thoughts can Jeff resolve the conundrum that structures their relationship: is Melanctha "good," so that he can love her, or is she "bad," making his involvement with her an infraction of his code of "regular" conduct for the "colored people." Of course, Jeff is also flirting with Melanctha's reckless abandonment of the linguistic and moral code, but constantly he returns to the need for judging her moral identity, and it is her ability to appear "good" at some times and "bad" at others—a fluctuation that is inconceivable within Jeff's original conceptual framework—that leads to his ambivalence. Frustrated by a woman who is too complex to fit within any of his available stock formulations of human character, he accuses her of psychological duality:

Sometimes you seem like one kind of a girl to me, and sometimes you are like a girl that is all different to me, and the two kinds of girls is certainly very
While we should reference this anxiety more to Jeff's moral individualization than to Melanctha's complexity per se, in any case the significant issue for Jeff, in the context of his newly learned doubts about linguistic clarity and his experimentation with Melanctha's mode of "feeling," is a potential failure of identity management. Melanctha refuses to resolve herself into the unified, static individuality that his conceptual framework can make sense of, and he demands that she clarify her identity by stating its truth in language so that it can be recognized by others: "...I certainly don't know which is a real Melanctha Herbert, and I certainly don't feel no longer, I ever want to talk to you. Tell me honest, Melanctha, which is the way that is you really, when you are alone, and real, and all honest" (139). As an unwitting conduit for the transmission of "disciplinary individuality" into the personal interactions of everyday life, Jeff here demands the easy categorization of individuals, insists that the name "Melanctha Herbert" denote a unified, totalized individuality, and tries to impose a "law of truth" (Foucault, "Power" 212) on this identity, at once "honest" and "real."

What is transpiring in these scenes is something very like Foucault's idea of the "examination," in which the
"normalizing judgment" searches for the confession or verbal verification of behavior that will allow moral categorization. Jeff, significantly a medical doctor, deploys a strategy that Foucault argues evolved out of the medical procedure of the "examination" to become a widespread technique within the disciplinary regime for constituting "the individual as a describable, analysable object...in order to maintain him in his individual features, in his particular evolution, in his own aptitudes or abilities, under the gaze of a permanent corpus of knowledge" (Discipline 190, emphasis mine). It is Jeff's insistent search for the verbal describability of his lover that makes his repeated interrogations of her, of what she is "really thinking," so comparable to the "examination." Moreover, Jeff is not interested in simply talking to Melanctha about her past, her tastes, or her behavioral patterns; he wants to find out, in what seems to be a very rigid and simplistic sense, "who" she is. That is, the describability he demands is intended to denote an unchangeable, categorizable "individuality," by which Jeff will be enabled to make the evaluation "good" or "bad" and thus determine whether to continue his romantic interest. It is precisely in this emphasis that the normalizing procedures represented in Melanctha are so evocative of disciplinarity itself--in the distinction that Jeff is not so interested in whether Melanctha has committed a
particular "immoral" act, as he is in making a "case" and a particular type of individual out of her by determining her acts. "The case," as Foucault defines it, "is the individual as he may be described, judged, measured, compared with others, in his very individuality; and it is also the individual who has to be trained or corrected, classified, normalized, excluded, etc." (Discipline 191).

While Melanctha herself consistently eludes being pinned down in any single individuality and avoids giving Jeff the verbal evidence he needs to establish this describability, at one point in the romance he thinks he has obtained the requisite record of her behavior from her old friend Jane Harden, who gives Jeff a thorough verbal description of Melanctha's past activities that includes hints of various illicit sexualities—fornicative, homosexual, and interracial:

Jane Harden began to tell how they had wandered. Jane began to tell how Melanctha once had loved her, Jane Harden. Jane began to tell Jeff of all the bad ways Melanctha had used with her. Jane began to tell all she knew of the way Melanctha had gone on, after she had left her. Jane began to tell all about the different men, white ones and blacks, Melanctha never was particular about things like that. (143-44)

This oral recounting of Melanctha's historical record allows Jeff to "see very clearly" what Melanctha "is," and what he sees strikes him as "very ugly" (144). His sense of "proper conduct" is aroused, for he now "knew Melanctha had done many things it was very hard for him to forgive
her" (146). He is willing to give Melanctha a chance to explain her way to a moral position that refutes the facts he has in hand, however, so he confronts her with the evidence--with the record of herself as a moral and racial subject:

I know [Jane] was talking truth in everything she said about you. I knew you had been free in your ways, Melanctha, I knew you liked to get excitement the way I always hate to see the colored people take it. I didn't know, till I heard Jane Harden say it, you had done things so bad, Melanctha.

(151)

More to the point, Jeff vociferously asserts his right to know this information, to constitute a body of knowledge about Melanctha. He believes that this knowledge constitutes the "truth" not only of Melanctha's past behavior, but also the "truth" of her identity: "I had a good right to know about what you were and your ways" (152, emphasis mine).

"The disciplinary apparatuses," in Foucault's formulation, "hierarchized the 'good' and the 'bad' subjects in relation to one another....By assessing acts with precision, discipline judges individuals 'in truth'; the penalty that it implements is integrated into the cycle of knowledge of individuals" (Discipline 181).

Indeed, Jeff seems obsessed with this verbal record of identity, asserting that, if he had wanted to, he could have extorted a confession from Melanctha personally--his mistake was only how he got the information, not that he
got it. Melanctha, for her part, absolutely rejects the establishment of this corpus of knowledge, telling Jeff flatly that she "never would have told you nothing" if he had come to her for a confession (152). Jeff's machinations to determine Melanctha's degree of conformity to the code of proper conduct, though perhaps more subtle, are functionally equivalent to the "good" Anna's surveillance of the servant girl Sallie: nonconformists must be observed in their nonconformity, described and evaluated, and punished.

Jeff's interest in Melanctha continues intermittently despite such judgments, both because he holds out hope of "reforming" her "character" and because of his own furtive desires that are aroused by her "wandering" ways. His insistent compliance to the moral code, however, repeatedly infuses his involvement with guilt and anxiety. When the two lovers seem on the verge of sexual activity, for example, Jeff's internal moral pilot suddenly goes into overdrive and he convulsively and physically throws Melanctha aside in "strong disgust" (155). His agonized feelings about this behavior are again expressed in the formulaic idioms of the internalized codes of proper racial and moral conduct that organize his very sense of self: "he only had disgust because he never could know really what it was really right to him to be always doing, in the things he had before believed in, the things he before had
believed in for himself and for all the colored people, the living regular" (156). Melanctha, more resistant to normalization, recognizes that the problem lies precisely with the simplistic, rigid linguistic units out of which Jeff builds his moral code and, consequently, his unitary self-conceptions. Brief formulations like "the right way to do," she observes, are of little use as abstractions and must be subject to constant qualification and application to the particularity of situations: "You ain't got no way to understand right, how it depends what way somebody goes to look for new things, the way it makes it right for them to get excited" (167). This statement represents a radical refusal of normalization—a radical morality. Melanctha's perception of the moral universe, indeed, stands in stark opposition to that of Lena, the paragon of the effectively, and coercively, normalized individual: "I do whatever you tell me it's right for me to do" (253).

While Jeff's reasons for ultimately rejecting Melanctha are confused and multiplicitous in his own thoughts, hence confused and multiplicitous in the narrative itself, then, it seems clear that they relate to Melanctha's failure to comply with disciplinary individuality and normalization. It is significant that he upbraids her, near the end, for failure to observe a sort of traditional, stoic individualist ethic, in which each individual is "not for the other but for ourselves, what we were wanting....Each
man has got to do it for himself when he is in real
trouble" (178). One of Melanctha's shortcomings, as Jeff
tells her, is her willingness to involve other individuals
in her trouble and suffering instead of bearing them on her
own with courage and fortitude (179). Just as
significantly, in his final tirades against her character
he also scolds her for what amounts to her refusal to
provide the "confession" of her behavior that he has wanted
all along: Melanctha's shortcoming is that she never can
"remember right," at least not in the rational,
discursively coherent, and moral sense that Jeff means the
phrase. Jeff's comments reveal his sense that it is
precisely because she cannot verbalize her moral
subjectivity concretely that Melanctha is without
subjective structure:

...you ain't got down deep loyal feeling, true inside
you....you ain't ever got any way to remember right what
you been doing, or anybody else that has been feeling
with you. You certainly Melanctha, never can remember
right, when it comes to what you have done and what you
think happens to you. (180-81, emphasis mine)

"Remembering right," then, is also code for the
presentation of a record of acts committed, which Melanctha
has flatly told Jeff she will never give him. She has
refused to comply with the examination procedure, refused
to allow a corpus of knowledge about her "case" to be
established, hence interfered with Jeff's effort to
identify and evaluate the "truth" of her moral
subjectivity. Though his moral censure is coded in a discourse about relationship issues (like "trust") and profoundly confused in his own mind with his abiding desire for Melanctha, Jeff imposes the severest punishment available to him as a judge at the microsocial level: he rejects her as a lover and friend.  

It is at the juncture of this rejection that the narrative returns to where it began, to Melanctha's involvement with the even more overt disciplinarian of rectitude, Rose Johnson. "Rose never found any way to get excited. Rose always was telling Melanctha Herbert the right way she should do" (207). Moreover, Rose's pronouncements cross-reference the rules of "proper conduct" with the racial code that organizes, stratifies, and, in fact, moralizes her society. For Rose, it may be an infraction of "proper conduct" to pursue sexual excitements without the moral endorsement of engagement, but it is an even greater infraction to pursue those excitements across racial lines. Jeff's morality was understatedly "colored": regular living, hard work, and quiet family life are his dictates for the "colored people"; and he is horrified by Melanctha's history of illicit sexuality, which includes her "wandering" with both "white" and "black" men. Rose is both more clear about what the code is and more domineering in providing guidance to Melanctha:
You better just had stick to black men now, Melanctha, you hear me what I tell you, just the way you always see me do it....I never do say to you Melanctha, you hadn't never ought to be with white men, though it ain't never the way I feel it ever real right for a decent colored girl to be always doing....Now you hear to me Melanctha, what I tell you. (207-8)

Like the "good" Anna with her underlings, Rose sets herself up as moral supervisor for Melanctha, scolding and advising on points of conduct throughout the remaining pages of the story, while Melanctha finds security and safety in being in contact with Rose's more structured self. Rose, the text indicates on several occasions, like Jeff, has a firmly structured moral subjectivity as a result of having "strong in her" the "sense of proper/decent conduct" (200, 210, 215): she has thoroughly internalized the idioms of both "the right way to do" and "the best way a colored girl can have to be acting" (208), providing her self, unlike the "complex, desiring" Melanctha's, with a set of enduring parameters.

As Rose's ministrations suggest, members of the Bridgepoint "black" community think, like Jeff, in terms of "regularity" for "colored people": the code of proper conduct is referenced to the code of racial strata. This racial/moral cross-referencing of identity constructs is in evidence, for example, when Melanctha is warned of the potential disasters of running with "white" men and taught what is "right for a decent colored girl to be always doing" (208). The racial category of identity also
operates at a more subtle, and more pernicious, level, however. An accepted part of the community discourse, as Stein represents it, is in fact the definition of its members in terms of their racial category or, more specifically, their skin color or "blood" mix, with an equally accepted privileging of lighter skin and "white" blood. Thus, Rose repetitively refers to Melanctha's father, an extremely dark-skinned man, with a single epithet that combines his moral and his racial position: "that awful black man" (213). The repetition of this color coding, spoken in the context of an all-black community by a character who is herself a dark-skinned black woman, emphasizes the significance of "race"—but more specifically "whiteness"—as a category of identity in the "black" community Stein represents. Understanding "whiteness" as the norm of "black" racialization also helps us to understand Rose's insistent self-justification, "for I was raised by white folks" (86, 88, 207, 219). Because she does have dark skin, Rose must make it clear that she escapes the lower class and racial position of being what she calls a "common nigger" (88) not only by dint of "proper conduct" but by virtue of her strong association to whites. Similarly, the fact that Melanctha "had been half made with real white blood," seems to considerably improve her chances for achieving the "regularity" of marriage and a "right position" (86, 210), and make her failure to do so
a source of some puzzlement to Rose, who believes that Melanctha "ain't no common nigger either" (86).

Finally, however, Melanctha's failure to conform to the model of identity constructed out of these codes of racial, moral and class correctness makes her presence a liability for the properly conducted and decent Rose. Melanctha's continuing failure to become "regularly married" leaves her without a "right position" within the code of proper conduct for black women of her age and of the class to which Rose aspires (210). Indeed, Rose condemns her harshly for a particular behavioral faux pas in this matter, when Melanctha's engagement to Jem Richards, the gambler, is spoiled by her acting "mad," "foolish," and "excited," and bragging to everyone about the engagement (219). It is significant that Melanctha's infraction in this instance hinges on a thoroughly technical issue of misconduct. To act this way when in love would be fine; to act so when engaged is a trespass of the microsocial rules of proper conduct and "middle class" respectability: she has embarassed her beau by being too much in love with him (219). Such a misstep is not only sure to jeopardize the engagement (as, evidently, it does), but it also identifies Melanctha as indecent. "When she is engaged to him Sam, she ain't got no right to take on so excited," Rose tells her husband. "That ain't no decent kind of a way a girl ever should be acting" (219).
Initially sympathetic, Rose is now building up evidence of Melanctha's turpitude, making a "case" out of her and compiling a record of her behavior that will allow a judgment to be made. The evidence becomes overwhelming when Rose, like Jeff before her, receives information from secondary sources verifying Melanctha's failure to conduct herself properly. With a verbal record of her behavior at hand, Rose is ready to define Melanctha's moral condition as not "good" and "never does act real right." Rose tells her husband,

sometimes I hear awful kind of things she been doing, some girls know about her how she does it, and sometimes they tell me what kind of ways she has to do it, and Sam it certainly do seem to me like more and more I certainly am awful afraid Melanctha will never come to any good. And then, Sam, sometimes, you hear it, she always talk like she kill herself all the time she is so blue, and Sam that certainly never is no kind of way any decent girl ever had ought to do. (228-29)

Rose confronts Melanctha with her judgment and passes sentence with the utmost finality: their friendship is over, and Melanctha is never to set foot in Rose's house again.

Rose's judgment is the normalizing judgment of a society governed by the rules of proper conduct and an allegiance to the static individualities that can be determined by degree of conformity to those rules. Melanctha's expulsion from Rose's house and companionship is, therefore, literally an expulsion of a "bad" individual from the social order, an individual who has failed to conform, who
has evaded normalization. Rose's judgment is thus even more final than Jeff's, and fitly completes the depiction of a social order pervaded by the disciplines of conduct, individuality, and the "norm," where everyone has become a judge and a punisher—a social order in which

the activity of judging has increased precisely to the extent that the normalizing power has spread. Borne along by the omnipresence of the mechanisms of discipline...it has become one of the major functions of our society. The judges of normality are present everywhere. (Discipline 304)

It is as one such judge, combining "the art of rectifying and the right to punish" (Discipline 303), that Rose makes her final assessment of Melanctha: "she never no way could learn, what was the right way she should do" (237).

Wandering as anti-discipline

Melanctha's nonconformity to the strict racial and moral codes deployed by the discourse of her peers—her lack of a coherent racial or moral subjectivity—implies a critique of the disciplinary systems that insist on such normativity and, when normalization fails, produce the kind of emotional devastation that seems to be Melanctha's lot at the end of her story. Reading the story in this "intratextual" dimension, then, presents Melanctha as a version of the plural and complex psyche in open struggle with socially imposed, unitary, and static constructs of identity. Stein clearly depicts her main character as more
plural and more complex than the other characters in the tale—as desiring, mysterious, and complicated—though she also reduces this complexity to a crude duality: Melanctha is first desiring (87), then repressing (89); first "seeking rest and quiet," then only finding "new ways to be in trouble" (89); first Jeff's bad girl of cold, hard laughter, then his flower of beauty and sunshine (138). Melanctha's cyclical wavering from habits of "wandering" to the patronage of "solid," rigidly moralistic friends, is similarly suggestive of the uncertain psychological character, what Marianne DeKoven describes as Melanctha's "divided self" (31), that Stein tends to represent as a merely dual nature.

Melanctha's complexity, of course, lies not merely in an open rejection of conformity, but in her uncertain relationship to it. At times with Jeff she seems a prophet of the possibilities of "wandering" free of any fixed moral identity, but she also, we are told, longs for Jeff-like "peace and quiet" and for "right" conduct. Apparently incapable of shackling the desires and the mysteries of the heart within a "strong sense of proper conduct" like Rose and Jeff, Melanctha allows them more free play, making her more a reveler than a rebel. Ruddick has characterized Melanctha's struggle with the more practical and more rigid "habit of attention" being imposed upon her by society as a struggle with a particularly Jamesian doctrine of "success"
that had influenced Stein's thinking. In the story, this doctrine of "success" is represented by Jeff. There is considerable merit to Ruddick's contention that Melanctha's relationship to Jeff's conception of successful living is uncertain and ambiguous largely because Stein herself was, at the time she composed *Melanctha*, ambivalent about the strict Jamesian guidelines for practical and individualistic subjectivity, and was, in fact, beginning to "strain against James" (Ruddick, *Reading* 30). Jeff's renewed inner strength and Melanctha's demise in the final pages might be read as a critique of what James called the "exuberant non-egoistic" way of being--the lack of selective attention--but it is just as possible, as Ruddick puts it, to read *Melanctha* as "a protest against the entire notion of mental success represented by Jeff" (30).

From the latter perspective, Melanctha's wandering has the effect of exposing the inadequacy of the simple, unified, and constrictive subject positions available to her within what I have sketched as a disciplinary society. The fact that Jeff can only recognize her as two-girls-in-one, or as "too many for him" (175), the extent of Melanctha's emotional misery within the system (her "awful blue" feeling), and the devastating punishment meted out to her at the end for her nonconformity, all suggest a subtle critique of disciplinary individuality (as well as Jamesian individuality, or "egoism"). In this view, Stein is
artistically representing complex subjectivity in aggravated tug-of-war with the moral subjectification of social discourse, perhaps because she had struggled with this kind of constrictive normalization herself, particularly as imposed by the sexual mores of her "white" middle-class upbringing. We might also note, however, that her complication of reductive psychic models resorts to certain reductive strategies of its own—like the distinctly either-or, binaristic models of identity that I have alluded to—a "stronger" reading of the text that I will turn to in my next section.

The moral subjectification deployed by the characters, as I have suggested, is deeply intertwined with the discourse of racial subjectification that they also use to identify themselves and each other. In this sense, Melanctha illustrates the operation of what I have called the discursive discipline of race, focusing on the psychological devastation it creates. Put simply, characters have the option of becoming numb to the contradictory intimations of their psyches, fully accepting as natural the race/morality constructs available to them, or they can resist these formulations at the risk of confronting the intimate violence of the disciplinary system. Melanctha's "blues" mentality, it should be noted, is not merely directed inward: "Sometimes the thought of how all her world was made, filled the complex, desiring
Melanctha with despair. She wondered, often, how she could go on living when she was so blue" (87, emphasis mine). While one might argue that Melanctha's emotional upheaval is meant to be merely the result of the abuse inflicted upon her as a child (to which the text clearly alludes), or, more vaguely, of her simple inability to "fit in," there are also indications that Melanctha is tormented by what she has seen in the world around her.

There are indications, more to the point, that what she has seen has had something to do with the devastating racialization of her society and the Jim Crow system that surrounds and, I would suggest, structures the black community of Bridgepoint. During Melanctha's formative adolescent "wanderings after wisdom" (97), part of the worldly knowledge she obtains is the repeated telling of a story of racist differentiation and hate, with an explicit threat of "white" violence toward "blacks" who do not conduct themselves properly. A porter at the train yard tells Melanctha how he evicted from his train a white man "who called him a damned nigger, and who refused to pay money for his chair to a nigger" (99). The porter had to give up going to that part of the south because the white men involved "swore that if he ever came there again they would surely kill him" (99).

It is within the dynamics and definitions of such violent racialization that "proper conduct" and "quiet
living" did, historically, become the imperatives of black communities. In this sense Stein's text illustrates what Ralph Ellison, in an essay on Richard Wright's southern roots, referred to as the process by which southern, black communities "worked out efficient techniques of behavior control" as a defense mechanism against "white" violence (Shadow 90). One response to such violence, in other words, is to numb oneself to it by living, as does Jeff Campbell, within the identity "patterns" it allows. Though characters like Jeff counsel her to do the same, Melanctha is, in the end, too spirited to do so, and thus she is fully awake to the horror of "how all her world was made."

Sensing that her self does not fit within any of the rigid models of identity imposed by the overlapping disciplines of race and conduct, Melanctha is forced to confront despair and thoughts of self-annihilation, wondering "how she could go on living when she was so blue" (87). Between the lines of Stein's text, I am suggesting, runs the implication that Melanctha is "awful blue" because of a world that could combine the conduct, race, and linguistic elements of individualization in defining her father as an "awful black man" and her friend the porter as an improperly conducted "nigger."

Still, Melanctha, having less strongly internalized the cultural code and having, therefore, a less fixed sense of self, fluctuates for a time between periods of "free
enjoying" and these periods of "awful blueness." She is briefly able to communicate the possibilities of her more "feeling" habit of attention to Jeff, forcing him to problematize the vocabulary of stock concepts, words, and phrases that govern his own hypersocialized subject. Jeff's and Melanctha's "free enjoying" at this point, along with their translations from it to conventionality and social opprobrium, respectively, undermine the normalcy of the "government of individualization" represented by "the sense of proper conduct." Melanctha leads us a tentative step down the road to reimagining "what we could be" as a means of subverting "the simultaneous individualization and totalization of modern power structures" (Foucault, "Power" 216).

From interiority to exteriority

We have, then, what looks from the "intratextual" point of view like a significant critique of the disciplinary and individualizing methods of society, and perhaps even of the particular racial and moral disciplinarity that occurs in certain black communities, and, by extension, of the larger racialization of society that causes those effects within its racialized subcultures. In other words, Melanctha does in important ways resemble what bell hooks refers to as a "radical black subjectivity" struggling against the "conservative policing forces" of her black community (20).
In short, the story's basic structure of plot and character suggests a sympathetic "white" representation of African American life.

By looking more closely now at the exceptionally racialized textual surface of Melanctha, however, I want to suggest how its potential subversion of disciplinary selfhood is itself subverted by Stein's reproduction of racial disciplinarity in the very language she deploys to construct the narrative. The racialized elements of Stein's discourse, that is, instance the linguistic discipline of race as I have described it in chapter 1. To reformulate this point within the Jamesian psychological framework with which Stein herself may have been working: if Melanctha can be read as a personality with an undisciplined, wandering attention, refusing to shape what she experiences with reductive words, phrases, and concepts (undermining the disciplinarity of the self), that representation is ironically counterpointed by the way the text itself exhibits a rigidly selective habit of attention, insistently forcing its representations to conform to a set of stock words, phrases, and concepts (producing a disciplinarity of the text). When we take this aspect of Melanctha properly into account, we must add, to the radical signification I have outlined so far, a second, more regressive dimension of the story. From this second perspective, the story might be more accurately
characterized as an early example of the "white avant-garde" attempting to "appropriate and usurp radical efforts to subvert static notions of black identity" for the purposes of its own self-definition (hooks 21). Like the contemporary avant-garde critics hooks is describing in this phrase, Stein used what she thought she saw in African American culture as the starting point for mulling ideas about her own, "white" identity.

It is precisely by turning critical attention to the surface of the prose, to the text as representation, that one also turns critical attention from the "black" subject matter of the story to the "white" subject position that created it. In other words, by looking at the surface effects of Stein's style, and in this case the racial surface effects, we perform the project which Toni Morrison has referred to as the aversion of the "critical gaze from the racial object to the racial subject" (Playing 90). The approach I am proposing has been aptly described by Edward Said as the shift from an analysis of "what lies hidden in" the racist text to an "analysis rather of the text's surface, its exteriority to what it describes" (Orientalism 20). As Said suggests, the "exteriority" thus analyzed is both that of the "style, figures of speech, setting, narrative devices, historical and social circumstances" and that of the writer herself to the supposed object of representation. By looking at the style, figures of
speech, and narrative devices of *Melanctha*, then, I want to explore how Stein clarifies herself as a presence thoroughly "exterior" to African American life, precisely by manipulating a received set of discursive agreements and linguistic units like those that make up what Morrison calls "Africanism." In her artistic effort to evoke alienation, we might say, Stein grants herself the privilege of translating the mystery and strangeness of a racial other, but it is precisely the constricted vocabulary of that translation that reveals a second referent: not any "real" African American presence, but the "white" self and its constitutive network of Africanist discourse.\(^{21}\) When we look at the textual surface of *Melanctha*, finally, we see a generalized and thoroughly disciplinary evocation of "blackness" that dilutes the radical impulse to represent human complexity.

As Eric Lott argues, new discourses of "race" evolved during the middle of the nineteenth century as a sort of social symbolic, encoding and resolving crises of subjectivity produced by the intensive "culture of moral reform" that accompanied the economic stratification of U.S. society (69-70). While Lott is most interested in how blackface minstrelsy functions as one such discourse, I want to suggest that Stein's representation of "blackness" in *Melanctha* can be read as a similar response to the intensively moralized air of her nineteenth-century middle
class background (a representation itself influenced by the discourse of minstrelsy). It is crucial, that is, that Stein does not represent the moral normalization that preoccupies *Three Lives* in the context of the "white" *middle class* milieu she would have been most familiar with (and that did become the context of her concern with conformity in later texts like *The Making of Americans*), but rather in the context of the working class, in the first and last of the *Three Lives* stories, and of the "black" community, in *Melanctha*. Like the blackface participants that Lott describes as "immersing themselves in 'blackness' to indulge their felt sense of difference" from the new bourgeois sensibility (51), Stein was using "race" to stage subjective conflicts precipitated by her class position, with its strict edicts about morality, gender roles, and, most significantly for Stein's emerging sense of a lesbian sexuality, sexual orientation. The issues insistently rehearsed in *Three Lives*, I am suggesting, pointedly support Lott's assessment that, "Working-class women (white and black) and black men in bourgeois cultural fantasy are figures for a thrilling and repellent sexual anarchy" (122). As much as she is an emancipatory figure of radical "black" subjectivity, *Melanctha* is Stein's racialized projection of otherness itself.
That Stein, in representing the "government of individualization" in *Melanctha*, intermingles the social codes of "race" and morality is significant, then, not only because different disciplinary technologies were always interactive, overlapping, and mutually supportive, but also in the context of Goldberg's thesis that modern moralism is productive of race as a differentiating ideology. As Goldberg notes, the discourses of race and morality have been deeply symbiotic since the inception of racialized thinking in the sixteenth century: "Historically dominant pictures of moral nature have been keys in forming both social self-conception and the figure of the Other: what each agent at a given conjuncture could be, expect, and achieve" ("Modernity" 198). The project of carefully defining one's own identity in moral terms—one's moral subjectivity—Goldberg implies, has consistently entailed the formulation of racial subjectivities as well, so that racial exclusions "have been legitimated and may disturbingly be justified in terms of the historically prevailing conception of moral subjectivity" ("Modernity" 198). Enlightenment philosophers defining their own moral subjectivity in terms of rationality, for example, at one and the same time defined their own racial subjectivity, and that of the "Other," by defining that rationality in opposition to a "manifestly" irrational "Other" (savage, African, American Indian, etc.). In this sense *Melanctha*
reenacts a fundamental dynamic of modern thought, though, as Lott argues of the minstrel show and as my multidimensional analysis of Melanctha is meant to suggest, this moralization of the subject through the racialization of an "other" is deeply ambivalent, encompassing both distancing and desire.

The common phrases relating to negroes

Indeed, Stein's remarks and attitudes about people of color as recorded in other contexts are suggestive of this ambivalence, articulating in some instances the kind of cross-racial fascination that George Fredrickson characterizes as "romantic racialism" and in others more overt versions of the projection of amorality I have described. Stein's early familiarity with and reiteration of overly romanticized and traditionally stereotypical images of southern "blackness" is suggested by the description, taken from her undergraduate Radcliffe themes, of "Baltimore, sunny Baltimore, where no one is in a hurry and the voices of the negroes singing...lull you into drowsy reveries" (Bridgman, Pieces 23). Such a remark about the city on which the "Bridgepoint" of Melanctha is ostensibly based might be taken as the precursor to the narrative descriptions in the story of how "the colored people came out into the sunshine....And they shone in the streets and in the fields with their warm joy, and they
glistened in their black heat, and they flung themselves free in their wide abandonment of shouting laughter" (208-9). Claude McKay was certainly correct in finding in Melanctha a reproduction of "the common phrases relating to Negroes," a view that we must set in counterbalance to Richard Wright's eventual claim that Stein's rendering of the colloquial language of African Americans made him "hear the speech of [his] grandmother, who spoke a deep, pure Negro dialect."23

Stein's recorded remarks do suggest that her thoughts about African Americans were often mediated through the hackneyed, brief, discrete units of the traditional body of discursive agreements about them--the "common phrases relating to Negroes." Aldon Lynn Nielsen has provided a useful synopsis of her seemingly dismissive statements about African and African-American culture, arguing that Stein seems to have believed that blacks were incapable of art, originality, and of historical tradition (Nielsen 21-27). Nielsen cites, for example, Stein's simple but sweeping pronouncement in The Autobiography of Alice B. Toklas that "Gertrude Stein concluded that negroes were not suffering from persecution, they were suffering from nothingness. She always contends that the african is not primitive, he has a very ancient but a very narrow culture and there it remains. Consequently nothing does or can happen" (Selected Writings 224). Aside from the simplicity
and essentialism of the analysis suggested here, we might note both the social ignorance of the assumption that the blacks of her time were not suffering from persecution and the new light that the imputation of an essentialized "nothingness" to blacks places on the vagaries of both speech and behavior in the Jeff and Melanctha relationship.

The view that the social position of American blacks was attributable not to racism but to a metaphysical black character is of course one of the most traditional and stereotypical of all rationalizations for society's continuing racialization. In fact, Stein's remark fosters two of the leading stereotypes that justified the dismissal of race issues as a problem for social attention: first, that darker-skinned peoples are somehow suffering from intellectual and cultural "nothingness" as an essential character trait; and second, that (because of their essential character) the condition of the race was simply fated to be a tragic one, a status that could not be changed by any manner of social treatment.24

Additional instances of stereotyped images and idiomatic expressions about "blacks" surface in Stein's later writing, particularly as she evolved a compositional technique that allowed her surroundings and the sometimes whimsical movements of her consciousness to be incorporated into the fabric of the text. The phrase "needless are niggers" appears in the midst of the associative discourse
of *Tender Buttons* (494), while the "stories" in *As Fine As Melanctha* incorporate instances of the repeating phrases of a culture's discourse about the other like "eeney meeney miney mo catch a nigger by the toe" (275). Moreover, Stein was not above applying such idiomatic representations of "blackness" to herself. As Lisa Ruddick reports, in the notebooks for *The Making of Americans* Stein referred to her own less rational side as her "Rabelaisian, nigger abandonment, Vollard, daddy side." The reference again suggests an easy familiarity with the discursively circulating stereotypes about blacks, but also indicates a tendency to project the sensuous aspects of her self in racial terms.

I am not suggesting that by finding such examples in Stein's writing we can "catch her out" and expose her for the racist she really is; on the contrary, such examples instance a romanticization of racial difference that can be both sympathetic and derogatory. What I am suggesting is that the recurrence of such formulaic units of Africanist language in the written record of Stein's consciousness are indicative of precisely that operation of "race" as a construct of culture—as a microsocially penetrating, discursive discipline—to which I have alluded. My interest, in other words, is not in the degree to which Stein *was* or was not a racist, but the extent to which *she lived in* a racialized cultural milieu, and the effects that
racialization had on her very habits of being. Stein's own "habit of attention" was, in part, a racialized habit: as these examples suggest, one of the clusters of "stock words, concepts and labels" that shaped her everyday perception of reality was that of the Africanist discursive agreements--the "common phrases relating to Negroes."

**Negro sunshine**

The comprehensive reiteration of such phrases about "black" Americans in the narrative of *Melanctha* has been well noted. The "exteriority" of the text and the characterizations it presents fairly drip with the most deeply stereotyped, strongly cliched, and exotically romanticized elements of the discursive field that constituted Africanism in Stein's day, many of them distilled into the same type of formulaic, easily repeatable linguistic units that I have alluded to elsewhere in Stein's discourse. One of the most insistent of these formulas reproduces Stein's image of "nigger abandonment," connecting it both to the stereotype of spontaneous "black" laughter and to images that "naturalize" or biologize "blacks," making them part of the physical world itself: the text repeatedly describes its "black" characters in terms of "the wide abandoned laughter that gives the broad glow to negro sunshine" (92, 111).
This rhetorical figure is representative of the texture of racial references that organizes the prose and the characterizations in Melanctha. To begin to understand the scope and significance of this veneer of racial language, it is necessary to understand how what appears to be a veneer is actually rooted in the very interior of the text, being manipulated by the characters themselves. I have already noted how Rose and Jeff deploy a "norm" against which individuals in their community can be evaluated and distributed along a continuum of normalcy. The norm they apply is, moreover, at times moral--involving evaluations of conduct--and at times racial--involving notations of skin color. More accurately, it is a norm in which these two categories overlap to produce precise clarifications of individuality: Jeff applies it in his pursuit of "knowing" the "real" Melanctha, and Rose applies it in her determination that Melanctha's father can be identified as "that awful black man." It is precisely this disciplinary management of the race/conduct norm that is transferred from these internal operations of the characters to the "exterior" features of the text--its style, figures of speech, setting, narrative devices--creating a seamless fabric of individualizing techniques that are obsessed with the raciality of moral behavior, and the morality of skin color. As Rose chatters along in her efforts to clarify her racial identity in terms of her proper conduct, the
text itself is just as busily clarifying her moral identity in terms of her skin color.

The connection I am suggesting between the "interior" and the "exterior" of Melanctha is initially evident in the fact, noted by other Stein readers, that the norms, values, and behavioral mandates forwarded by both Jeff and Rose are neither their own nor those of a particularly "black" community. Rather, Jeff's ideas of regular living are the stuff of a thoroughly middle-class "white" conventionality, "the voice of the white bourgeoisie coming through a black manikin," as Milton Cohen has put it (121). Moreover, his ideal of hard working, restrained, docile, quiet living "colored people" closely mimics a typical "white" ideal of what "properly conducted" black people should be, leading Cohen to suggest the "Uncle Tom" quality of Jeff's values (121). Similarly, Nielsen argues that "Campbell is given the role of 'race man' in this book and is constantly expounding moral observations of the type put forward by Booker T. Washington" (25). This dynamic becomes all the more evident when we realize that the characters who possess the strongest sense of "proper conduct" in Melanctha have derived their norms and values from "whites": both Jeff and Rose are remarkable for their close contact with "white" communities. Jeff's father and mother worked for a wealthy "white" family which, we are told, "had been very good to [Jeff] and had helped him on with
his ambition" (111) and education, while Rose has been raised and financially assisted by another "white" family (86, 88). Rose herself makes it very clear how this white training improves her measurement against the story's race/conduct norm: despite very black skin, she is able to assert, "No, I ain't no common nigger, for I was raised by white folks" (86).

Thus, instead of problematizing the normalizing disciplinarity of the "white" discursive order, Melanctha reiterates it, first portraying characters who are its conduits, then deploying narrative strategies which make the "exteriority" of the text a disciplinary mechanism in its own right. If for example, Rose thinks she has identified herself as decent according to the code of "proper conduct," the narrative voice has other ideas, assessing her conduct in terms of her white training, but assigning her a moral identity based on the color of her skin: "Her white training had only made for habits, not for nature. Rose had the simple, promiscuous unmorality of the black people" (86). Three significant assumptions of the racial code entwined in the text are established with this statement: 1) people can be individualized according to essential racial and moral "natures"; 2) black skin denotes essential identity traits like uninhibited sexuality and unmorality; and 3) though you can curb and shape the actual behavior of someone with black skin, you cannot alter that
essential "nature"--the racial/moral individuality is both definable and static. This racialization of morality, indicative of a common set of racist assumptions of the 1890s, begins to suggest the linkage between moral discourse and racial discourse posited by both Lott and Goldberg. As Goldberg observes, "the imperatives of race are inadvertently lent the authority of the moral domain" ("Modernity" 224).26

The assessment of "black" "unmorality" in the story's first pages quickly flowers into a bizarre, systematic fetishization of skin color that pervades the entire text, creating what Milton Cohen has summarized as the "racial hierarchy" of Melanctha (120). As Cohen points out, this categorization of character types by skin color might be taken as a racialized version of the project which fascinated Stein throughout the decade 1900-1910, her effort to categorize individuals according to a relatively small number of types, or "bottom natures." I have already noted the resemblance of the Melanctha/Jeff dyad to one of those schemas--the "thinking"/"feeling" dichotomy--suggesting one level on which Stein is expressing anxieties about managing the plurality of identity. The almost feverish effort to assign behavioral characteristics and emotional tendencies to the signifiers of skin color and/or racial heredity, however, reveals that anxiety working at a different, and more politically impacted level.
The essence of Stein's racial descriptions of the characters, charted in detail by Cohen, follows a simple principle: the blacker the skin and the less white blood, the less civilized, less intelligent, less moral, and more closely linked to "nature" and the body; the lighter the skin and the more white blood, the more civilized, more intelligent, more capable of moral discretion, and less closely linked to the physical. Thus, the "real black" (86) Rose is identified by a cascade of traditional racist stereotypes, including laziness and hypersexuality: "Rose Johnson was careless and was lazy....Rose had the simple, promiscuous unmorality of the black people....this coarse, decent, sullen, ordinary, black childish...unmoral, promiscuous, shiftless Rose" (86); "this lazy, stupid, ordinary, selfish black girl" (200). By contrast, Melanctha, who "had been half made with real white blood" (86), is a "subtle, intelligent, attractive, half white girl [with] wisdom" (200). (While Rose is also described as having "wisdom," it is crucial that Rose has the wisdom of "common sense," while Melanctha has the wisdom of learning, subtlety, and, presumably, rationality.) Similarly, Jane Harden, the story's whitest character, "so white that hardly anyone could guess" her black blood (103), is also capable of advanced learning (two years of college), has a "good mind," and "had much white blood and that made her see clear" (104).
The color coding applied to the men in the story is equally telling. Melanctha's father, James, is described with various strings of adjectives, but those strings always include the tag "black." As a black-skinned man, he takes on all the stereotypical features of the "white" community's most feared vision of the "black" other: the mean, angry, violent, oversized, oversexed male brute. James is described as "coarse...big black virile...brutal and rough...powerful, loose built, hard handed, black, angry...fierce and serious...black and evil" (90-92), and he is capable of erupting into violent rages at Melanctha, and at John, the coachman, for showing too much interest in his daughter. By contrast, John, a "light brown" "mulatto," is "pleasant [and] good natured" (94), and he shows extraordinary kindness and friendliness toward Melanctha. So too, Jeff Campbell, whose racial identification is "mulatto," is, as we have noted, highly intellectualized, having a doctor's education and a taste for reading and ratiocination. He is also kind, thoughtful towards others, interested in the advancement of his race rather than the brute pursuit of bodily pleasures, "good and sympathetic," "earnest and joyous" (111). The text uses "whiteness" (both blood and skin) as a "norm" according to which its characters can be distributed along a continuum of both racial and moral subjectivity.
Moreover, it might be observed that the "black" end of the masculine continuum bifurcates its caricatures into the dual stereotype of "blackness" so prominent in the "white" imagination throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, most prominently in the minstrel show. According to such Africanist representations, there was the "black" male that was to be feared because he was violent, large, brutish, evil, and given to uncontrollable sexuality (like James), and the "black" male that was harmless because he was so childlike, stupid, lazy, fearful, eye-rolling, and given to uncontrollable laughter (the cheerful and docile "darkie"). Melanctha's acquaintances at the train and ship yards fulfill the latter role. The men at the train yard are portrayed as superstitious storytellers, coded by an exaggerated greasy "blackness": "their round, black, shining faces would grow solemn, and their color would go grey beneath the greasy black, and their eyes would roll white in the fear and wonder of the things they could scare themselves by telling" (99). At the shipping docks, we meet more minstrel caricatures: "she would listen with full feeling to the yowling of the free swinging negroes, as they ran, with their powerful loose jointed bodies and their childish savage yelling" (101). There are some inconsistencies in Stein's characterizations by skin color, probably, as Cohen notes, in relation to her conceptions of the "bottom natures," but a basic
fetishization of color is rigidly observed. "Black" characters are persistently tagged as "black," whereas "yellow" or "light-brown" characters are usually only identified by color once, or only vaguely. Most pointedly, intellectuality is reserved for only those characters at the lighter end of the scale, and simplicity and childishness is reserved for only those at the "black" end.

These caricatures, as Nielsen observes, reiterate the stereotypical "image structures of white discourse" about the nonwhite that were already in circulation in American culture. Images of the childlike, libidinous, cultureless, stupid, lazy, and immoral "black" abound in the popular, scientific, and academic writing by "whites" that is chronicled in histories of such discourse like Gossett's Race: The History of an Idea in America and Fredrickson's The Black Image in the White Mind. Even Stein's representation of Melanchta's complexity is largely stereotypical, further undercutting the sense that Melanchta's multiplicity suggests the humanity of blacks or critiques the individualizing impulse. Melanchta's statedly "complex," but ultimately dual character, first of all, seems to be based on the conventional racist misconception that the mixture of "white" and "black" blood would produce a psyche torn between the refined callings of its "white" elements and the sensuous strivings of its "black" elements. Within the dynamics of the story itself,
then, we can understand how Jeff--also a mulatto--is threatened by his licentious side but manages to overcome it, having thoroughly internalized the civilizing guidelines of his "white" training. Jeff feels the pull of his "black" blood but manages to clarify his identity as fully moral by virtue of "white" blood and "white" social influence. Melanctha, on the other hand, without the advantage of "whiteness" by association, is projected as half-and-half by a strict blood-to-nature equation: we know within the text's racial code that her libidinous impulse for "wandering" and "trouble" must be the tendency of her "black" blood, and we can assume that her urges for peace, quiet, and regularity are the tendency of her "white" side. We might say, then, that the text's internal fetishization of racial bloodlines dooms Melanctha to complexity and contradiction, but in this respect her representation also follows the assumptions already in circulation in U.S. literature. Stein's stereotypes of black "laughter," on the one hand, but mulatto intellectual sensitivity and melancholy, on the other, derive from a long fictional tradition of what Fredrickson terms "romantic racialism" (110).27

In addition to the racial or skin-color hierarchy which governs the characterizations in Melanctha, there is a fully developed narrative strategy of Africanism, creating what Sonia Saldivar-Hull calls the "racist frame" of the
story (193). As with the racial individualization of the characters, this setting and background reiterates a remarkably formulaic set of cliches and stereotypes about the nature of "blackness," an idea often signified in the text by the phrase "negro fashion." The text cyclically repeats the association of blacks with abandonment, laughter, nature, and sunshine, usually by replicating some form of its most idiomatic representation of "blackness": "the wide, abandoned laughter that makes the warm broad glow of negro [southern] sunshine" (86, 92, 111, 137, 161, 195, 209). In addition to these traditional associations of blacks with moral abandonment, with "wide-mouthed shouting laughter" (209), and with the heat of the tropical sunshine, "negro fashion" is referenced to a series of other stereotypical behaviors: black-on-black violence (94), pious church-going (87), and parental and maternal negligence. In a particularly pernicious instance of this re-production of white discursive assumptions and formulae, we are told that Rose Johnson simply forgets about her newborn baby, but that neither Rose nor her husband mind the loss for long because, after all, "these things came so often in the negro world" (85, 225). This occurrence and its presentation continue a stereotype that helped to impute bestiality to blacks, rationalized the destruction of black families during slavery, and extends, as Nielsen
points out, all the way back to Thomas Jefferson's descriptions of the "black" character (Nielsen 25).

In the textual background of Melanthia, indeed, "negroes" are so connected to nature and its bestial kingdom that they virtually blend into not only the sunshine but the natural cycles and structures of the earth's ecosystem: in spring, "the buds and the long earthworms, and the negroes, and all the kinds of children, were coming out every minute farther into the new spring, watery, southern sunshine," and in summer, we are told, "colored people never get sick so much" (195). Stein's evocation of an atmosphere of "blackness" depends, then, on the rhythmic repetition of certain linguistic units--the nouns "sunshine," "laughter," "abandon," and the adjectives "docile," "simple," "lazy," "indolent," "cowardly," "childish/selfish," and the idioms noted above. By connecting and recombining these elements of the received discursive structure about "blackness," she creates a fabric on which is limned the same representation of the "black" subject that had been in circulation since the earliest pages of American history: the simple, bestial, heat-loving, childlike, and immoral "darky." That Rose has the "simple, promiscuous unmorality of the black people" (86) and the maternal instincts of a "simple beast" (85), finally, is an appropriate distillation of the "black-subject-as-structure" that the text not so much creates as
transmits. As the peculiarly racialized language of *Melanctha* suggests, the discipline of racial individualization is carried out through the circulation of repeatable discursive formations.

"White" anxiety and the racial mirror stage

It is in the two significant deaths in *Melanctha*, those of Rose's child and the main character, that the cultural dynamic I am suggesting—the ongoing production of a twisted "black" image to dispel the anxieties of "white" identity—becomes most evident. The "white" fantasy-nightmare about uncontrolled "black" virility, hypersexuality, and proliferation, represented in the text both by Melanctha's virile, threatening father and the "promiscuous" Rose, was matched at the end of the nineteenth century by a second fantasy, that of a black race so constitutionally weak that it was doomed to extinction. While both of these images have subsided somewhat in the cultural imagination at our end of the century, during the decade of Stein's college years they were feverishly popular, fueled by lynching mania and social Darwinist theories of the certain demise of the "incompetent" "black" race, theories which led to fatalistic attitudes about blacks (Fredrickson 228-55). While the text's repeated assumption that high infant death rates are endemic to the black community—"but then these
things came so often in the negro world" (85)--is indicative of the latter fantasy, the image of parental negligence is perhaps even more suggestive, since it connects with the perception that blacks are too lacking in familial sentiment and too beast-like to care for their children.

Indeed, this sidelight of the text, taken together with its emphasis on "black" immorality and sexual license and with Melanctha's desponding melancholy and youthful death as a result of consumption, make Melanctha read like a fictional rendering of the popular fantasy of how black proliferation would be avoided. The political effectivity of Stein's story also needs to be read, that is, in the context of a U.S. culture of racism that had produced, in 1896, the year Stein completed her undergraduate education, Frederick L. Hoffman's Race Traits and Tendencies of the American Negro. This treatise, which Fredrickson deems "the most influential discussion of the race question to appear in the late nineteenth century" (249), is fatalistic both in forecasting the demise of the black race and in assigning it a set of essential, and degenerate, characteristics. Hoffman pronounced the physical degeneracy of the "negro" to result from "the fact of an immense amount of immorality which is a race trait, and of which scrofula, syphilis, and even consumption are the inevitable consequences" (emphasis mine). These factors, combined
with other innate tendencies like "a lower standard of nurture," Hoffman hypothesized, would "in the end cause the extinction of the race" (emphasis mine). I am not suggesting that Stein read and agreed with Hoffman; I am pointing out that she was telling a story so familiar to "white" citizens of the U.S. in the opening years of this century as to give sheer mythology the ring of realism.

Like other instances of Africanism ranging from pseudoscientific discourse to the songs of the minstrel stage, then, the textual surface of Melanctha might be read as a projection of discomforts about sexuality, social violence, morality, and even death onto a fantasized racial other, a fantasy equally invested in the docility, harmlessness, and ultimate managability of that projected other. As Morrison puts it, Africanism is "a way of talking about and a way of policing matters of class, sexual license, and repression, formations and exercises of power, and meditations on ethics and accountability" (Plaving 7). Fifty years ago, Ralph Ellison hypothesized the existence of a similar psychocultural racial mirror stage:

...it is practically impossible for the white American to think of sex, of economics, his children or womenfolk, or of sweeping socio-political changes, without summoning into consciousness fear-flecked images of black men. Indeed, it seems that the Negro has become identified with those unpleasant aspects of conscience and consciousness which it is part of the American's character to avoid. Thus when the literary artist attempts to tap the charged springs issuing from his
inner world, up float his misshapen and bloated images of the Negro. (Shadow 100)

The effect of "the racial situation"—what I have elaborated as a mechanics of discourse and discipline—on the writer, Ellison argues, is not "sterility" but the production of "a deformed progeny" (101). We might take the loose-jointed, laughter-shouting, eye-rolling, sunshine-oozing, consumptive "blacks" of Melanctha as a signal instance of this deformed literary production.

In another essay written a few years later (1953), Ellison argues that the understated rhetoric, the technical experimentation, and the focus on the personal of twentieth-century U.S. writers—especially the modernists of the "lost generation"—were artistic maneuvers meant to occlude their avoidance of the socially significant issues writers like Twain and Melville had grappled with: democracy, morality, and race. I do not believe, finally, that Stein was engaging in the "evasion" of social responsibility that Ellison imputes, for example, to Hemingway. I do think, however, that the tortured contradictions of the different social dimensions of her text can be productively read in terms of what Ellison identifies, in the work of the "lost generation" artists, as the working out of massive personal problems through a tormented use of stereotyping, of technical experimentation, and of ritualistic enactments of defeat.
and agony. His critique provides an insightful formula for the personal dimension of the racial mirror stage as we see it functioning in Stein's inflection of Africanism:

the work of art, like the stereotype, is personal; psychologically it represents the socialization of some profoundly personal problem involving guilt (often symbolic murder--parricide, fratricide--incest, homosexuality, all problems at the base of personality) from which by expressing them along with other elements...[the artist] seeks transcendence. Here is the literary form by which the personal guilt of the pulverized individual of our rugged era is expatiated: ...by being gored with a bull, hooked with a fish, impaled with a grasshopper on a fishhook; not by identifying himself with human heroes, but with those who are indeed defeated. (Shadow 38-40)

The cultural myths of "white" discourse, if I am reading Ellison's complex formulation in this essay correctly, typically produced the misshapen stereotypes of the "nigger" as a means of transferring internal disorganization and "irrationality" to an external locus. While it might be possible to isolate the historical moment at which this psychocultural process originated, it is perhaps more accurate to consider it as a continuing dimension of the mythic and psychic fortification of "white" identity. The psychological disturbances of our society's "pulverized individuals," Ellison argues (using Hemingway as an example), are symbolically resolved by the morbid identification of "being gored with a bull." To Ellison's list of literary identifications with the mauled and the defeated, I am suggesting, we might add, "by being worked to death with the good Anna, by becoming a social
outcast with Melanctha, by having the faculty of feeling exterminated with the gentle Lena."

Having outlined Stein's reproduction and manipulation of a racialized mythology--the stereotype--and discussed it as typical of a "white" cultural fantasy, I now want to move in the second direction Ellison articulates, by discussing Melanctha as a projection of Stein's personal conflicts and anxieties. The clues to what those psychological torments may have been can be traced in the unique features of Stein's evocation of "the stereotype," features which I have already analyzed in terms of the disciplinarity that pervades culture: namely, those features that inscribe Stein's persistent anxiety about the clarification of identity and her dissatisfaction with the way her society managed "decency"--most particularly, for her, sexual "identity" and sexual "decency." We may find in Stein's work of art and in her stereotypes, to paraphrase Ellison, the externalization of profoundly personal problems that were causing feelings of guilt and internal pulverization: disturbances, particularly those linked to homosexuality and incest, that lay at the base of her negotiation of personality (Shadow 39).

I have given Stein's obsession with classifying psychological types, a project that held her interest throughout the decade 1900-1910, only ancillary mention thus far, but it is certainly important to read Melanctha
in the context of Stein's continuing efforts to develop a systematic characterology of human nature. In his psychobiographical study, *Gertrude Stein in Pieces*, Bridgman describes a young Stein, from at least early adolescence until around the time she met Alice Toklas in 1907, beset by feelings of internal duality, dissolution and confusion. Stein expressed the anxieties caused by this self-conception, Bridgman points out, by repeatedly using her early college themes to write stories about internally divided and confused young women and even by identifying with the story of "Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde." Behind this fundamental anxiety, what Stein referred to as her "really anxious being" (Bridgman, *Pieces* 13), Bridgman finds lurking a recurrent concern with forbidden sexuality and with aggressive male behavior, especially of a sexual nature. Bridgman's contention is that Stein's writing--at least until she was well into *The Making of Americans*--can be read as the efforts of someone who "commenced writing in a state of manifest tumult"--a tumult significantly sexual in nature--to "purg[e] her psyche of old ghosts" (78-79). Indeed, Bridgman insightfully connects this concern of Stein's youth to her later artistic concerns and specifically to her eventual technical experimentations:

Throughout her life Gertrude Stein puzzled in her writing over the phenomenon of a multiple self. Sometimes identity seemed to her bewilderingly unstable, likely at any moment to fall to pieces.... She found it difficult and yet imperative to reconcile the sundered
parts. A good portion of her stylistic experimentation can be traced to this effort. The problem was basic. (Pieces 26-27, emphasis mine)

The disintegration anxiety thematized in Jeff's concern with the "fighting that was always going on inside him" and the "little pieces all different" that Melanctha awakens is, in one sense, the author's (136, 158). Melanctha's own crude duality is perhaps the most obvious example in the text of an attempt by Stein to externalize her discord by projecting it onto a figuration of otherness, but other, more coded references to self-fragmentation in the story tell us even more about the psychology of this projection.

The extremely general level of most of the description of Melanctha's life should instruct us to take note of those rare moments when we are suddenly given odd, incidental detail. I have suggested that one such telling detail is the story about "white" racism in the south, but at least two others are indicative of disintegration anxiety, the "ill-defined" yet intense awareness of basic structural deficits of the self (Kohut, Restoration 103-5). First, in a context that amalgamates images of Melanctha's forbidden sexual flirtations with intimations of her father's surveillance, sexual control, and violence, Melanctha suffers a broken arm, which sparks one of her father's disciplinary and controlling rages. The scene provides both a physical symbolization of Melanctha's broken self and a suggestion of the psychosexual history of
that fracture: her father's control and physical abuse (there are strong hints that it is also sexual abuse), and Melanctha's compensatory obsession with forbidden sexuality.

As a psychoanalytic approach--including Kohut's psychology of the self--might suggest, the mutilation, fracture, and/or dismemberment of the body is a common symbolization of the loss of integrity of the psyche. The threat of complete bodily disintegration, in fact, is articulated at the crucial point of Melanctha's wandering through the work sites of forbidden sexuality, when the flirtatious workmen taunt her, "Heh, Sis, look out or that rock will fall on you and smash you all up into little pieces" (102). The psychosocial dynamics of the situation are clear: Melanctha may discard the security of the social laws imposed and monitored by her father, allowing herself to be "held" in the illicit sexual embrace of the workmen, but only at the risk of having her sense of identity--written in the terms of those same laws--smashed to pieces. If we follow Ellison's eloquent reading here, the threatened pulverization of Melanctha evokes the racialized attempt of a "pulverized individual" to identify with, yet distance herself from, the pulverized.31

Stein's artistic enterprises of the decade 1900-1910 are not only suggestive of this feeling of self-disintegration; they are consumed by the depth of the anxieties it caused
her. Like Jefferson Campbell, a derivative of a character in an earlier story who was, in turn, quite autobiographically based on Stein herself, Stein literally felt the meaning of thought and the meaning of life slipping away with the potential subversion of the concrete, unified self. This anxiety led to a somewhat desperate attempt, lasting at least until she was nearly finished with *The Making of Americans*, to shore up the boundaries. Jayne Walker has examined, by reading passages from *A Long Gay Book* and *The Making of Americans*, Stein's next two enterprises after completing *Three Lives*, how Stein connected a broken sense of self to deep epistemological and ontological anxieties, feelings that led directly to her efforts to develop a "totalizing system of classification" of human character (Walker 70). As Walker argues, Stein sought to clarify identity and restore her sense of its synchronic continuity through a sort of "complete" knowledge and definition of all the "types" of human character--in a project that amounted to the complete and definite "individualization" of everyone. The impetus of *The Making of Americans*, thus, was the quest for the certainty of a "completely completed feeling" that was available through defining everyone as a type: "I have not so much an afraid feeling in being living now when I am certain, and I am knowing them, that there are a number of kinds in men and women" (*Making* 581). Like Jeff Campbell,
Stein was demanding that all identities resolve themselves into singular, definable, categorizable individuals, so that she could secure the boundaries of her own individuality, and with them, her sense of meaning in life.

While Stein's obsessive effort to categorize psychological types may have peaked as she worked on *The Making of Americans*, inspired by the schematic characterological theories of Otto Weininger (as both Walker and Leon Katz argue), it was not limited to this time period. Bridgman notes the numerous instances of Stein's tendency to characterize and classify people by "bottom nature," beginning in her college days, including her psychological experiments at Harvard, and extending through her portraits of 1912. Katz, similarly, contends that "the concept of the completed individual...became in fact the unifying locus of her thought from the beginning to the end of her writing" (146). As Katz observes, Stein's passion for Weininger's "science of the individual" was inspired both by her own discomfiting intimations of dissociation and by contemporary theories of identity as a bundle "of 'factors' and causative patterns" which undermined one's sense of unified individuality (Katz 146).

It would be imprudent to be too reductive about Stein's quest to reassert some satisfactory conception of identity as unified, whole, and complete. Walker has argued convincingly that, in the later stages of *The Making of*
Americans, Stein discarded her emphasis on subjective wholeness and unity in favor of an appreciation of the fragments and difference that actually constitute experience. However, even if we acknowledge that Stein abandoned the search for a satisfactory characterological system, and that the techniques of Tender Buttons and the portraits that followed evoke an evolving comfort with fragmentation, it is clear that her thinking and her writing between 1900 and 1910 revolved around the disintegration/wholeness axis and the anxieties it caused her. "Stein freely confesses her fears" that the definition of types will fail, Walker notes, "her increasingly desperate need for an orderly system to unify the disconnected 'pieces' of her experience" (54).

Certainly, at the time Stein created Melanctha she was still deeply concerned to find a totalizing system of classification that would define identities as unified and categorical, as was evidenced by her passionate response to reading Weininger two years later. We should read the system of racial classification, the comprehensive stereotyping, and the theme of the fragmented self in Melanctha, I am suggesting, as a gloss on Stein's own tortured encounter with unmanageable identity. We should, in other words, politicize Bridgman's contention that Stein was "externalizing psychological dilemmas that laughter could not dissolve" (Pieces 14) by restating it in terms of
the racial dynamic that Ellison describes: Stein was externalizing conflicts at the very base of her personality, and she was using a misshapen Africanist presence to do it. In this instance, she ascribed the multiplicity of identity, and the laughter, to the "bloated images of the Negro" that floated up from the depths of her unconscious.

We can trace much of this anxiety about psychic disorder and plurality to the disciplinary class context I have earlier alluded to, a perspective that more clearly reveals how Stein uses Melanctha to assign what she experienced as the immoralities of her "identity" to that "black" other as well. Just as we can read in Melanctha Stein's consuming struggle with the axis of psychological fragmentation/wholeness--now sensing the impingement of the former, now reasserting the security of the latter--we can read there her struggle with the related axis of normative conformity/unique "individuality" (using the latter in a very different sense than heretofore). Related because, as Stein realized, the parameters of the self are written in the discourse of social norms and assumptions. During the years 1900 to 1910, as she used her fiction to work out a satisfactory relationship of "pieces" to unity, she was simultaneously straining for a satisfactory combination of the moral conventionality that structured identity, on the one hand, and the ability to be, as she put it in The
Making of Americans, "free inside" and "singular," on the other.

Stein indicates in the latter text that she felt herself to be an eccentric, one of those "queer" or "singular" individuals who is both deeply attracted to and unhappily constrained by what she alludes to as a massive cultural system of homogenizing, indoctrinating normalization. This "machine" of middle-class moral conformity, she understood, offered security of identity:

...there must be in a kind of ordinary way always there inside us the sense of decent enough ways of living for us....I believe in simple middle class monotonous tradition...middle class is sordid material unillusioned unaspiring and always monotonous. (38)

But within this tradition of middle-class "decency" individual uniqueness risked effacement by the cultural and familial enforcement of a monotonous sameness, which becomes

our only way of thinking, our way of educating, our way of learning, all always the same way of doing, all the way down as far as there is any way down inside to us. We are all the same all through us, we never have it to be free inside us. No brother singulars, it is sad here for us, there is no place in an adolescent world for anything eccentric like us, machine making does not turn out queer things like us. (47)

Describing the machine of cultural normalization in terms suggestive of Foucault's disciplinary regime, with its universal reign of the norm, Stein alternately poses herself as a product of normalization and as the "eccentric" in conflict with U.S. middle-class conformity.
We might read *Melanctha*, too, in terms of Stein's contradictory feelings about the machine of middle-class decency--its appeal for her reflected in Jeff's pose of regularity, and her sense of its constraint reflected in Melanctha's wrenching collision with the machine. It is impossible to do so, however, without taking note of the earlier story which was eventually to evolve into *Melanctha, Things As They Are*. In this story, autobiographically based on Stein's brief and frustrated 1903 love affair with a Baltimore woman named May Bookstaver, the pull of conventionality is reflected in the internalized bourgeois decency of Adele, an almost autobiographical stand-in for Stein who struggles with the indecent passions illicited in her by the eccentric and convention-flouting Helen. The moralism of Adele is clearly Stein's own, and would become that of Jeff Campbell when the story was rewritten a few years later as *Melanctha*. In that rewriting process, indeed, Adele's phrase "the middle-class ideal" is directly translated into Jeff's "living regular." While *Things As They Are* ostensibly concerns itself with Adele/Stein's morality and regularity in conflict with more passionate, "excited" modes of experiencing, the fact that the novel's plot revolves around a lesbian romance points to the heart of that conflict for Stein: the clash between the lesbian sexuality to which she increasingly felt drawn and the
compulsory heterosexuality of the Victorian bourgeois cultural dictates that informed her identity as social subject.

Indeed, the initiation of the conventionality-eccentricity (or conformity-"singularity") struggle in this early novel based on Stein's first protracted lesbian involvement suggests that what was really at stake in most of the first decade of Stein's writing was her effort to reconcile her internalized sense of middle-class "decency" with the lesbianism which it categorically censured.35 Catherine Stimpson has presented an extensive discussion, for example, of the methods of "encoding" through which Stein managed to write about her forbidden lesbian tendencies and relationships throughout what Stimpson refers to as Stein's "decade of choice" (495). While it is not my purpose to extend this reading into Stein's career after that decade, I do want to suggest that Stein's still-conflicted feelings about her lesbian inclinations at the time she wrote Melanctha are as crucial to understanding its deployment of Africanism as are her anxieties about the unity of identity. It was not, according to Bridgman, until she was nearly finished with The Making of Americans that Stein felt distanced enough from her early sense of morality to "[announce] that she had become reconciled to the nature of her affections" (Pieces 105). By then, of course, Stein had realigned her sexuality around her
relationship with Alice Toklas, initiating what would become a permanent redefinition of her code of sexual "normalcy."

When she wrote Melanctha, however, Stein was still struggling to bring what she felt to be the illicit sexual impulses of her psyche into line with the normative codes of her society, and an elaborate metaphor of race provided her a medium for both encoding and projecting the forbidden. Here, Lott's understanding of the minstrel show as social symbolic is perhaps the most pertinent analogy, suggesting a masculine precedent in nineteenth-century bohemianism for Stein's maneuver of lesbian "class abdication" through "cross-racial immersion" in twentieth-century expatriacy (Lott 51). Like the antebellum minstrel performers Lott describes, Stein evokes the personally and politically liberatory possibilities of sexuality by making "blackness" sexuality's "virtual condition--that fascinating imaginary space of fun and license outside (but structured by) Victorian bourgeois norms" (51). As Jeff Campbell's "living regular" takes the place of Adele's "middle-class ideal" taking the place of Stein's own youthful moral imperative, then, and as Melanctha takes the place of Helen taking the place of May Bookstaver and Stein's "queer" eccentricity, Stein replaces a profoundly personal story of forbidden, lesbian romance with an oddly distanced, highly artificed story of "black"
heterosexuality. In the transformation from Things As They Are to Melanctha, Stein literally mapped a narrative of lesbian desire with a "white" cast of characters onto a contrived metaphor of racial existence, refiguring the sexual dynamic that Lott describes on the blackface stage, where homosexual interests were engaged but were "deflected or remained unacknowledged" by virtue of their being visually mapped onto a spectral show of heterosexual "black" desire (54, 166). In Melanctha, in short, "problematic passion among whites is transferred to blacks, as if they might embody that which the dominant culture feared" (Stimpson 501).

Indeed, it is in the enormity of this transformation of lesbianism into racialism that we can glimpse both the psychocultural function of "race" as ideology, and the larger significance of every discrete, idiomatic inflection of the discursive network of "race." When Stein refers in a notebook entry to her unconventional, uncivilized, bodily tendencies as the "Rabelaisian, nigger abandonment" side of herself, she is not simply using the common phrases of her culture to communicate; she is defining her moral subjectivity in terms of the racial subjectivity of someone else, a maneuver of self-fortification that is as old as Hume, Kant, and Hegel (Goldberg, "Modernity"). In the process of fortifying her own identity as "moral," Stein uses the middle-class definition of morality to both
legitimate and justify the racialization and "immoralization" of that other. As Lisa Ruddick has commented,

That she associates her bodily gusto, or everything Rabelaisian in herself, with something she calls "nigger abandonment" suggests that the extreme racism she expresses in "Melanctha"...served (among other things) her own need to distance a part of herself about which she was ambivalent. She had her own sensuous side, which she projected in racial terms. (33)

In working out her attitudes toward her own lesbianism, Stein may have been moving toward a new, less disciplinary conception of moral identity for the "white" subject, but in doing so she was extending the discursive disciplinarity that constrained the possibilities of moral identity for the "black." Like the themes of many of the blackface songs Lott analyzes, the plot of Melanctha "is to be sure, antibourgeois, but it is again black people, black women, who are the world's body" (Lott 146).

**The background of word-system**

Within the framework of such a discursive disciplinarity, the focus of a racially politicized criticism shifts from Stein's personal morality to the extensive racialization of the culture which shaped her consciousness. It is precisely as an illustration of how that culture transmits racialist assumptions through a set of discursive agreements, and how those assumptions then shape the consciousness and the perceptions of those in
communication with the linguistic circuit, that Melanctha takes on its greatest value for my analysis. That value as an illustration of the mechanisms of racial subjectivity and racialist language is accentuated by the fact that Stein's aesthetic strategy--her intention in composing the work--apparently was, as Jayne Walker has convincingly argued, not to represent "reality" but to "realize" her object as she perceived it, allowing the elements already present in her own consciousness to become a manifest part of what she "perceived," rather than imposing a veneer of "realism." So attuned was Stein to the mediating features of language between any empirical "reality" and the linguistic representation of it, she elected to forego the epistemologically naive project of illusionistic realism and allow the material surface of her medium--the very letters, words, phrases, and other discrete linguistic units which constituted the "palette" of her discursive art--to manifest itself as a legitimate part of the composition.

Although William James's psychological theory of how acquired perceptions shape present visual sensation into knowable objects was surely an influence, Stein's most important model for this compositional method was the art of Paul Cézanne. Discarding the illusionary techniques of traditional realism and dramatically modifying early impressionist experiments with registering only direct
visual sensation, Cézanne instead embarked on a project of, as he called it, "realizing one's sensations" (quoted in Walker 3). Rather than attempting to represent some "real" object, that is, Cézanne was interested in representing the discrete "signs" that bring such objects to the eye—points of light and shadings of color, for example—along with the actual material elements of his medium that were the instruments of that representation—the one-dimensional surface, spots of color, brush strokes, interacting planes and so on. While illusionary painting had attempted to disguise or obscure these "materials" of the artist's craft, that is, Cézanne made them a distinct and "visible" part of the represented object, much as, in James's formulation, each perceived object is necessarily a complex of acquired mental contents and immediate visual impressions. Thus, in Cézanne's "Chocquet Seated," as Meyer Schapiro describes it, "The texture of the pigment is more pronounced than the texture of the represented objects, and the painted pattern is clearer than the structure of things," so that "through the texture of the painting, the latter has become almost as distinct an object as any of the things it represents" (62). Or, as Walker summarizes, "because of the intensity of his commitment to 'realizing' his sensations, Cézanne was aware that seeing was 'reading,' through a grid determined by the concrete resources of his medium" (11).
This artistic analogue is instructive, not least because Stein, a passionate Cézanne enthusiast between 1903 and 1905, later claimed that his "Portrait of Madame Cézanne" was the model for Three Lives. Stein self-consciously adapted Cézanne's painting methodology to the writing of fiction, creating "a new mode of realism that inheres in the material patterning of the composition, not merely representing the objects of completed conception but modeling the processes of perception and cognition" (Walker 13, emphasis mine). As Stein herself retrospectively articulated this principle, "It was not solely the realism of the characters but the realism of the composition which was the important thing, the realism of the composition of my thoughts."37 As for Cézanne, representing the "realism of the composition of [her] thoughts" meant for Stein focusing on the acquired "grid" through which she necessarily "read" the represented object and on the material elements of her medium--in this case, the elements of her linguistic system. Crucially, then, as Stein herself described the specific instance of Melanctha, her interest in the composition itself took the form of an interest in what she called "this background of word-system, which had come to me from this reading I had done. I was obsessed by this idea of composition, and the Negro story was the quintessence of it" (emphasis mine).
Stein's conception of a "background of word-system" that informed the composition of her story about U.S. "Negroes" draws direct attention to what I have outlined in chapter 1 as a system or field of racial discourse made up of the culturally circulating terms, idioms, images, tropes, and linguistic "agreements" about "blackness." In composing her story, it seems, Stein subordinated theme, realistic portrayal, plot, and other traditional artistic concerns to the racial discursive structure that she had internalized and that organized, shaped, and, indeed, limited her thoughts about her object, the southern "black" community. She was not trying to represent the southern "black" community, we could say, she was trying to represent the southern "black" community as it intersected with the acquired grid of concepts in her mind.

Having observed that this discursive structure, and by extension the "black" community of the "composition of [Stein's] thoughts," was present in the form of a set of repeatable, discrete linguistic units--the metaphors, phrases, idioms, images, and words in circulation in U.S. culture about "blackness"--it is important to note that part of this "background of word-system" overlaps with the cultural discourse of a "real" African American community that Stein was representing. Specifically, Stein apparently culled at least some of the linguistic fragments that inform the narrative texture of Melanctha from the
songs of an African American musical tradition that she experienced first-hand while living in Baltimore from 1897 to 1902. As Carla Peterson argues, Stein lived in close proximity to African American neighborhoods, not the German or middle-class communities, and became familiar with an active black music scene that included the performance and development of black minstrel and vaudeville shows, ragtime, and blues. According to Peterson, the lyrics that Stein heard in blues tunes and in the "coon" songs of the minstrel and ragtime traditions, often derived in part from the "white" minstrel stage and infused with negative stereotypes and racial perjoratives reinflected by black entertainers, were an important influence on the textual elements of Melanctha. If Peterson is indeed correct, we might read the rhythmic repetitions of "verses" and "phrases" and some of the thematic elements of Stein's story in the context of the form and content of such music: blues songs that often featured strong, sexualized female figures wandering outside male control, and "coon" songs like the popular one featuring "coal black Rose" (Lott 117-18).

As Peterson's research suggests, the linguistic units that make up the "background of word-system" can be loaded with political ambivalence and interracial heritage, making Stein's artistic manipulation of them almost indecipherably equivocal. What is less equivocal is the discursive
disciplinarity of the culture of racialism itself, which, as Stein's method makes eminently clear, makes it impossible to "see" the "racial" object without "reading" it through the grid of those internalized discursive fragments. The intermittent recurrence of phrases like "the wide broad laughter of negro sunshine" and "the simple unmorality of the black people," then, suggest Stein's foregrounding of the material elements of her linguistic medium--her inclusion of the grid that shapes her perceptions in the representation itself. This "realism of the composition of [her] thoughts" was an enduring principle for Stein, and continued to demonstrate a certain racial significance. In the stories of *As Fine As Melanctha*, which feature an even more radical style that allows unstructured phrases circulating in the writer's mind to be incorporated into the composition, the impingement of the racial discursive structure is similarly clear: "eeney meeney miney mo catch a nigger by the toe" (275); "Nigger, nigger never die black face and china eye" (268).

Cézanne emphasized the set of basic shapes, colors, and brush techniques that he was working with, giving up traditional realism in order to allow those material elements of the medium to become visible components of his artistic compositions, literally making "the texture of the painting...almost as distinct an object as any of the
things it represents" (Schapiro 62). Similarly, Melanctha repetitively and rhythmically reproduces linguistic units like those above as a means of accurately recording how "blackness" appeared to Stein's consciousness. No one in Stein's racial, socioeconomic, and intellectual position could see an African American without certain associations being amalgamated into the perception: "nigger abandonment," "childlike" "eeney meeney miney mo..." etc. When we read of the "wide broad laughter of negro sunshine," we are seeing Stein's brushstrokes. Melanctha is not so much an illustration of Stein's romantic racialism, though it is in part that, as it is an illustration of "race" as a discursive discipline, demonstrating its active penetration to the minutest corners of society and of the individual psyche, and its creation there of "habits of attention" that literally shape and constrain perception. In formulating a Cézannesque approach to written composition for her "Negro story" by refusing to suppress the material surface of the linguistic medium itself, Stein stripped the racialized discursive network--the "background of word-system" which she had internalized--of its guise of realism. It is as profound an illustration of Africanism as we have.

In drawing on "blackness"--including the themes of a genuine African American blues culture--to express her own felt sense of difference, as Peterson notes, Stein found a
way to represent radical femininity that did not exist in middle-class culture and a means to simultaneously distance that radicalness as alien. Stein's use of "blackness" as an "idiom of class dissent," to borrow Lott's phrase for one aspect of the minstrel show, including, as it does, a genuine instance of the "cross-racial identification" that he finds there (84), must finally be read as profoundly contradictory, achieving its liberatory moments by way of oppressive racial caricature. It is, perhaps, a contradictoriness held in play by Stein's more or less conscious representation of the process of racial representation itself. The racialism of the discursive system, however, which Stein in part--and ambivalently--manipulates to resolve her own sense of class-disciplined "pulverization," becomes the very force of psychic pulverization for the "blacks" that it, in turn, culturally disciplines. It is to Ralph Ellison's own figurations of this disintegration anxiety that I now want to turn.

Notes

1. As reported in Brinnin 120-21. Wright's comments, part of a review of Stein's "Wars I Have Seen," appeared in PM Magazine, March 11, 1945.

2. See, for example, Stimpson 489-506, and Ruddick, Reading. Stimpson notes the presence of racial stereotypes but demurs on their ramifications for the interpretation of the story, either hers or anyone else's. Moreover, she rather unanalytically presents Wright's words of praise as a counterbalance to the possibility of Stein's racism.

3. Morrison herself hints at the need for just such an approach to Three Lives (Playing 14).
4. Peterson's unpublished remarks are taken from her talk "The Making of Black Americans. Gertrude Stein's Melanctha and African-American Musical Traditions," delivered at the conference "The Question of Race in the Americas," University of Pennsylvania, October 1, 1994. Although the author has agreed to furnish me with a copy of the paper resulting from that talk (personal correspondence, March 6, 1995), which will also be published in the forthcoming volume, Criticism on the Color Line, I was unable to obtain the paper in time to include it in my preparation of this chapter. Hence, my references to her approach to Stein will draw on informal notes from her talk. Although this circumstance requires my usage of her ideas to be less specific than I would like, the inclusion of her perspective seemed vital to my argument.

5. Lott provides an excellent and penetrating discussion of the complex, "mulatto" cultural background of minstrelsy itself (38-49, 94). On the political ambiguities of minstrelsy's reappropriation as a "black" cultural form see Lott 103-4, and Ellison's essay "Change the Joke and Slip the Yoke" in Shadow and Act.

6. Lott's description of how members of a nascent working class worked out the psychological constrictions of the new industrial morality through blackface performance provides an accurate gloss to my argument about Stein: "The blackface body figured the traditional, 'preindustrial' joys that social and economic pressures had begun to marginalize....The tortured and racist form of this pleasure indicates the ambivalent attitude toward enjoyment itself that industrial morality encouraged" (148). Stein's representation of "blackness" can be read in part, I would suggest, as a similar effort to manage the anxieties produced by middle-class morality.

7. Foucault locates an increasing emphasis on and proliferation of disciplinary mechanisms in Western societies toward the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth centuries. The extension of individualization through conformity and penalty is particularly related to the evolution of the "panoptic" and carceral sciences, and the birth of the modern prison. Foucault cites dates circa 1840-1850 as the key milestones in the emergence of the fully developed, society-wide "carceral" system (Discipline 293-97). The key discussions of the "pyramidal" distribution of surveillance, penalty, and normalization which inform the following analysis can
be found in "The means of correct training" (Discipline 170-194).

8. Foucault suggested that there are two "images" of discipline: "the enclosed institution," like the prison, and "the discipline-mechanism," which might be extended generally throughout society. The Benthamite plan for the "panopticon," for example, provided the structural layout for the prison, but it was also the basis for "a network of mechanisms that would be everywhere and always alert, running through society without interruption in space or in time" (Discipline 209). In this instance, the movement "from a schema of exceptional discipline to one of a generalized surveillance, rests on a historical transformation: the gradual extension of the mechanisms of discipline throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, their spread throughout the whole social body, the formation of what might be called in general the disciplinary society" (209).

9. According to Foucault, the development of "continuous" surveillance and supervision was crucial to the extension of disciplinary power as an integrated social "system" or "network": "this network 'holds' the whole together and traverses it in its entirety with effects of power that derive from one another: supervisors, perpetually supervised....And, although it is true that its pyramidal organization gives it a 'head', it is the apparatus as a whole that produces 'power' and distributes individuals in this permanent and continuous field" (Discipline 176-77).

10. "The individual is no doubt the fictitious atom of an 'ideological' representation of society; but he is also a reality fabricated by this specific technology of power that I have called 'discipline'...[P]ower produces; it produces reality; it produces domains of objects and rituals of truth. The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production" (Foucault, Discipline 194).

11. As Foucault argued, one of the most specific methods of discipline is to control an axis of conformity and normality: "What is specific to the disciplinary penalty is non-observance, that which does not measure up to the rule, that departs from it. The whole indefinite domain of the non-conforming is punishable" (Discipline 178-79).

12 The contrary mental make-up of the two lovers has been well noted. See, for example, Bridgman, Pieces 53-56, Ruddick, Reading 19-20, and Weinstein 19.
13. In the article, published in the *Psychological Review*, Stein "broke her subjects down into two basic types. Type One were 'nervous, high-strung, very imaginative.' She found them 'easily aroused and intensely interested.'... Type Two were blonde, pale, phlegmatic with weak powers of attention and concentration" (Bridgman, *Pieces* 33).

14. As Ruddick notes, "Melanctha" is "so close, in its characterizations, to James's theory of the mind as to approach psychological allegory" (15). Others who have commented on elements of Jamesian psychology in Stein's work include Bridgman (20-22, 75, 133-34), Weinstein (12-14, 104-105), Donald Sutherland (6-8), and Walker (14-15).


16. Quoted in Ruddick, p. 19. See James, *Psychology: The Briefer Course* 196. As Ruddick summarizes, "words and stock concepts, besides determining what objects we will select for notice, distort our perceptions of those objects that we do observe" (19).


18. Modifying Lacan slightly, we might say that the massive disparity between the fiction of ego unity (taking the specific form, here, of a socially formed "moral subject"), on the one hand, and the intimations of the desiring, multiplicitous, linguistic "unconscious," on the other, produce an anxiety of the fragmentation of the subject.

19. That the person who serves this function in the text is a doctor bears significance beyond its reference to the facts that Stein herself once studied to become one and that Jeff, to some extent, serves as a surrogate for Stein in the story. As Foucault observes, originally, "the supervision of normality was firmly encased in a medicine or a psychiatry that provided it with a sort of 'scientificity'" and this supervision quickly "proliferated" outside the prison, the school, the specific institution, spreading through a vast network of apparatuses, services, and "agents" (*Discipline* 296). Of course, it might also be argued that Stein's extensive
training in psychology, medicine, and psychiatry left her with an unusual familiarity and expertise with the procedures and methodologies of the very human sciences that, Foucault argues, were intimately linked to the spread of disciplinary individuality. Whatever Stein's "intentions" in making Jeff a doctor, the fact that he is one adds considerable depth to the reading of Melanctha as a text about discipline.

20. The depiction of a dual personality in terms of that personality's relationship to "proper conduct" is strikingly similar to a historical instance used by Foucault as an illustration of the operation of one of the earliest disciplinary mechanisms: the institution of the asylum and the disciplinary constitution of "madness." In Madness and Civilization, Foucault refers to the treatment of a "young girl" who was deemed mentally ill because she was "torn between 'the inclinations of her heart and the severe principles of her conduct.'" The asylum sought a cure for such "madness" by creating for the girl a "domain of pure morality, of ethical uniformity" (Reader 148). In terms of her society's similar obsession with ethical uniformity, Melanctha's dual inclinations are also so perplexing as to place her on the edge of what that society would define as "madness."

21. Said describes this dynamic for Orientalist discourse: "[the Westerner] could penetrate, he could wrestle with, he could give shape and meaning to the great Asiatic mystery....Yet what has, I think, been previously overlooked is the constricted vocabulary of such a privilege, and the comparative limitations of such a vision" (Orientalism 44).

22. See Foucault, Discipline 26 and 138, for descriptions of the "multiform instrumentation" of the "political technology of the body" and the "micro-physics of power" (26).

23. McKay 248. I am indebted to Nielsen for locating and reporting this quote (21). Wright's remark is from his review of Stein's "Wars I Have Seen," PM Magazine, March 11, 1945, as quoted in Stein, Selected Writings 338.

24. For the tradition of stereotypes about "black" "nothingness," see Gossett 42-65. For the tradition of rationalization of African Americans' social position by way of the fatalist argument see Nielsen 23, Gossett 282-86, and Fredrickson 228-55. As Fredrickson makes clear, the period during which Stein was growing to intellectual
maturity was a period of unprecedented formalization of the doctrine that the American black was fated to inferiority and eventual extinction: "...the 1890's saw an unparalleled outburst of racist speculation on the impending disappearance of the American Negro. From the most reputable sources came confident predictions of black extinction through natural processes, and few who thus consigned an entire race to oblivion could conceal their satisfaction" (246-47).


26. Stein's conception of the "unmorality of the black people" has deep roots in the tradition of Euro-white theorizations of moral subjectivity. Kant reasoned his way to a causal relationship between black skin and immorality and stupidity, as Goldberg argues ("Modernity" 212), while Nielsen has referenced Stein's remarks with Hegel's formulation: "it is manifest that want of self-control distinguishes the character of Negroes. This condition is capable of no development or culture" (Quoted in Nielsen 28).

27. The classic instance of this tradition is, of course, Stowe's Uncle Tom's Cabin, with its articulate, dissatisfied and resourceful "mixed race" characters and its simple, docile, and unrelentingly cheerful "blacks." Similar examples are to be found in Metta V. Victor's antislavery novel Maum Guinea, and Her Plantation Children (1862) which, as Fredrickson notes, "contains a similar cast of docile blacks and restive browns," and in William Dean Howells An Imperative Duty (1892), a text Stein probably read, which also ponders the confused and melancholic disposition of a woman of "mixed race."

28. The material reproduced here and following from Hoffman is quoted in Fredrickson 250-51.

29. Bridgman 27. For Bridgman's assessment of Stein's anxieties about self, especially as they are thematized in her Radcliffe essays, see 5-27.

30. See especially chapters 1 and 2. As Bridgman remarks in assessing Stein's Radcliffe themes, the college-aged Stein "sought relief from her inner torment by dramatizing it in her college prose" (24). The first of these themes, "In The Red Deeps," includes intimations of sado-masochism, multiple identity, and a "tumultuous sexual motif, involving both father and brother" (25).
31. The intensity of the image might be read in its endurance in Stein's consciousness. As late as 1943, in the whimsical play "Look and Long," Stein was rewriting the struggle to concretize identity and the body. In the play, which thematizes bodily splitting and shifting identity, one of the characters attempts to piece his body together with sticking plaster and string: "Oh oh, I am in two oh in two in two. It is only the string holds me together." Stein, "Look and Long," in Gertrude Stein First Reader and Three Plays 79. For commentary on the continually related themes of twinning, multiple or lost identity, bodily injury, and illicit sexuality in Stein's work during the 1930s, see Bridgman 301-8.

32. For an account of the autobiographical aspects of Things As They Are, originally titled Quod Erat Demonstrandum, see Bridgman 40-45, and Stimpson, 495-500. Bridgman, Ruddick, and Stimpson all provide useful descriptions of the connections between Things As They Are and Melanchta (Bridgman 52-55, Ruddick 15, 18-30, Stimpson 499-502).

33. Stein's view that the wholeness of a personality was built out of a series of fragments was, in fact, explicit in The Making of Americans: "Sometime then each one I am ever knowing comes to be to me a completed being, and then always they are always repeating always the whole of them....it has to be told as it has been learned by me very slowly, each one only slowly can know it, each one must wait for little pieces of it, always there will be coming more and more of it...always I am telling pieces of it" (305, 350).

34. As Bridgman argues (Pieces 44).

35. Indeed, it is difficult not to read many of Stein's comments about the struggle between "singularity" and middle-class conventionality, between "eccentricity" and the homogenizing "machine," in The Making of Americans, as being more specifically about her culture's denigration of lesbianism: "Or you like something that is a dirty thing and no one can really like that thing" (485); "It takes time to make queer people....Brother Singulares, we are misplaced in a generation that knows not Joseph. We flee before the disapproval of our cousins, the courageous condescension of our friends who gallantly sometimes agree to walk the streets with us, from all them who never any way can understand why such ways and not the others are so
dear to us, we fly to the kindly comfort of an older world accustomed to take all manner of strange forms into its bosom" (21).

36. See Walker's "Preface" and chapter 1. Walker insightfully applies Cézanne's painting aesthetic to Stein's fictional approach. Norman Weinstein has made similar observations about Stein's approach to the linguistic medium, though with a less detailed analysis of the Cézannesque aesthetic on which it may have been based (44-45, 60-61).

37. I am indebted to Walker for locating and pointing out the significance of this and the following Stein comments, which are taken from "A Transatlantic Interview 1946" and quoted in Walker 13.
RACE AND THE FRAGMENTED SELF
IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY AMERICAN LITERATURE

VOLUME II

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by

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Chapter Three
The Opened Shackle:
Discipline, Disintegration, and Freedom of the "Black" Self in Ellison's Invisible Man

In chapter 2 I outlined how a newly expatriated Gertrude Stein manipulated a "discourse" of cultural assumptions about "blacks" to artistically secure the boundaries of her own subjectivity or, more accurately, to both register the psychological impression of discursive "blackness" and simultaneously avail herself of that discursive network's ego-reinforcing functions. In recapitulating images of the "black" as sexually immoral (Rose), physical and carefree (the "free abandoned laughter of negro sunshine"), child-abusing (Rose and James Herbert) and even as well-behaved race spokesman (Jeff Campbell), Stein was managing a range of disruptive forces within her own psyche: anxieties about illicit sexuality, disintegrating identity, and familial and social violence. The artistic reconstruction of such images of otherness allowed her to shape the coherence and purity of her own self by means of what we might call a psychodiscursive racial mirror stage. In effect, Melanctha provides a racially politicized psychoanalytic criticism with a detailed illustration of how the unified, moralized, "white" subject is created and sustained, at both the personal and cultural levels, as a highly individualistic model for identity.
The cultural effect of such ritualistic repetitions of U.S. culture's imagistic and idiomatic agreements about "blackness," however, is not only the fortification of a "white" subject but also the articulation of a definitive, constrictive, and individualizing "black" subject. The racial mirror stage produces not only a narcissism of "white" identity, as Frantz Fanon argued in discussing the colonial situation, but a "dual narcissism" in which "the white man is sealed in his whiteness" and "the black man in his blackness" (Fanon 9-10). In the discussion that follows, I want to turn to Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man*, published the same year (1952) as Fanon's *Black Skin, White Masks*, as a text that thematizes how "race" functions both as a psychological apparatus for "whites" and as a correlative disciplinary apparatus for "blacks"—sealing "black" identity in its "blackness." As Ellison's novel delineates, the racial mirror stage structured by "white" discourse about "blacks" is in no way reciprocal: the image-system through which "whites" see "blackness" as not-self, facilitating the structuring of the "white" subject, inevitably destructures the identity schema of the psyche objectified by that gaze. The eyes/I's, in the complex symbology of *Invisible Man*, are always stacked against the "black" subject: it is invisible as the nexus of a multidimensional consciousness, hypervisible as a signifier of the "non-white," and blinded by the very structure that
allows the "white" subject to represent it as the latter "sees" fit. Moreover, Ellison's novel suggests that the real psychological violence of the "white" image-system inheres in its role as an instrument of a disciplinary individualization that parallels Fanon's perception of the compulsory "narcissism" of race. Ellison's insistent theme is not only his protagonist's invisibility, but the network of coercive "disciplines" and unitary self-fictions that render him so. In his quest for a satisfactory identity, Ellison's nameless protagonist repeatedly confronts the psychological dilemma structured by every invocation of U.S. racial imagery: conform to the "black" image in the "white" mind, or experience a progressive fragmentation of identity.

Among the myriad symbols that organize Ellison's vision of African American life, the iron shackle is perhaps most emblematic of the novel's concern with the discipline of the "black" self. Incorporating nuances of the disciplinary aspects of slavery and chain gangs, of the behavioral codes of Reconstruction, of Booker T. Washington accommodationism and its educational modes, and even of the iron-clad (and ironic) images of blacks emanating from "white" culture--like the iron "darky" bank the protagonist finds in his room--it has, as Brother Tarp says of the specific chain link he gives to IM, "a heap of signifying wrapped up in it" (379). As a closed loop of solid iron,
figuring wholeness and unity, the shackle signifies the autonomous and rigidly ordered self: invoking the need for "discipline," the president of the protagonist's accommodationist college raps on his desk with "an old leg shackle from slavery" and expels the protagonist for exceeding the defined role of the good southern "nigger" (137-39). The expelled student thus embarks on what critics have commonly viewed as an identity quest, carrying with him yet another image of the well-wrought ego, his briefcase. Given to him by the "white" leaders of his home community, it serves as the container for a growing accumulation of written vouchers of identity and, eventually, various haphazardly collected icons of the "black" self. The subsequent episodes of Invisible Man elaborate a series of encounters with constrictive and enclosing identity constructs (often symbolized by tokens that the main character adds to his briefcase collection and carries with him) and with an increasingly widening network of discipline. Indeed, it is largely by representing this far-reaching network that Ellison effects the extension of his critique from the question of "race" as a specific apparatus of individualization to the question of individualization as a generalized social modality. Invisible Man stubbornly refuses to be only about racial existence--just as Ellison rejected the epithet "protest novel"--insisting instead on registering
its social critique according to what Kenneth Burke has called its "two methods of bookkeeping" (357), one specific to black culture, the other referable to all U.S. citizens. As the application of the term "discipline" itself is extended from the slave shackle to the standards of absolute communitarianism in the Brotherhood to a comprehensive cultural machinery that evokes the components of Foucault's disciplinary regime--the workplace, the asylum, the hospital, the school, the military--the full scope of Ellison's vision unfolds.

When the iron shackle makes its second appearance in *Invisible Man*, joining its precursor in what Robert Stepto has referred to as the text's "museum" of "artifacts" which are "prototypes for the self-in-motion" (186), it connotes a symbolic resolution of the protagonist's struggles against both disciplinary "blackness" and the networks of institutional and interpersonal discipline. If the protagonist's central quest is for a satisfactory conception of his own identity, the leg iron that Brother Tarp filed open to escape the chain gang provides a key symbol of how such a self might be configured. The chain link that Brother Tarp gives the main character--at a critical juncture, significantly, in the latter's engagement with the "discipline" of the Brotherhood--bears a "signifying" difference from the museum piece on Dr. Bledsoe's desk: while Bledsoe's shackle was smooth and
closed, Tarp's has been violently marked and opened (379). The difference between these two pieces I take as figurative of the contrast between the ordered, disciplined, ego-bound self and a model of the self that more flexibly allows for the interpersonal and historical contingencies of subjectivity: an externally derived structure, but one with a critical opening or marginal space as the nexus of continuous self-creation, intersubjectivity, and possibility. In this sense, "the reforming of the shackle is finally the trope before the questing narrator for a viable pattern of mobility and a viable system of authorial control" over his own life and self (Stepto 190).

The opened shackle, I will argue, inscribes Ellison's unique vision of "radical black subjectivity" (hooks 26), a dynamic, complex, and plural racial identity that becomes a persistent emphasis of his nonfiction essays. In his crucial assessment of U.S. culture in "The Little Man at Chehaw Station," for example, Ellison observed that each of us is "representative not only of one but of several overlapping and constantly shifting social categories" and questioned our tendency to hide that plurality behind the security of reductive "symbols of identity" (Going 19-20). His own conception of "radical black subjectivity," however, finds its fit liberatory strategy not in simply annihilating such symbols, or the racial mechanism that
idealizes them, but in the individual's improvisatory "transformations" of all such historical and cultural determinants of identity (Going 20). If Ellison ultimately casts *Invisible Man* as the poetry of the "blues" self, I want to read that poetry as a chronicle of what happens to the plural psyche in the crucible of a racializing, individualizing society. The plural "blues" self, I argue, wrenches the disciplinary force of the iron shackle into an opened structure, creating a critical, interstitial space for the psychic freedom of continuing change, irreducible contradiction, and a plurality of "invisible" interconnections with social, historical, and racial otherness.

**Mirror stage**

I have suggested that the process by which the "white" subject materializes itself as a coherent, normative, and autonomous ego-construct might be formulated as a sort of ongoing racial mirror stage. This formulation is based on Fanon's germinal speculations about the formation of personal racial identity, but the racial mirror stage also has a broader, cultural application. The psychocultural "white" fiction of ego unity, as Nielsen elaborates it, is not produced positively, through the definition and reification of "whiteness" per se, but negatively, through an ongoing individual and cultural (largely discursive)
definition and reiteration of "blackness." In Chapter 2 of *Invisible Man*, Ellison develops a subtle but provocative parable of the personal moment of this construction of "whiteness," capturing both the self-securing, self-knowing production of the "white" subject and the fragmentation and obscuration of "black" identity that results. Thus, the "mirror staging" of racial identification provides the predominant metaphor of the fateful car ride that leads to the expulsion of the invisible man from his dreamy southern black college where everyone's sense of history, mission, and proper racial roles are so clearly, yet so evasively, defined. While the wealthy "white" banker and scientist, Mr. Norton, confidently pontificates about his own destiny and identity during the first segment of the ride, the narrator focuses suggestively on the white line that splits the divided highway he will be driving for the rest of his life, stealing furtive glances back through the rear-view mirror to gauge Norton's satisfaction and approval. Although these visual dynamics in the car of "white" power, like the college's "white"-endorsed "up-from-slavery" myth, seem pleasant and well-intentioned on the surface, the ride into the southern countryside soon exposes the unpleasant, repressed underside of both the stories "whites" tell about "blacks" and the story the college tells about itself.

In the "powerful" (37) machine of "white" privilege that takes the narrator for a ride with the rich college patron,
we are immediately alerted to a play of glances through the vehicle's rear-view mirror, during which Norton's knowledge of his own identity is emphasized but the narrator becomes increasingly muddled precisely as a result of Norton's assertions of self-knowledge. As the ride begins, Norton instructs the narrator to drive him away from campus, for "The campus is part of my life and I know my life rather well" (38). Norton's concrete sense of self, however, elicits immediate confusion from the young student, who has no similar sense of self-knowledge and who then asks himself two questions that suggest the meaning of subsequent events: "How was the campus part of his life, I wondered. And how did one learn his life 'rather well'?” (38). Applying Lacan's mirror stage to the situation suggests that the rich "white" man has acquired his coherent sense of self precisely by making the "black" college a part of his own life. That is, Norton has materialized his own "white" subject position and its knowability through a process of projective othering: Norton's act of looking at the "black" college enacts the process that "projects the formation of the ['white'] individual into history" and "manufactures for the ['white'] subject" a "succession of phantasies" of "totality" (Lacan, Ecrits 4). Norton not only directs his financial beneficence toward the economic dependence and social inferiority of southern blacks, we might say, but he
also needs their dependence and inferiority as the negative terms against which his own wealth, independence, and autonomy can be staged. The "white" philanthropist literally knows himself "rather well" because the "black" campus is a part of his life.

In correspondence with the dialectic of Lacan's mirror stage, then, Norton's claim to knowledge of his self "symbolizes the mental permanence of [his] I, at the same time as it prefigures its alienating destination" (Ecrits 2, latter emphasis mine). That is to say that we may interpret Norton's use of "blackness" in this scene as a racial reiteration of the "fictional direction" of the developmental mirror stage that becomes the perpetual fictional direction of the function of the "I" (Ecrits 2): the "Ideal-I" the baby derives from its reflection has, of course, not been formulated in terms of any interior world, but in terms of what is distinctly exterior to itself. Indeed, Lacan emphasizes several dimensions of the fundamental "otherness" of this projection: the baby has looked away from its own body, at a reflected image; the baby recognizes its "self" negatively, by distinguishing its own movements from the surrounding not-self in the reflection; the image in the mirror is, moreover, a manifold distortion--one-dimensional, oversized, and inverted. Thus, the primordial fantasy of unified identity has a distorted, oppositional "otherness" implicit in its
constitution, leading Lacan to observe that the mirror stage prefigures the alienation and anxiety of even the mature subject's relationships to the images and fantasies through which it knows itself. It is this crucial aspect of the mirror stage—what it suggests about how otherness defines the self—that lends itself to the hypothesis, suggested by Fanon, that in a racialized milieu one component of identity might be a racial self, constituted against a racial other. Norton, indeed, provides a pointed fictional illustration of how the mature, socialized subject in U.S. society might project its "self" by way of an image of racial otherness.

Norton's assertion of "white" self-certainty, Ellison suggests, produces complete bewilderment for the "black" subject: "How did one learn his life 'rather well?'" Clearly, being positioned as the "dependent" "other" by someone else's self-constituting gaze scrambles the invisible man's attempts to stage and to know his own self. While Norton's fiction of ("white") ego unity is so achieved that he hardly need do more than gesture at the campus to reiterate it, the car episode suggests that the narrator's sense of a meaningful self is reduced to so archaic a state by Norton's presence as to require the constant recapitulation of a literal mirror stage—glancing at the actual bodily image of "whiteness" in the rear-view mirror—for reinforcement. Hence his repeated peeks at the
"white" man's reflection: "Through the rear-view mirror I could see him..." (37), "Through the glass I saw him..." (41), "When I took a quick glance into the mirror..." (44). Due to the politics of the psychological mirror staging going on in the car, Phillip Brian Harper notes, the protagonist can view only the reflected "whiteness" as the basis of his self-staging, and hence is "thwarted from glimpsing his own image--from experiencing a successful mirror phase--and thus from achieving a workable self-conception" (118). Perhaps the most pointed indication of how the "white" mirror stage at work at the college obscures "black" identity (and of its economic dimensions, as well) are the historical photographs, displayed in the college library, that flash through the protagonist's mind as Norton begins to speak of the role the black college has played in producing the "white" man's "pleasant fate" (39). These photographs of the school's early days depict impoverished "black" "people who seemed almost without individuality, a black mob" with "blank faces," in stark contrast to their "white" benefactors "in smiles, clear of features, striking, elegant and confident" (39). Indeed, these pictures almost suggest a spectral rendering of the contrast between the power of the subject and its constitutive imagos, "whose veiled faces," Lacan comments, "it is our privilege to see in outline in our daily
experience and in the penumbra of symbolic efficacity" (Écrits 3).

Although the protagonist at first tries to identify "with the rich man" in the back seat (39), he is immediately stymied by the latter's possession of a "pleasant fate," an idea almost unfathomable to a young southerner whose grandfather was a slave. But Norton proceeds to make the protagonist's attempts at self-definition even more difficult by directing the "gaze" of his ego-reinforcing mechanism at the youth even more personally. As Norton repeatedly presses the point that "your people" and, more specifically, the protagonist himself, are "closely connected to my destiny" (41), the protagonist registers only embarrassment at not being able to understand the point Norton is making:

"I had a feeling that your people were somehow connected with my destiny. That what happened to you was connected with what would happen to me."

I slowed the car, trying to understand. Through the glass I saw him gazing at the long ash of his cigar...

"Yes, you are my fate, young man. Only you can tell me what it really is." (41)

In the race-creating mirror stage through which Norton establishes a clear sense of himself as "white," "blacks" are intimately connected with his identity, but only in the form of a collectivity ("your people") whose supposed characteristics serve above all as signifiers of the "non-white." To formulate the point in the terms of what I have
called racial discipline, Norton's identity as a wealthy, independent, authoritative "organizer of human life" is sustained by and dependent upon his continuing activity as an organizer of "black" life (42). Namely, he assigns himself the authority to circumscribe "blacks'" potential economic and social roles according to the list of possible careers he suggests to the narrator--"a good farmer, a chef, a preacher, doctor, singer, mechanic"--and to give them the "necessary" helping hand of "white" philanthropy (43). Indeed, Norton adds another common "white" assumption to his list of probable potentialities for "blacks"--the probability of failure--when he concludes, "whatever you become, and even if you fail, you are my fate" (43). Thus, whether the protagonist becomes a good farmer or whether he fails, he will be fulfilling Norton's story not about "black" progress, but about Norton himself.

Again, we might apply Lacan's formulations of the otherness of the mirror stage to Norton's "you are my fate" claim, in which it is the invisible man who is reduced to "the automaton in which, in an ambiguous relation, the world of [Norton's] own making tends to find completion" (Ecrits 3). While Norton's pronouncements leave him deeply self-assured, then, "smiling through the mirror" at what he has identified as, in effect, "you people" in the reflection (43), being on the receiving end of such organizational maneuvers continues to cause the narrator
immense psychic confusion: "My feelings were mixed. Was he kidding me? Was he talking to me like someone in a book just to see how I would take it?" (43). He stumbles "with embarrassment" (44) at Norton's insistence that he can tell the older man his fate, then is completely unable to verbalize his own hopes, dreams, or identity: "I don't know now, sir. This is only my junior year..." (44). The "white" mirror stage, so effective at producing coherence and security for "whites," is profoundly disorienting, humiliating, and self-disrupting for the "blacks" it not only objectifies but creates as "black." What the narrator does vaguely recognize is that in this mirror stage moment, as in the broad historical situation starkly outlined in the school photographs, his personal identity is irrelevant: "But you don't even know my name, I thought, wondering what it was all about" (45). Norton's identity does depend, as he insists, on the narrator, but only insomuch as the latter's darker skin signals his membership in a "black mob" characterized by a set of generalizable economic and social signifiers of "nonwhiteness," in opposition to which Norton can stage his own self-image. The narrator's notice that the "white" subject needs no particular, nameable subjectivities for this process is a crucial first reckoning of the alienation that will leave him nameless, objectified and scrambling to reconstruct an identity throughout the remainder of the novel.
Ellison's rendering of the full implications of the racial mirror stage begins to come clear when Norton introduces his own daughter as the real explanation for his philanthropy, a gesture that is still more alienating for the narrator. As Norton begins to speak of her, the narrator realizes that Norton is talking while "no longer seeming to see me, but speaking to himself alone" (42). The description captures not only the occlusion of "black" subjectivity that Norton's "white" self-constitution entails, couched in the novel's predominant metaphor of invisibility, but also Nielsen's cogent summary of the autodiscursive dimension of what he refers to as the U.S. "racial-mirror stage": "The white subject has spoken to itself, and in so speaking has created its own racial consciousness" (5). More significantly, Norton's introduction of his daughter's sanctified image at this point provides Ellison's first hint of the crucial psychosexual dimensions of the racial mirror stage. While Harper is quite right to read the imbalance of self-certainty in the car as a largely economic and social incongruity, through which the privileged Norton's "very success at self-definition sets [him] up as an impediment to the self-constitutive efforts of those less fortunate" (119), Norton's excited emphasis on and desire for his own daughter in the same context, reveals the equally important sexual and biological dimensions of racial
subjectification. By stressing Norton's sudden increase in "intensity" at the moment he begins speaking of the college's connection to his identity in terms of the daughter he is memorializing, Ellison suggests that Norton's focus on the college as an economic device is also a screen for the secret management of more carnal anxieties (42). Norton's use of the "black" campus for his own ego functions begins to resolve itself here into a massive displacement of a bizarre, hyper-romanticized desire for his own daughter onto his efforts to improve the economic and cultural status of "blacks."

The protagonist, on the other hand, attempts to read his self-disruption and struggle to concretize an acceptable self in terms of the overt issue of economic identity: "You have yours, and you got it yourself, and we have to lift ourselves up the same way" (44). Fanon's speculations on the "mirror stage" dynamic of the racial situation suggest how these very different languages of identity are determined by the "white" and "black" mirror stages:

When one has grasped the mechanism described by Lacan, one can have no further doubt that the real Other for the white man is and will continue to be the black man. And conversely. Only for the white man The Other is perceived on the level of the body image, absolutely as the not-self--that is, the unidentifiable, the unassimilable. For the black man, as we have shown, historical and economic realities come into the picture. (Fanon 161, n.25)

The full extent of Norton's dependence on a corporeal "black" imago as his Other, suggested by his presentation
of the photograph of his "too pure" daughter as the real motivation for making "blacks" the key to his "fate," is about to explode in the second segment of chapter 2, the Trueblood episode. Meanwhile, we have already seen the "picture" of historical and economic struggle through which the invisible man is forced to conceptualize the obscuring of "black" identity and the struggle to constitute it.

Suddenly, as if to shock the invisible man as well as his readers, Ellison plunges his narrative from the coded surface of polite U.S. racial discourse to the underside of ugly and unspeakable realities it represses. As the car of "white" privilege takes a hill and is "swept by a wave of scorching air" (45), Ellison reveals with one deft maneuver the lewd tale of incest beneath the two interlocutors' courteous chat about destiny, the "wasteland" of broken fountains and raw sewage beneath their image of a sylvan campus (36-37), the culture of poverty and folk ways repressed by the college's sanitized myth of progress (47), the "cripples" and the "asylums" covered over by "white" philanthropy (35), and, above all, the sexual and corporeal mirror stage beneath the overt discourse about economic and intellectual identities. Although Norton says and thinks the "black" Other functions in the fulfillment of his destiny (as the great philanthropist) and his construction of a memorial (to his daughter), what we discover in the countryside is the magnitude of Norton's hidden use of the
"black" Other in a fundamentally sexual dimension—to quell sexual self-revulsion.

As their vehicle passes into this revealed landscape, the protagonist and Norton encounter the "disgraced" sharecropper Jim Trueblood, who, we learn, has impregnated his own daughter. While Trueblood's elaborate narration of his incest and its consequences are crucial to the novel's vision of "black" self-expression, as Houston Baker, most notably, has explained, I want here to focus on Norton's reactions to the Trueblood saga, particularly as they typify what Fanon called the "biological" cycle of the "white" racial mirror stage (165). In Norton's fascination with Trueblood's "incestuous" relationship with his daughter, Matty Lou, we can read a projection of his own repressed desires, a projection facilitated by the same system of stereotypes about "black" physicality, hypersexuality and immorality elaborated in Stein's 

Melanctha.

The protagonist is doubly reluctant to expose Norton to Trueblood. The college had always been embarrassed by the elements of poverty and the cottonpatch in its backyard, a "peasant" life of "earthy harmonies" which do not square with its myth of civilizing progress for southern "blacks": "We were trying to lift them up and they, like Trueblood, did everything it seemed to pull us down" (47). Trueblood's sexual indiscretion, according to the protagonist, has
turned this blunted "contempt" for his earthiness into open "hate" for his apparent depravity (47). But the protagonist is unable to deflect the interest piqued in the "white" man by the sight of the two pregnant women, mother and daughter, at Trueblood's cabin. As the protagonist explains that the daughter has no husband, Norton lets slip the first indication of his real assumptions about the "black" Other, assumptions quite different from the pleasant fiction that his gifts to the college can help them to become farmers and mechanics: "But that shouldn't be so strange. I understand that your people--Never mind! Is that all?" (49). Norton is a member of the "white" discursive community well-versed in the same stereotypes of "black" promiscuity and immorality that pervade Stein's text.

But that is, of course, not all. Once the invisible man has disclosed the incest behind the pregnancy, Norton is a man transformed, expressing shock, horror, pain, but above all wanting more--hastily and energetically moving to get closer to Trueblood and his story: "'Get out!' he cried. 'I must talk with him. . . Hurry!'" (50). As Norton listens with a mixture of "envy and indignation" (51), Trueblood unravels his long narrative of dire economic straits; of fatherly anxiety about potential suitors; of his dream of entering the house of "white" wealth and the bedroom of "white" sexuality; and of awakening in his
daughter's arms, with no way to "keep from sinnin'" except with a knife (59). Norton's fascination with Trueblood's situation seems a direct gloss on his bizarrely romanticized relationship with his own daughter, related to the invisible man only minutes before the Trueblood encounter:

Her beauty was a well-spring of purest water-of-life, and to look upon her was to drink and drink and drink again....She was too pure for life...too pure and too good and too beautiful. We were sailing together, touring the world, just she and I, when she became ill....Everything I've done since her passing has been a monument to her memory. (43)

Reading Norton's reaction to Trueblood as directly connected to the previous scene, in fact, clarifies Ellison's continuing representation of the "white" mirror stage. The analogy here between the similar projects of self-unification executed in "white" discourse like Stein's and in Ellison's portrayal of "white" behavior like Norton's is an apt one. In Melanctha, as I suggested in chapter 2, Stein transferred internal anxieties and guilts about class identity and socially proscribed sexual tendencies onto a hypersexualized "black" stereotype. In these pages of Invisible Man, the "white" subject is shown barely able to suppress the sexual tendencies that would unleash chaos in its sense of self, first displacing them with a fiction about memorializing the object of desire by improving the lot of an economically inferior "black" Other, then feverishly embracing what it takes to be the
very incarnation of a sexually and morally inferior "black" Other—one through which Norton can vicariously live out the exact fantasy he has suppressed.

Hence Norton's query to Trueblood: "You have looked upon chaos and are not destroyed!...You feel no inner turmoil, no need to cast out the offending eye?" (51). For the "white" subject, the creation of an orderly fiction of ego unity, and the creation of a "black" subject through which it is effected, is precisely about the suppression of inner chaos and turmoil—a particularly compelling source of which are forbidden sexual tendencies. As Fanon explained, this sexualized inner turmoil is suppressed through an imaginative projection onto "blackness"—or rather, through a projection that creates "blackness" as the very condition of inner turmoil (Melanctha) and hypersexuality (Rose). This projection lies at the foundation of the "biological" cycle of Fanon's racial mirror stage:

Granting that unconscious tendencies toward incest exist, why should these tendencies emerge more particularly with respect to the Negro?...The civilized white man retains an irrational longing for unusual eras of sexual license, of orgiastic scenes, of unpunished rapes, of unrepresseed incest....Projecting his own desires onto the Negro, the white man behaves 'as if' the Negro really had them....[T]he Negro is fixated at the genital; or at any rate he has been fixated there. (Fanon 165)

Projecting his own incestuous desires onto Trueblood, Norton is transfixed by the opportunity to behave as if the "black" man really had them. The fact that Trueblood does
not act on such desires (while he acknowledges Matty Lou's womanliness and beauty, his story makes it clear that the intercourse was an accident of unconscious dream activity facilitated by the conditions of extreme poverty) is of little significance to the "white" man's use of the situation as a verification of "blackness" and a reinforcement of his own civilized, "white" subject.

Ellison connects the two scenes in this chapter, then, as two "moments" of Norton's mirror stage--his economic positioning next to the college and his sexual/moral positioning next to Trueblood--by juxtaposing Norton's veiled but discernible desire for his daughter, in the first, with Trueblood's openly discussed but actually spurious desire for Matty Lou, in the second. Moreover, while Norton is focusing on this living signifier of "nonwhiteness"--incest personified--all other forms and indicators of black subjectivity become invisible to him. As in the moment in the car when Norton introduced his own daughter's photograph, the main character again "vanishes" while the "white" man listens to Trueblood: "he was listening to Trueblood so intensely he didn't see me" (57). When the "white" subject "stages" itself it sees only a "black" image--in this case the luridly sexual "black" stereotype--which is really a mirror-distortion of a part of its own identity. This is the phenomenon, repeated in various forms throughout the novel, that informs the
central "invisibility" discovery of the invisible man's entire experience. As he tells us in his "Prologue," "it is as though I have been surrounded by mirrors of hard, distorting glass. When they approach me they see only my surroundings, themselves, or figments of their imagination—indeed, everything and anything except me" (3).

As Norton finally prepares to leave, and the invisible man again notes that "[h]e looked at me with unseeing eyes" (68), Ellison plays out the connection between the cultural-economic and the sexual-biological phases of "white" self-constitution by foregrounding the inevitable bioeconomic transaction that structures the racial hierarchy. Pulling out his wallet—and with it the telltale "platinum-framed miniature" of his daughter (68)—Norton compensates Trueblood for so effectively embodying the essential corporeality of "blackness"—for effectively "symbolizing the biological" (Fanon 167) so that Norton can deny it in himself—with a hundred-dollar bill. It is a token that refers directly to Norton's more coded use of the "black" image, his economic support of the college and its young upwardly mobile "blacks," as the protagonist signals with considerable chagrin: "You no-good bastard! You get a hundred-dollar bill!" (69). The money, in other words, might have gone to the protagonist instead, had he not been, as it were, "out-blacked" by the sharecropper. (As the car ride began, the protagonist had hoped for "a
large tip, or a suit, or a scholarship next year" (38) as a
token of Norton's appreciation.) But whether Norton gets
his assurances of "nonwhiteness" from the image of the
well-behaved mechanic-to-be or the image of uninhibited
sexuality, the effect for him, the text suggests, is
whitening. When Trueblood has finished his story, Norton's
face has "drained of color" (68), and as he stumbles back
into his car the protagonist notes that his face is "still
crack white" (69).3

The invisible man's ill-fated car ride illustrates the
mechanism of a racial mirror stage that fictionalizes a
coherent "white" identity by positing a "black personality"
that is equally unitary and what I will call
"disciplinary." In reality, I am suggesting, this "black
soul," is an extension or part-object of the "white"
identity. The "white" subject that "seals" itself, to
borrow Fanon's term, in intellectuality and moral purity,
does so by manipulating the symbolic order to "seal" its
imagined Other within a "black" subject of corporeality and
immorality. The educated-craftsman-Booker T. Washington
"black" and the hypersexual "black" that populate Norton's
mind in this episode of Invisible Man are only two of the
disciplinary identity configurations which constitute the
"black soul"; the novel describes several others and the
main character is knocked on the head by most of them more
than once.
The image of the sexual "black," here forced on Trueblood, is one that the invisible man has been forced to take on himself before and will be forced to confront again later. The opening "Battle Royal" episode chronicles the first in a series of attempts by "whites" to set up the "black" image as a pornography of the "white" self, by forcing "blacks" to act out what is considered to be illicit sexual behavior. As we have seen in the case of Norton, reiterating this image sanitizes "white" identity of chaotic impulses, while still allowing it to voyeuristically consume the pleasure of the forbidden. The opening sequence, for example, is a structural inversion of the car ride episode, during which we see "whites" imposing first the stereotype of hypersexuality then the educated-but-knows-his-place image, both to their immense gratification. In this scene, ten young African Americans are forced to watch a titillating nude dance by a "white" woman, while a collection of "white" social leaders view their mixture of pleasure, discomfort, and erections. After a blindfolded "battle royal" and a mad scramble for "tips" from the "whites," a bloodied invisible man crawls back into the other, equally "white"-imposed image of himself, delivering a speech spiced with the Washingtonian rhetoric of social responsibility and "casting down buckets where you are." Much later in his career, he encounters the "black sexual brute" stereotype when he meets a woman
at a Brotherhood meeting who envisions him as her personal living pornography: Sybil wants to play-act her own rape at the hands of a man she can only see as a "big black bruiser" (511). Indeed, the Norton and Sybil scenes are subtly linked by a joke that both refuses the imposition of the "black"-as-rapist image and pointedly identifies the real source of such pornographies. Refusing to comply with the pleas of the drunken Sybil, the invisible man instead scrawls the following message on her stomach in purple lipstick: "SYBIL, YOU WERE RAPED / BY / SANTA CLAUS / SURPRISE" (511); a much younger invisible man had twice identified Norton with "St. Nicholas" (37, 105).

All three episodes, then, evoke what Fanon described as the intensive biologization, sexualization, and, most specifically, genitalization of the "black" imago. For Fanon, this mechanism, which he formulates as one aspect of the racial mirror stage, functions like a blunt instrument in the symbolic and psychological oppression of "blacks": "Whoever says rape says Negro" (166). Even more specific is Fanon's observation that, in the presence of this imago, "one is no longer aware of the Negro but only of a penis; the Negro is eclipsed. He is turned into a penis. He is a penis" (170).\(^5\) If for Sybil, as for millions of acculturated U.S. "white" women, the word "rape" bears an at least connotative relationship to the concept "black man," it is equally true that for Norton, as for the men at
the battle royal, to see a "black man" is to "see" a penis. If this is the most compelling of all "black" stereotypes, finally, it is so perhaps, as Fanon's analysis suggests, because it is so profoundly linked to the bodily-schema psychology of the mirror stage.\(^6\)

**Discipline**

When the narrator returns from his carnival ride with Norton on the south's racial back roads—a ride that includes stops at both Trueblood's "slave quarters" and at the combined asylum and tavern known as The Golden Day—he faces an iron-fisted retrenchment of the college's more "polite" racial myths and identity frameworks, suggesting how the college has itself become implicated in an urgent project of identity management. While the racial mirror stage is anything but reciprocal, it does produce coercive definitions and parameters of "blackness" that are as reductively unitary and individualistic as the configurations of "whiteness" they are meant to support, and it is these parameters that the college's president, Dr. Bledsoe, invokes as he "disciplines" the narrator upon his return. One of the most prominent dehumanizing features of the racialized society Ellison represents, then, is what a Foucauldian theoretical paradigm might refer to as a prevailing culture of disciplinary individualism, here centered around what Fanon calls a
"dual narcissism" of race (9-10). Much of the subsequent social critique of *Invisible Man* is devoted to exposing the operations of the various disciplines that seek to fix complex subjectivities within clearly defined, socially categorized, interpersonally isolated, politically manageable identities—to create, combining both meanings of the word, *subjects*.

Ellison focuses, it seems to me, on how the racial discipline surrounding the "white" mirror stage is at once a product of, complicit with, and productive of other disciplinary technologies which overlap to form a fabric of disciplinary individualism broadly conceived. His narrative illustrates, for example, how both "whites" and "blacks" are seduced by the idea of racial individuality (Norton/Bledsoe), how that racial discipline intersects with the discipline of capital, workplace and asylum (the paint factory and its hospital), how even opposition to capitalism and racism reproduce an ideological (and racial) discipline (the Brotherhood), and how even reversal of racism reproduces racial (and ideological) discipline (Ras). Ellison places the racial discipline within a larger cultural regime in which individualizing disciplines reinforce individualizing disciplines. While he suggests that "race" originates in the self-constitution of the "white" ego (Norton providing a case study), he also suggests that "race" is a particular strategy in a more
comprehensive pattern of dehumanization. In the following section, I want to examine Ellison's representation of how "race" is embedded within our culture's pervasive "government of individualization" (Foucault, "Power" 211-12), of which "race" might be viewed as a particularly efficient and effective tool. Thus, as George E. Kent observes, the story of the invisible man's victimization by a "cultural machinery that would reduce him to negative sign" is inseparable from his story "as an allegory of black struggle in American history" (97).

The mythology of the accommodationist college itself becomes the first derivative of the race-driven extension of individualization targeted by Ellison. Bledsoe's reaction to the narrator's "wrong turn" suggests how the culture of "white" supremacy evidenced in Norton's mirror stage forces a southern "black" college to reproduce the system of racial individualization, no matter how vigorously the latter resists the "white" representations of itself. Hence, though Bledsoe advocates the subversive tactic of "lying" to "whites" for economic and social advantage ("My God, boy! You're black and living in the South--did you forget how to lie?" (136)), the college, in its zeal to forward the "black" cause, is almost unwittingly complicit in a system of disciplinary power and racial individualization. Bledsoe refuses some of the culturally imposed identity configurations of "blackness,"
in other words--like the image of the hypersexual "black"--but he believes in and fosters the "black" subject. Though the college fights to keep Norton's unspoken image of the hypersexualized "black" suppressed, it assumes as its only realistic path to economic survival his expressly endorsed image of the educated-craftsman-Booker T. Washington "black." This, of course, is precisely the identity structure with which the narrator left home, rehearsed in his speech on "social responsibility" to the "white" men at the smoker.

Just as he was aggressively threatened on that occasion for substituting the phrase "social equality" for "social responsibility," the invisible man finds that the college reinforces with equal discipline its own version of this self-image, what I will call the southern-nigger-struggling-upward, after the invisible man has endangered its coherence and uniformity by exposing Norton to the chaotic underside of "black" existence in the south--an underside which includes, significantly, the "crazy" vet's open questioning of the racial hierarchy (92-94). The invisible man himself has already remarked on the embarrassment caused to the college and its students by elements of African American history and identity that contradict the preferred "story" of the educated, civilized, and economically viable African American, noting the college's "contempt" for the "primitive" culture of
"peasants" like Trueblood, with their "earthy harmonies" and "animal sounds," not to mention its contempt for his "disgraceful" sexual history (46-47). The invisible man worries that his ride with Norton has opened the coherence of his very self to the chaos of primitive, sexual, and discontented elements at the "quarters" and The Golden Day: "Here within this quiet greenness I possessed the only identity I had ever known, and I was losing it" (97). To reintegrate himself with the college, he considers expressing to Norton his total disavowal of these unprogressive elements, "to assure him that far from being like any of the people we had seen, I hated them, that I believed in the principles of the Founder with all my heart and soul" (97). To Norton, of course, no great violence has been done to the racial scheme of things, and he is quite willing to forgive and excuse the young college student. For Bledsoe, however, everything has changed; the image of "blackness" he is trying to build has suffered "incalculable damage. Instead of uplifting the race, [the protagonist has] dragged the entire race into the slime" (138). It is Bledsoe, then, who enforces the iron discipline of the college's carefully delimited definition of "black" identity, moving swiftly and finally to extrude the disorder that the invisible man now represents. As Bledsoe promises Norton, "[H]e shall be disciplined, severely disciplined" (101).
It is important to note that, while the word "discipline" has a common enough usage in reference to punishment, Ellison presents an extensive depiction of the campus as a militarized camp or manufactory where behavior is rigidly controlled and identity is rigidly patterned. Ellison's description of the invisible man's expulsion from the college is meant as a critique, I would argue, not of the idea of the southern "black" college per se nor of its Washingtonian mission of economic development within segregational constraints, but precisely of the discipline of the idealized self-constructs fostered by that mission's particular myths of progress and civilizing acculturation. Thus, he depicts a college riddled with minor rituals of discipline and codes of acceptable behavior meant to carefully orchestrate the struggling-upward model of "black" identity. Looking back on his experience, a more "open-eyed" (35) invisible man can see not only the cesspools of sewage on the idyllic landscape of the campus (36), but also the almost military disciplining of behavior that was actually taking place there:

we drilled four-abreast down the smooth asphalt and pivoted and entered the chapel on Sundays, our uniforms pressed, shoes shined, minds laced up, eyes blind like those of robots....Oh, bugle that called in the morning, Oh, drum that marched us militarily at noon. (36)

The college's manufacture of blinded mechanical "individuals" with "laced up" minds is linked, moreover, not only to the Founder's and Bledsoe's delimitation of a
certain type of "black identity" but also to a larger structure of "white" power which works through them. As the students walk to Founder's Day chapel, to hear the school's mythic history rehearsed before the "white" trustees, they move "with rigid motions, limbs stiff and voices now silent, as though on exhibit even in the dark, and the moon a white man's bloodshot eye" (108). At the chapel, the invisible man walks past the "rows of puritanical benches straight and torturous, finding that to which [he is] assigned and bending [his] body to its agony" (108). The military marching, the puritanical seating implements, the rigid control of movement, the "firm and formal design" thrust upon them by the sermons they hear, and even the sense of omnipresent "white" surveillance all are part of a method for churning out carefully patterned and defined identities (109).

The identity "demanded" by this design is, of course, that of the southern-nigger-struggling-upward, dramatized by the "black rite of Horatio Alger" that is performed upon the chapel's stage (109). Ellison's description, crucially, connects this identity model not only to the mythology of "black" economic progress overtly endorsed by the "white" trustees, but all the way back to the segregatory racial definitions of the "whites" in the main character's hometown,
those who had set me here in this Eden...who trailed their words to us through blood and violence and ridicule and condescension with drawling smiles, and who exhorted and threatened, intimidated with innocent words as they described to us the limitations of our lives...and this we must accept...even when those were absent, and the men who made the railroads and ships and towers of stone, were before our eyes, in the flesh, their voices different, unweighted with recognizable danger. (109-10)

In the structure of power outlined on these pages, the school's production of "black" robots is a disciplining of identity that has a degree of "black" control and authorization but that is nevertheless governed by the project of racial discipline begun with the strip tease and continued by Norton's self-satisfying glances at the campus and at Trueblood. In each case, "black" identity is structured by the "white" gaze.

It is within the context of such a campus that Bledsoe acts to restore order by expelling the invisible man for allowing the college's carefully composed image of "blackness" to become disordered. Bledsoe himself reiterates the dynamics of such a composition when he personally enacts the "black" mirror stage that is structured by "white" expectations. Before they enter Norton's room to assess the damage of the car ride, the protagonist notices that "as we approached a mirror Dr. Bledsoe stopped and composed his angry face like a sculptor, making it a bland mask" (100). Bledsoe's miniature mirror stage constructs not so much his idea of
himself as his idea of the "white" idea of himself; it is fraught, as Phillip Brian Harper suggests, with "the intervention of the white man...in the process of the fashioning of the black self" (120). As with the protagonist's frequent glances into the mirror of "whiteness" in the earlier car scene, Bledsoe's act connotes the repeated need of the alienated "black" subject to literally recapitulate a mirror stage that will make sense of itself in terms of the "bland mask" the "white" observer expects to see.

As we learn from the narrator's descriptions of Bledsoe in the following pages, moreover, the identity Bledsoe here composes for "white" consumption is a version of the Washingtonian accommodationist, organized by a rhetoric of progress and of resourcefulness within assigned roles. In musing on Bledsoe's "Live-a-Humble" philosophy, the narrator recalls, "Hadn't he refused to eat in the dining hall with white guests of the school...Hadn't he always taught us to live content in our places?" (103-104). Indeed, Bledsoe espouses covert advantage-taking within a framework of acting "black" and stresses the value of showing the rich "whites" "what we want them to see" (100) and of lying to them as needed to preserve the proper "black" image and the influx of economic support (137). The "white" intervention in this "black" image, however--and the magnitude of Bledsoe's complicity with "white"
management of the southern "black" population--are revealed in his unqualified use of what Nielsen has described as the very "organizing principle" (6) of the entire "white" racial discursive structure: the term "nigger." He uses it, tellingly, both in summarizing his own enactment of the college's prevailing identity construct, the southern-nigger-struggling-upward ("I had to act the nigger!" (141)), and in chastising the invisible man for endangering the integrity of that construct:

"Nigger, this isn't the time to lie. I'm no white man. Tell me the truth!"

It was as though he'd struck me. I stared across the desk thinking, He called me that. (137)

The failing for which Bledsoe is about to expel the protagonist from the school, it becomes clear in these pages, is one of not acting "black"--more specifically, of not acting the southern-nigger-struggling-upward.

It is in this specific moment of discipline, finally, that the college's disciplinary project most clearly resolves itself into that of sealing its students within their "blackness," to borrow Fanon's description of the "narcissistic" nature of the racializing hierarchy. Not only is Bledsoe furious with the protagonist for failing to "act the nigger" appropriately, he is appalled by a specific occurrence on the Norton field trip that unsettled the uniform mask of "blackness" he wants Norton to see. As if the idea threatened to shatter the very identity he had
earlier composed in the mirror, Bledsoe's "face twitched and cracked like the surface of dark water" at the news that the "crazy" vet at The Golden Day opened to question the proposition that "white is right" (137). More seriously, the vet did not act "black"; he brought both racial discontent and a confusion of the racial roles endorsed by Norton (and Bledsoe) into the "white" man's view, creating a dangerous roiling of the smooth surface of "blackness." "He talked like a white man," the protagonist reports; "A Negro like that should be under lock and key," Bledsoe replies, emphasizing his concern, determined by the power of the "white" gaze, with keeping "whiteness" and "blackness" clarified and separate as mirror-stage ego-ideals.

It is, then, as an agent of discord in the coherence of the accommodationist "black" self that the invisible man is sentenced to immediate expulsion: his failure to properly act "black," disgusting to Bledsoe in itself, has also allowed the elements of "black" sexuality, "black" poverty and cultural backwardness, the economics of slavery (Bledsoe refers to the entire sharecropper section as "the slave quarters"), and "black" social discontent to contaminate the college's preferred self-image of the educated-but-in-his-place-farmer-craftsman. As he passes sentence, Bledsoe wields, with great symbolic significance, a token that at once figures both the accommodationist myth
of racial "progress" and the sealed, unitary, well-ordered "black personality" it privileges:

Suddenly he reached for something beneath a pile of papers, an old leg shackle from slavery which he proudly called a "symbol of our progress."
"You've got to be disciplined, boy," he said. "There's no if's and and's about it." (138)

In having Bledsoe reach for the iron-circle of the leg shackle at the moment he "disciplines" the invisible man, Ellison suggests both the sealed unity and the unchangeable rigidity of the "black personality" configuration Bledsoe mandates. The disciplinary "black" self can give no quarter to the "if's" of possibility nor the "and's" of multiple otherness which are fundamental to the experiential reality of the plural psyche. Bledsoe's iron shackle stands as Ellison's most salient symbol of the "black" subject. With a good deal of irony, Ellison makes the shackle both Bledsoe's symbol of what, in his limited vision, progress away from slavery can be and a symbol of the fiction of "black" ego boundaries Bledsoe's vision of progress demands. If Bledsoe responds to being defined by the "white" mirror stage by initiating a reactionary "black" mirror stage of his own, the iron shackle is an appropriate physical figuration of the "armour of an alienating identity, which will mark with its rigid structure" the subject that emerges from such a mirror stage (Lacan, Écrits 4).
One of Ellison's many nonfiction allusions to the racial plurality of personal identity and of U.S. culture itself serves as an effective gloss on this moment in *Invisible Man*. In meditating upon the powerful role of what Kenneth Burke termed "symbolic action" in the construction of human identity, Ellison refers to the tendency to repress the plurality and fluidity of the self beneath symbolically articulated fictions of self-definition:

We repress an underlying anxiety aroused by the awareness that we are representative not only of one but of several overlapping and constantly shifting social categories; and we stress our affiliation with that segment of the corporate culture which has emerged out of our parents' past--racial, cultural, religious--and which we assume, on the basis of such magical talismans as our mother's milk or father's beard, that we "know." Grounding our sense of identity in such primary and affect-charged symbols, we seek to avoid the mysteries and pathologies of the democratic process.

(Going 19-20, emphasis mine)

If we take Bledsoe's "shackle" to be such a "magical talisman," we might read it as not only a figuration of ego unity (the completed circle), but also a symbol of the particularized racial self which Bledsoe has been shown to effect throughout the preceding pages. In Bledsoe's hands the "shackle" connotes not only the identificatory racial "segment" of the broader culture delimited by the common experience of slavery, but the even smaller segment of that segment which he intends by associating the iron with the college's version of "progress." Clearly, he does not mean for the latter segment to include either Trueblood or the
"crazy" vet. Moreover, in this moment we find him waving it talismanically at a veritable force of racial and cultural self-image disunity, which is what the protagonist has become for the college. In Bledsoe's mirror stage, a "knowable" sense of "black" identity is established by manipulating "symbolic action" to fend off "anxiety" about an uncontrollable plurality of influences on self-experience. Bledsoe's "shackle," like his removal of the protagonist from the school, produce a racial version of what Anthony Wilden has called, in his concise summary of Lacan's mirror stage, a "vision of harmony by a being in discord" (174)

As Ellison continues, however, the "security" offered by such "symbols of identity" is "equivocal" for their user, for "an overdependence on them as points of orientation leads him to become bemused, gazing backward at a swiftly receding--if not quasi-mythical--past" (20). Since Bledsoe's rigid control of the school seems to be organized around the shackle as a "symbol of our progress" and around the quasi-mythical history enunciated in the chapel sermon of Homer A. Barbee (the blind historian), we might read in his attitude a similar pattern of over-dependence on the shackle as a point of orientation. But where Ellison locates the force of psychological dehumanization here, I would argue, is not in the psychic function of "symbolic action," or in any misuse of history, or in the school's
circumscribed sense of racial "progress," but in the unrealistic rigidity and wholeness of Bledsoe's vision of "blackness." His use of the shackle here gives away his role as, above all, a disciplinarian of the self—a producer of the "black subject."

Indeed, Bledsoe's deployment of an individualizing "blackness" both resembles, and is determined by, that of "white" men like Norton, a relationship that is perhaps best elucidated by shifting from a psychoanalytic to a Foucauldian vocabulary. Bledsoe himself admits that the "power" he exerts is coextensive with a systemic power that resembles Foucault's model of a diffused "network" or "pyramidal organization" of "disciplinary power" that "distributes individuals in a permanent and continuous field" (Discipline 177). Bledsoe explicitly admits that his role in the application of what I have referred to as a racial discipline is enmeshed in such a larger structure: "'This is a power set-up, son, and I'm at the controls. You think about that. When you buck against me, you're bucking against power, rich white folk's power, the nation's power—which means government power'" (140, emphasis mine). As the statement makes clear, Bledsoe is "at the controls" only in the sense of his institutional operation of what Foucault called the "microphysics of power" (Discipline 26). The power does not originate with him and, despite Bledsoe's belief to the contrary, he is
actually controlled by it, and by both the "rich white folks" and the larger national-governmental-economic complex which looms above him in the hierarchy. As such, Bledsoe's reproduction of racial discipline reflects the reproduction of disciplinary power even by those it dominates. As Foucault observes, "this power is exercised rather than possessed; it is not the 'privilege,' acquired or preserved, of the dominant class, but the overall effect of its strategic positions--an effect that is manifested and sometimes extended by the position of those who are dominated" (Discipline 26-27).

Bledsoe's "shackle" confronts the invisible man simultaneously with the rigidly defined identity construct of the southern-nigger-struggling-upward and with his apparent difference from it. His failure seems to be a sort of innocent honesty, his not knowing, as Bledsoe bluntly puts it, "how to lie" (136). This incongruity causes the invisible man to feel, as he did in the car with Norton, a sudden liquidization of his self structure, as Ellison suggests by having him vomit upon exiting Bledsoe's office--"almost a total disembowelment" (143). It is also significant, however, that the invisible man is unable to see around the individualizing logic of racial discipline; he believes that he has only two choices: conform to Bledsoe's/Norton's vision of "black" identity or succumb to a chaos of uncertainty about racial identity in "the world
of Trueblood and the Golden Day" (145)--a world where race "progress" is meaningless, where "white" may not be right, and where a "black" man can talk like a "white" man. Still seduced by the ego-security offered by the shackle, he "convinces" himself that he has erred by "violat[ing] the code" of racial existence set forth by Bledsoe (145), that he can only construct a self-image within Bledsoe's disciplinary code.

When he returns to the president's office the next day to accept the "shackle," as it were, Bledsoe's personal icon of the unified "black" self is rhetorically passed on to the protagonist in the form of the seven letters of introduction the president writes to identify the expelled student to possible northern employers: "touching the shackle gently with his index finger" (147), Bledsoe agrees to provide these additions to what Robert Stepto has called the collection of "cultural signs, mostly written 'protections' or 'passes'...that supposedly identify" the protagonist (173). Like the diploma and scholarship papers he has already received, these letters serve as discursive elements of what he believes to be a clearly defined identity. Despite his continued efforts to use such identificatory "signs"--symbols of identity--to achieve conformity with society's "code" of identity, however, the invisible man repeatedly finds his "honest" self-experience to be incommensurate with the systems of discipline that
surround him. As in the moments with Norton and Bledsoe, his confrontations with discipline and unitary self-images continue to render his more complex, more multiply determined experience invisible: believing in the former, he can only experience the disordered tendencies of his "honest" self as "disemboweling"; finally refusing one such system (Bledsoeist southern niggerism), he stumbles blindly toward others (northern workplace capitalism, anticapitalist historical materialism).

In thus tracing out the various components of what Ellison elsewhere referred to as "that feverish industry dedicated to telling Negroes who and what they are, and which can usually be counted on to deprive both humanity and culture of their complexity" (Shadow xx), the novel takes on a cyclical, intrareferential quality which renders virtually impossible anything approaching a "full" reading. Indeed, Ellison's subtle development of intricate networks of symbols and terminologies that convey the meaning of his main character's experiences create a textual inexhaustibility suggestive of the psychic inexhaustibility which "that feverish industry" aims to reduce: each symbol and each episodic experience opens out into a larger system to which it adds, and through which it has, significance. It is by tracing the repetitive, crossreferential nature of the invisible man's narrative, then, that the deeper, "disciplinary" structures of his existence become evident,
yet any reading must necessarily be limited to a selection of representative passages. Joseph R. Urgo, for example, points out how the thematic and repetitive nature of *Invisible Man* highlights Ellison's concern with "discipline" and its imposition of objectifying self-images onto what Urgo defines as the multidimensional "anarchic self" (xvi).12 From this perspective, it is a set of externally imposed disciplinary categories that insistently produce the "invisibility" thematized in the novel:

The actual plot of *Invisible Man* is repetitive; it continually "boomerangs" back to the same point, that IM is invisible because he refuses categorization. He won't sacrifice his undisciplined, creative, and rather messy self to the rigidities of any system, whether it be the blindfolded boxer, the black college boy, the factory assistant, the Brotherhood spokesman, or the virile Negro lover. (Urgo 24)

Though none of these self-conceptions have quite the symbolic terseness of the iron shackle, which I take as figurative of "the black college boy," the invisible man encounters a series of these templates for the "black personality" during the rest of his adventures: to those listed by Urgo we might add the text's various minstrel figures, like the musical "nigger-with-rhythm" persona attached to the invisible man by a drunk at a Brotherhood cocktail party, and Clifton's dancing Sambo doll; the grinning, begging "field darky" figured by the iron bank he finds in his room; and the essentialized African "blackness" asserted by Ras the Exhorter. Kimberly W.
Benston has also usefully discussed these templates as a series of delimiting "names," among which we might group both Norton's farmer-craftsman and Bledsoe's "nigger." As Benston argues, "the hero's tale evolves from his very inability to decipher such depotentiating naming; seeking notability as a stamp of incorporation by authority, he becomes the instrument of a long series of authoritarian namers" (Benston 159-61). While I will return shortly to the "disintegrative" effects produced by the racial individualization of such names or unifying self-images, a closer look at the expelled student's northern industrial phase will suggest Ellison's connection of the disciplinary mode of these patterns to other aspects of economic and political life.

Like the social discipline articulated by Foucault, the "disciplinary regime" in Invisible Man uses surveillance and confinement as its implements of application, emphasizes the clear definition and coercive management of identity, and aims primarily at increasing the raw economic utility or productivity of the individuals so defined. What the invisible man discovers, in moving from an educational institution to an industrial worksite, is that he has really only moved to a different locus in what he will gradually recognize as an expanding regime of discipline, albeit a locus where the capitalist motivation of the entire system is more evident than at his college.
By transplanting his hero to the northern, urban center of industry, Ellison reveals the linkage of the basic mechanisms of disciplinary individualization—including racial individualization—to the capitalist project; or how, citing Foucault, "the two processes—the accumulation of men and the accumulation of capital—cannot be separated" (Discipline 221). Thus, as Phillip Brian Harper observes, Ellison suggests that the college campus is literally continuous with "the site at which industrial capitalism operates," where a "rationalized mode of production" causes the alienation of the subject we see expressed primarily as a question of racial identity at the college.13

Upon acquiescing to the definitions of the Bledsoe/Norton scheme of things and plunging into a search for employment structured by Norton's economic power and Bledsoe's letters of identification, the invisible man immediately feels alienated by a regime of monitoring and control in the northern urban world he now inhabits. "Armored cars with alert guards" roll past; the streets swarm with automatons who seem "directed by some unseen control" (161). Moreover, he senses that "blacks" are marked as particular subjects of control. Carrying the briefcase that "contains" his own identity, including the letters that are a rhetorical extension of Bledsoe's leg iron, the invisible man worries that the African American
couriers he sees carrying their own "leather pouches"—"like prisoners carrying their leg irons"—are being monitored by an unseen police force (161-62). Just as life at the southern college seemed monitored by an omniscient "white" man's "eye," evidenced by the "white" trustees who visit to observe the operations of the college and figured in the moon which looms over the chapel sequence (108), this new economic world seems riddled with surveillance:

This was Wall Street. Perhaps it was guarded, as I had been told post offices were guarded, by men who looked down at you through peepholes in the ceiling and walls, watching you constantly, silently waiting for a wrong move. Perhaps even now an eye had picked me up and watched my every movement. (162)

Reformulating his sense that he is being watched as "a queer feeling that I was playing a part in some scheme" being orchestrated by Bledsoe and Norton, the protagonist begins to monitor his own behavior to ensure he commits no infractions, becoming "inhibited in both speech and conduct" (167). Surrounded by such specters of surveillance and control, he strains to conform to the self-image of the sophisticated, urbanized "black college boy" through what he literally conceives of as the disciplinary management of personality: stopping for breakfast on the way to one of his bogus job interviews, he deliberately avoids ordering the southern, agrarian identified "pork chop and grits," noting that it "was an act of discipline, a sign of the change that was coming
over me and which would return me to college a more experienced man" (175, emphasis mine). "He who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it," Foucault remarked of the disciplinary value of total surveillance, "assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously upon himself....he becomes the principle of his own subjection" (Discipline 202-203).

The invisible man is, of course, totally unsuccessful in his quest for work from Bledsoe's contacts, but does manage to secure a place in the manufactories of industry thanks to a kind gesture by young Emerson, after the latter strips him of the illusion that Bledsoe's letters "identify" him as the urbanized "black college boy." Ellison, however, places his protagonist--now bent on avenging Bledsoe's discipline--at Liberty Paints only to ruthlessly demonstrate the extension of individualizing discipline from Bledsoe's school to Liberty's workshop and, subsequently, to a bizarre asylum/hospital where useful personalities are manufactured for the industrial machine.

The invisible man, honestly but uncompromisingly pursuing his own agenda, totally disrupts the smooth operation of the Liberty Paints factory, usually by attempting to think on his own, rather than being the totally docile worker--limited to robotlike efficiency and the execution of specific orders--that industry would
prefer. Having been expressly ordered not to think (196), he uses his own initiative in deciding which of two substances he needs to refill a container. In doing so, he destroys the perfect "whiteness" of an entire batch of the factory's signature product, "Optic White" paint, causing it to become "diffused with gray" (201). He is reassigned to the basement of Lucius Brockway, the "machine inside the machine" of both "race" (the production of "whiteness") and industry (212). Here, however, he continuingly fails to conform to the clearly defined versions of "blackness" that industry can understand. Neither one of the management-loyal "black" "scabs" defined by the office boy at the beginning of the episode nor one of the rebellious, unionizing, ungrateful "young colored fellers" (224) excoriated by the management-loyal Brockway, the invisible man only manages to serve as a muddler of clear race/labor categories: his failure to follow orders or time schedules repeatedly gets him into trouble, culminating in a massive explosion in this basement of industry. Confounding the disciplines of race, labor, and individuality leads, in Ellison's allegory, to a critical heightening of the systemic pressure in the valve of "white" power. Unable to manipulate the "white" valve indicated by Brockway as a pressure release quickly enough, the invisible man causes the basement of the factory to explode into a "wet blast of black emptiness that was somehow a bath of whiteness"
(225), violently restoring the dynamic by which "whiteness" was constituted in Norton's "mirror stage" and in the college historical photographs. The "right" kind of "blackness" and labor keeps the business of the plant--largely the production of "whiteness"--operating smoothly; the "wrong" kind of "blackness" and labor--the protagonist's honest but uncategorized, untrained self--causes the industrial process to run amok.

During his brief employment with Brockway, the invisible man seems on the verge of tunneling through the disciplinary "names" that are throwing constraints around his subjectivity. Enraged by the rapid succession of moments in which he is unceremoniously defined, tried, and condemned without so much as being allowed to speak for himself, he begins to vaguely understand that what keeps happening in his life is the assignment to him of "identity" with blatant disregard for his own ideas about who he "is." At the factory, a group of ideologues at a union meeting convict him as a "fink" because of his "association" with Brockway; aware that "they had made their decision without even allowing me to speak for myself" (218), the invisible man senses the same disembowelment of his meeting with Bledsoe, "feeling as though my bowels had been flooded with acid" (219). After Brockway, with equally abrupt judgment, convicts him as a labor "trouble-maker" because of his "association" with the
union, the invisible man finally erupts into a diatribe that both questions these definitions and foregrounds his own self-experience: "I came down here because I was sent. I didn't know anything about you or the union either....Are you people crazy? Does this paint go to your head?...What's going on? What have you got against me? What did I do?" (222). He is on the verge of comprehending that none of these ideologues recognize him as a unique person, but only as a representative of various ideas in their own heads, and hence of comprehending a much larger machine of ideological individualization in which they are merely gears. It is indeed the "paint" that has gone to their heads, insomuch as the paint represents textually the disciplines of both race ("whiteness as ideology") and economic production. But as if simply becoming aware of the disciplinary machine and questioning its categories is enough to threaten its destructuration, the explosion occurs and the invisible man's realization that he is "understanding something fully" (225) slips away. Sensing that he has "lost irrevocably an important victory" (225), he is bustled off to the factory's asylum/hospital for corrective re-individualization.

As the protagonist is moved from the plant basement to the factory hospital, the "discipline of the workshop" flows almost seamlessly into the disciplinary system's more overt function as a "technique for making useful
individuals" (Foucault, Discipline 210, 211). Indeed, we might view the disciplinary response to the color-confusion the protagonist unleashes in the halls of industry in much the same terms as Foucault analyzes the disciplinary response to the "plague" at the end of the seventeenth century. Like Foucault's "plague," the gray color that the protagonist precipitates by evincing an undefined, unmanageable version of "blackness" (specifically, in these scenes, of "black" labor) represents "mixture," which, as "a form, at once real and imaginary, of disorder has as its medical and political correlative discipline" (198, emphasis mine). In this instance, Foucault describes the evolution of discipline as a specific response to the "confusion and disorder" (199) of the "plague," a response that most prominently includes what he calls "individualizing distribution" (198): "the ultimate determination of the individual, of what characterizes him, of what belongs to him...the assignment to each individual of his 'true' name, his 'true' place, his 'true' body, his 'true' disease" (Discipline 197-98). Just as Foucault treats the historical techniques of plague management as a "compact model of the disciplinary mechanism" (197), I want to present the factory hospital episode as my final example--and the most compact model in the text--of the government of individualization which is inscribed in scene after scene of Invisible Man.
I suggest this connection not only because Foucault provides here one of his clearest descriptions of what he means by "making individuals" (certainly there are others relevant to the correction of personality, particularly in *Madness and Civilization*), but also because of intriguing similarities in the details of these respective compact models: just as the protagonist is placed into a box-machine where he can barely move but can be perpetually observed while doctors create a corpus of charts and notes regarding his case, the disorder of the plague was managed through the creation of an "enclosed, segmented space, observed at every point, in which the individuals are inserted in a fixed place, in which the slightest movements are supervised, in which all events are recorded" (*Discipline* 197). Moreover, by placing the protagonist in this machine and jolting him with numbing electricity, the doctors at the hospital hope to create a "new man" (239), one without contradictory desires, feeling, or memories—a "complete change of personality" (231). Though eager to provide the protagonist with his "true" name, they are pleased that (as they are led to believe) he has no memories about subversive "black" cultural icons like the trickster Buckeye/Brer Rabbit (237). The process of individualization in the industrial machine, in short, is intended to destroy the rebellious, ambiguous, confused, emotional, tricksterish, and even "criminal" components of
the protagonist's identity--his racial and industrial "gray" areas--producing in their place a unified and coherent subject. As the doctor notes, comparing the effect of his "treatment" to a prefrontal lobotomy, "'The patient will live as he has to live, and with absolute integrity. Who could ask more? He'll experience no major conflict of motives, and what is even better, society will suffer no traumata on his account'" (231, emphasis mine). If one is to live as a "nigger" or as an industrially rationalized subject without disrupting the smooth operation of U.S. society, the full range of human experience must be suppressed. The invisible man has full command of his physical senses, and full feeling on the "surface of [his] body," but can feel nothing internally (230). Ellison is half-comically, half-tragically describing racial individualization and the industrial rationalization of subjectivity as attempts to "lobotomize" full human experience, leaving a creature with full functional ability and "absolute integrity" but without the affect or the complexity of motivation that constitutes full humanity. Such is the intent, Ellison suggests, when the psyche is defined according to a surface effect of the body; or when, in the interests of production, "the body is reduced as a 'political' force at the least cost and maximized as a useful force" (Discipline 221). Within the context of a prevailing industrial
capitalism, the "political technologies of the body" have evolved as a treatment for the "plague" of "major conflict of motives." Thus the hospital Director, representing at once psychiatrist and capitalist--"'Was he doctor, factory official, or both?'" the protagonist wonders (241)--tries to convince the protagonist that he is "cured" (240). The disease: psychic plurality. The new subject: the American "black" man.

As the invisible man strongly suspects, he has seen this doctor and this machine before. "'Do you know Mr. Norton?'' he queries the Director. "'Do you happen to know Bled?'' (242). In the machine, with his head "encircled by a piece of cold metal like the iron cap worn by the occupant of an electric chair" (227) and unable to feel his stomach at all, he has boomeranged back to the disciplinary moment in Bledsoe's office with its iron shackle and its "total disembowelment." Indeed, we may take these two scenes, with their associated symbologies, as figurative of a continuously repeating experience in his life, perhaps the central organizing feature of the entire novel: the moment of "discipline" when the "honest, contradictory, inconsistent self" (Urgo 21) is placed in a "box" that removes a fundamental part of its constitution, supposedly producing a "new" well-defined identity. These "boxes," indeed, may be correlated with the objectifying categorizations delineated by Urgo and the "names" referred
to by Benston, distilled, of course, in Bledsoe's application of the key name "nigger." Within the cyclical structure of Ellison's work, the machine-box of the factory hospital is a reiteration of the boxing ring of the battle royal, where (electric) "power" was applied to the bodies of young "blacks" to produce the kind of well-disciplined "black" identities determined by the "white" image structure: oversexualized, scrambling for small coinage, and "hot" with rhythmic energy (watching the invisible man's body dance between the electrical nodes of the machine, one of the doctors comments, "They really do have rhythm, don't they? Get hot, boy!" (232)). Similarly, in the search for the job that will transform him into the young-urban-professional black, the invisible mam walks through Wall Street's grid of surveillance and steps into an elevator that shoots him upward, "creating a sensation in my crotch as though an important part of myself had been left below" (162). Later, he again passes through an elevator on his way to joining the Brotherhood, noting a sense that he "had been through it all before" (292). The elevator takes him to a party where he is assigned a new name and a "new identity" as Brotherhood spokesman. Clearly given the job because of his skin color, he is told he will be a "new Booker T. Washington" who nevertheless represents not "blacks" but "the poor" (300, 298)--an identity which will be constantly and rigidly managed by
the ideological constraints of what the Brothers repeatedly refer to as "discipline."

The "cure" of the machine, however, never quite takes; always there are rough edges, past selves, contradictory desires, conflicted motivations, multiple determinations of character that make it impossible for the invisible man to conform completely to the self-image molded by the "box" or by his new "name." Spouting the rhetoric of "social responsibility" that the "white" men of his hometown love, he lets slip the antithetical phrase "social equality" (31). Trying to conform to the role of order-following factory assistant, he is unable to suppress his own spontaneous affective and analytical outbursts. Asked to deny his racial culture and his personal history in deference to the pure class consciousness of the Brotherhood, he is enticed by the powerful racial significance of Frederick Douglass and Brother Tarp's chain gang leg iron, feels the pull of personal memory (381), and finally infuriates the Brotherhood leadership by insisting on the reality of racial identity (458). In this "model" hospital episode too, what Houston Baker refers to as the tricksterish Homo ludens elements of the invisible man's personality somehow escape the suppressions of the machine (Journey 161). Though he does not at this stage understand it himself, the invisible man is aware that his personality is connected to "many names...as though I was somehow a
part of all of them" (235, emphasis mine); aware, too, that one of his names, one of his past selves, is the trickster of "black" culture that the hospital officials hope they have annihilated:

I laughed, deep, deep inside me, giddy with the delight of self-discovery and the desire to hide it. Somehow I was Buckeye the Rabbit...or had been....Yes, I could not bring myself to admit it, it was too ridiculous--and somehow too dangerous. It was annoying that he had hit upon an old identity. (236)

What Ellison referred to as "the mysterious, underground aspect of human personality" survives even the most violent disciplining of the self, even the most high-tech production of the subject. "Homo ludens is hidden at the margins and is yet to be discovered by the technological 'detectives,'" Baker observes, "The expectation of those who control society's machinery is characterized by their refusal to explore the margins" (Journey 161).

Disintegration

Though Invisible Man is riddled with indications that the "lobotomization" of racial subjectification fails in its attempt to annihilate the "anarchic self" (Urgo xvi), it also thematizes a peculiar psychological havoc that is wrought by the "discipline" of the machine: at the hospital, the invisible man's earlier sensations of "disembowelment" grow into an increasingly dramatic experience of bodily disintegration and an outright crisis
of the self. Baker is quite right to note that it is a "playful, ironic" tricksterish invisible man who walks out of the factory hospital (*Journey* 161), but it is also an invisible man utterly disoriented by what he feels to be this "alien personality lodged deep within" him (243). The immediate effect of the hospital machine on Ellison's anti-hero is, more specifically than the internal numbness he first describes, a sensation that parts of himself have been literally cut away and that, as a result, he must struggle to reconstruct a sense of self dependent on his bodily schema:

I lay beneath the slab of glass, feeling deflated. All my limbs seemed amputated....I lay experiencing the vague processes of my body. I seemed to have lost all sense of proportion. Where did my body end and the crystal and white world begin?...I was laved with warm liquids, felt gentle hands move through the indefinite limits of my flesh. (233)

The invisible man's struggle here to reconstruct his sense of the limits of his own body gives Ellison's obvious use of a birth motif for the hospital scene an important additional level of meaning. The birthing of a "new man" intended by the hospital officials is fused with the invisible man's reversion to a Lacanian, infantile state of psychosomatic disorganization, indicated by his groping for the lost finitude and coherence of his body. Like the infant of Lacan's mirror stage, the invisible man seeks to (re)constitute a fiction of ego unity through a complete integration with the "processes of his body" and the
"limits" of his physical being. By retracing the form of his bodily schema, he hopes to overcome the nightmare sensation of quasiphysical "amputation" caused by the "prefrontal lobotomy" of the machine and, in doing so, to find an answer to the question of "identity" that now plagues him (237).

The disillusioning manipulations of Bledsoe's letters, of the factory workshops, and of the hospital machine have opened the invisible man's eyes to the social disciplines that have hitherto forced him to suppress his true feelings (243), unleashing the rebellious, trickster self that quips sarcastically with the hospital Director and overturns a spittoon on the head of a man he believes to be Bledsoe. But the protagonist is still consumed with the idea of a unified self--disenchanted, perhaps, with some of the "names" he has tried but still living out what Benston refers to as "the comedy of his vain desire to achieve an empowering name" (159). Caught up in the romance of self-presence, he is unable, as he leaves the hospital and begins a new life on the streets of Harlem, to cope with the confusion of identity engendered by his regression to a sort of pre-mirror stage condition in which he has become aware of the "many names" of which he partakes (235). Thus, he can only conceive of these newly released elements as parts of an "alien personality lodged deep within" him (243, emphasis mine). As the hospital episode ends he is
still trying to solve the problem of a fragmented, multiple self, and still associating this quest with the reintegration of his body: "We, he, him--my mind and I--were no longer getting around in the same circles. Nor my body either" (244). In this remarkably overburdened statement of self-fracture, we might read the "I" as the perceived center (ego) of invisible man's sense of self, linked to the "circular" configuration of Bledsoe's "shackle" and to the body imago, but now experiencing an internal plurality ("we") based on the "hitherto suppressed" (243) emanations from other regions of a larger, more complex, more multiply determined "mind."

In the transitional Chapter 12, the invisible man links this new condition of fragmented identity directly to his loss of the specific illusionary self-constructs which had governed his previous life. The self-images of the "college boy working to return to school down South," the accommodationist, and the well-dressed-black-urban-professional are among the "illusions that had just been boomeranged out of my head" (250), he notes while observing others who are still performing these roles. Moreover, he is now capable of a critical reassessment of his psychological condition: he has survived within the parameters of such illusions--parameters laid down and self-images imposed by the segregation of society, certainly, but also by the disciplines of society, as we
have seen—only by numbing the parts of himself that exceed or contradict such boundaries. Though long buried "beneath the emotion-freezing ice which [his] life had conditioned his brain to produce" (253), those parts were there all along. Defining these now thawing portions of his psyche partly as an emotional/spiritual element heretofore "frozen," partly as a "new, painful, contradictory voice" (253), partly as the angry "demands for revengeful action" which we might associate with Baker's ludic trickster figure, the invisible man vaguely links their release to the key moments in his developing awareness of how others are "defining" his identity—Bledsoe's use of the term "nigger," young Emerson's unveiling of Bledsoe's manipulations, the combined moment of self-realization and self-explosion at the paint factory:

A remote explosion had occurred somewhere, perhaps back at Emerson's or that night in Bledsoe's office, and it had caused the ice cap to melt and shift the slightest bit....Coming to New York had perhaps been an attempt to keep the old freezing unit going, but it hadn't worked; hot water had gotten into the coils. (253)

Instead of a liberation, however, the protagonist experiences the collapse of the self-disciplinary "freezing unit" and the release of his contradictory, emotional components as an anxiety-producing loss of coherent identity. He now suffers from an "obsession with [his] identity" (253) not unlike the condition analysts of narcissistic personality disorders have described as
"identity confusion" (Samuels) or "disintegration anxiety" (Kohut): "Who was I[?]....If only all the contradictory voices shouting inside my head would calm down and sing a song in unison, whatever it was I wouldn't care as long as they sang without dissonance; yes, and avoided the uncertain extremes of the scale" (253). It is, significantly, precisely his internalization of the ideal of a unified, controlled, and "certain" self that prevents the invisible man from either fully expressing his resentment of the (racial) "names" he has been called or of living comfortably with the "many names" he is beginning to realize are implicated in his identity. The producer of the "ice cap"--now become the producer of his disintegration anxiety--is none other than the discipline of the self, or what he calls "'self-control,' that frozen virtue, that freezing vice" (253).

In the pages that follow the protagonist struggles repeatedly with this anguished borderline condition, caught between his newfound sense of the fluidity of his "blackness" and the freedom of his self-experience and his old, deeply internalized allegiance to one-dimensional versions of the self like the accommodating, "progressive" "black college boy." Purchasing hot yams from a street vendor, the protagonist is overcome with memories of his previously repressed southern, agrarian, folkish past and experiences "an intense feeling of freedom" (258) at being
able to enjoy that aspect of his identity openly, with no regard for the culture of discipline--"I no longer had to worry about who saw me or what was proper" (258, emphasis mine). While eating his yam, he meditates further on the profoundly unpredictable, contradictory nature of an identity filled with "likes" and "dislikes" that have nothing whatsoever to do with externally proscribed patterns or "accepted attitudes" (260), and proclaims his new belief in doing "what you liked": "I am what I am" (259). Indeed, a few lines later he incorporates both his folk roots and (perhaps less intentionally) his plural intersubjectivity into his new statement of selfhood, announcing "I yam what I am" (260)--I y(ou) am/we are what I am. We might read this scene as a fictional rendering of a new attitude toward African American folk culture which Ellison described in his own life as a "discipline toward affirming that which felt desirable to [him]," regardless of the extent to which it demonstrated education or civilization (Shadow 9). Yet the invisible man is markedly unable to integrate this new multidimensional or fluid "blackness" with comfort, much like he could only refer to the talkative, tricksterish voice of the hospital episode as an "alien personality lodged deep within": "now that I no longer felt ashamed of the things I had always loved, I probably could no longer digest very many of them" (260). Indeed, the next yam brings him only an "unpleasant taste,"
as he realizes it is "frostbitten" (261). His internal freezing unit is still working, making the experience of internal contradiction and manifold desire distasteful, rather than empowering.

The narrator is almost uncontrollably fluctuating, at this stage in his narrative, between the romance of a complete and autonomous identity and the lived experience of a plural psyche, mixing memory and desire, which resists totalization. On the one hand, he seeks a new "name"/ego-construct to replace the Nortonist/Bledsoist one he has exploded—and finds one in short order when, pressed by economic exigency, he attends the Brotherhood cocktail party and receives a literal "new name" as Brotherhood spokesman. On the other hand, however, he expresses distaste for the Brotherhood's manipulation of his racial identity: he recognizes that they are treating his skin color as a "natural resource" (296) and elects to model his career after the Founder, not as the deraced "Booker T. Washington" of the "poor" that Brother Jack prescribes. It is indicative of the protagonist's new "I am what I am" ethos that, in opposition to the Brotherhood members' race-erasing ideology and Brother Jack's preemptive assertion that "The brother does not sing!" (304), he wishes at the party that there were a way for him to be asked—as a "black" man from the south—to sing spirituals (307). But the ideology of the Brotherhood, which Jack first refers to
at this party as "our discipline" (301), demands that the invisible man set aside not only such racially determined facets of his identity as an appreciation for black music, but also his "past," his family (301), and his relationship to the folksy landlady, Mary Rambo. "So long as he seeks a name as prescribed social role," Benston notes, "the hero discovers only the limitation of exogenous delimitation" (160). The Brotherhood is really only another box-machine in which he will be given an "unconflicted" racial identity and "name," at the price of amputating precious parts of his contradictory racial identity.

The complex motivations and implications of this self-disintegration are reiterated in the comedic episode which intervenes between the cocktail party and the invisible man's first speech as the Brotherhood's token "black" spokesman. Returning home after the party, he makes a conscious determination that the remedy to his identity confusion lies, in part, in re-establishing himself as a unified, autonomous ego; he decides, therefore, to separate himself from Mary, his past, and their mutual connection to a racial, southern identity: "they seldom know where their personalities end and yours begins; they usually think in terms of 'we' while I have always tended to think in terms of 'me'" (309, emphasis mine). (His attraction to the new identity is, predictably, as much economic as psychological: as these thoughts run through his head, his
pockets are filled with the crisp new bills the Brotherhood has paid him for taking on the name they assign.) Upon awaking the next morning, Ellison has his anti-hero reenact the explosion of the old rigid mold for his self in a sequence that tellingly alludes to the versions of the "black" self forwarded by Bledsoe, Brockway, and Mary, and to the protagonist's rejection of all of these as too binding. In a violent outburst against the uncivilized, "cottonpatch ways" (312) of tenants beating on the heating pipes in Mary's building, IM takes up a "cast-iron figure of a very black, red-lipped and wide-mouthed Negro" with "white eyes" and an "enormous grin" (311), and retaliates by striking the pipe with it until he feels "the iron head crumble and fly apart in [his] hand" (312).

A caricature of various exaggerated "Negroid" features, perhaps a representation of the combined minstrel and "field nigger" figure in the American racial imagination, this iron bank is also linked to the "white" version of "black" identity transmitted to young "blacks" by Bledsoe through the discipline of the iron "shackle" and the "white" version of "black" identity which, initially imposed upon, unavoidably becomes a genuine part of "black" identities through the process of folk acculturation represented by the likes of Mary and the Provos. The invisible man's description of and reaction to the bank are crucial to an understanding of its signification:
It was a bank, a piece of early Americana, the kind of bank which, if a coin is placed in the hand and a lever pressed upon the the back, will raise its arm and flip the coin into the grinning mouth....[I] grabbed it, suddenly as enraged by the tolerance or lack of discrimination, or whatever, that allowed Mary to keep such a self-mocking image around, as by the knocking.

(311)

We might remember here that, upon advising the invisible man to leave "pride and dignity" to "white folks" and just do his best in his socially assigned role as a "black" man, Bledsoe "looked at [him] like a man about to flip a coin" (142) and that, in his subsequent rage of "disembowelment" the invisible man struggled to "keep from bursting out [his] brain" against something. Now, dramatically picking up this icon of the "nigger" selves of his past (the accommodating Bledsoe nigger, the uncivilized field nigger, the leering minstrel nigger), he indeed causes its iron head to explode, destroying with great symbolic significance its grinning mechanism for gathering small change: "The figure had gone to pieces like a grenade, scattering jagged fragments of painted iron among the coins" (313). Connected by literal possession to the down-home "blackness" of Mary Rambo, the bank also suggests Primus Provo's role as minstrel performer, and its "explosion" is of course a reenactment of the explosion in Brockway's basement when the constraining definitions of the "old-fashioned, slavery-time, mammy-made, handkerchief
headed" (222) Brockway had caused the invisible man to "fly apart" for the first time.

The disintegration of the iron bank is representative of the protagonist's conscious decision to put these old selves behind him, but Ellison doubly iron-izes his effort to forge a new "identity," suggesting how the protagonist's own overly narcissistic, "me"-centered paradigm ("No respect for the individual," he grumbles at the "cottonpatch" tenants banging on the pipes [313]) contributes to his continued alienation and psychological fragmentation. First, he smashes one iron-cast racial "identity" only to move immediately into another: the Brotherhood, too, expects him to act out a particular image of "blackness"—playing the part of "black" spokesman for the dispossessed but denying the "black" aspects of his existence while doing so—for which they are willing to compensate him with a patronizing income (flipping him more coins) but no power or agency in the organization. More comically, the invisible man finds that it is impossible to dispose of these junked versions of the "black" self. Attempting to discard the fragments of the shattered bank along Harlem's streets, he is thwarted twice, first by a woman who identifies him as a southern "field nigger" and demands that he retrieve the package from her trash can, then by a man who identifies him as a type of the "young New York Negro" con man or drug dealer (322) and who
helpfully returns the package the invisible man has intentionally dropped on the sidewalk. It is tragicomically difficult, in the psychological world depicted by Ellison, to walk away from past versions of the self or from distasteful components of one's psychic make-up; as we have seen in earlier episodes, the cost of a "new name" can only be some version of psychological amputation—even when the part-or past-selves derive from the racist distortions of the "white" imagination. The invisible man, in other words, cannot even "dispossess" himself of unwanted psychic components. Despite his desire for an identity that will "sing a song in unison" (253), he is forced to carry the broken image along with him as part of the dissonant "psychic" contents of his "ego"-briefcase: unwittingly reflecting the couriers with pouches he earlier observed on Wall Street, he walks now with his own "package" self—a jumble of dissonant elements—at his side.

The meaning of the disintegrated iron "darky" bank must be read, finally, in the context of three other crucial scenes in Invisible Man. To explode the atomistic, exogenously imposed, disciplinary "black" self—the "black subject"—as a meaningful paradigm for self-experience, is, in effect, to reverse the mirror stage by which one conceptualizes oneself through the constitution of an image of self-unity. Thus, when his consciousness of the
"nigger" identities being imposed upon him reaches critical mass at the paint factory, causing him to "explode," the invisible man is left in what I have described as an infantile, pre-mirror stage condition of subjective disorder, which he schematizes physically as a sense of being both "deflated" and fragmented or "amputated" (232). (The "white" hospital workers, of course, try to reconstruct the unconflicted "nigger" self, but his "contradictory voices" have been permanently unleashed). This image of "deflating" the disciplinary "black" ego-construct recurs later during his similarly conscious flirtation with another more fluid conception of "blackness"--the mental state he refers to as the "yam level" (261). Rejecting the shame imposed on the eating of down-home food by the Bledsoist "progress" version of the "black" self, the protagonist imagines humiliating the college administrator by publicly accusing him of eating chitterlings. With his refined image compromised by the charge of "field niggerism," the protagonist fantasizes, "Bledsoe would disintegrate, disinflate" (259). The smashing of the bank, viewed in this context, is also a material enactment of this earlier fantasy of "disinflating" the Bledsoean "ego." However, just as the protagonist's "yam level" reverie of a fluid, self-determined identity is interrupted when he literally stumbles over the full complexity of the plural psyche--the
contradictory "jumble" of an evicted couples' possessions scattered like junk upon the street (an image of the multiplicity of African American identity that he finds nauseating)--he finds that, after smashing the signifier of all of the past "black" selves (including the "cottonpatch field nigger") that do not fit into his new Brotherhood identity, he cannot, try as he may, discard them like junk along the street. Caught up in the cult of the "me," as the protagonist admits he is, and in the quest for an "empowering name," as Benston puts it (159), he shuttles between the anxiety-ridden (yet liberatory) plurality on one side of the racial mirror stage, and the security-granting (yet imprisoning) illusion of self-presence on the other.

We first saw the characteristic imagery of fragmentation of this borderline state, along with the correlative effort to reestablish integrity according to the outline of the bodily schema, as a prominent part of the invisible man's experience in the hospital machine, which, as I have argued, stands as a model for a series of box-machine-individualizing-naming contraptions that he encounters throughout his narrative. The Brotherhood becomes, of course, the central example of such a disciplinary "machine" in the latter third of Ellison's novel, so it is no coincidence that, on the occasion of the invisible man's first public appearance as Brotherhood spokesperson, the
fragmented, pre-mirror stage sensations of the hospital—and, by extension, the disembowelment of being named "nigger" by Bledsoe—replay before his eyes like an uncanny vision. That Ellison intends this scene to evoke the alienation that anyone might feel at the prospect of being confronted with a "new identity" seems undeniable. Yet that he has in mind the particular psychological extremities of the racial situation is indicated by the invisible man's explicit connection of the occasion of his first speech to several of the more overtly racializing "boxes" of his career: the "canvas-covered platform" (332) of the arena, formerly the site of boxing matches where a famous boxer "had lost his sight in the ring" (326), recreates the blind battle royal of the young black boys; the spotlight surrounds him "like a seamless cage of stainless steel" (332), reminiscent of Bledsoe's shackle and habit of "making a cage of his fingers" (143); standing before the crowd, visible to thousands but unable to see them, he feels again the "hard, mechanical isolation of the hospital machine" (333). Similarly, according to Fanon, the effect of having one's consciousness of self mediated through the eyes of others—the effect, as he concisely puts it, of the words "Look, a Negro!"—is simultaneously a "crushing objecthood" and a feeling of being "burst apart" into fragments (Fanon 109).
The racial psychology of the colonial situation provides an instructive parallel to the invisible man's experience as he prepares to "become" his new identity publicly for the first time. Almost immediately upon entering the arena, he experiences the effort to conform absolutely to a new name and a new identity as a literal splintering of himself as a center of cognition, a dispersal of himself across multiple subject positions. This sensation is connected, moreover, to a psychological effect which is puzzling without the explanatory framework of the mirror stage: he begins to deliberately observe and operate his own body and motions as if from another perspective, not only as if somehow separated from himself, but also as if trying to reintegrate his sense of identity by carefully reintegrating the parameters of his physical form:

I bent forward, suddenly conscious of my legs in new blue trousers. But how do you know they're your legs? What's your name?...For it was as though I were looking at my own legs for the first time--independent objects that could of their own volition lead me to safety or danger...Then it was as though I stood simultaneously at opposite ends of a tunnel. I seemed to view myself from the distance of the campus while yet sitting there on a bench in the old arena. (326-27)

Disoriented by the process of having a new identity "manufactured" for him by the Brotherhood's disciplinary "box"/"machine," the protagonist is placed in the position, as in the car with Norton, of having to literally reiterate his own mirror stage to reconstitute subjective integrity. Thus, he becomes unusually conscious--as in the hospital
machine--of the limits and movements of his own body, feeling his *disintegration* as a dissection of the bodily schema, and schematizing his *reintegration* through an unusually deliberate emphasis on the organization and manipulation of that bodily schema. The mirror stage, to use Lacan's own phrasing of this relationship, "manufactures for the subject, caught up in the lure of *spatial identification*, the succession of phantasies that extends from a fragmented body-image to a form of its totality that I shall call *orthopaedic*" (Ecrits 4, emphasis mine).

Similarly, the invisible man conceptualizes his status in-between the anxiety of fragmentation and (what he hopes will be) the formation of a new, unified identity through the trope of looking at a picture or reflection of himself: "I seemed aware of it all from a point deep within me, yet there was a disturbing vagueness about what I saw, a disturbing unformed quality, as when you see yourself in a photo exposed during adolescence; the expression empty, the grin without character." (327, emphasis mine). The description suggests another moment of mirror staging in his life, the experience with Norton that made him think of a college historical photo, showing "blacks" with blank, characterless expressions as if their subjectivity has been disrupted/interrupted by the clearly defined "whites" who surround them.
As in that earlier instance, the "photo" conceptualization represents a sort of mental micro-mirror stage whose intended outcome is a more "formed" reflection of the self; the invisible man hopes that the photo will resolve into his new, unified identity, one without the internal multiplicity of a split point of consciousness, of the "contradictory voices," or of the alien, tricksterish part selves he has been feeling. Indeed, he summarizes this multiplicity, the disintegration anxiety it illicits, the discipline of his new, unitary self that must suppress it, and the overt consciousness of the body engendered by this whole psychodynamic in a passage I quote at length because it so concisely emphasizes the racial mirror stage components of the invisible man's experience:

This was a new phase, I realized, a new beginning, and I would have to take that part of myself that looked on with remote eyes and keep it always at the distance of the campus, the hospital machine, the battle royal—all now far behind. Perhaps the part of me that observed listlessly but saw all, missing nothing, was still the malicious, arguing part; the dissenting voice, my grandfather part; the cynical, disbelieving part—the traitor self that always threatened internal discord. Whatever it was, I knew that I'd have to keep it pressed down....No more flying apart at the seams, no more remembering forgotten pains....No, I thought, shifting my body, they're the same legs on which I've come so far from home. And yet they were somehow new....I was becoming someone else. (327, emphasis mine)

The enticing security of this new sense of self, however, ironically implies the very splitting that the invisible man seeks to escape. If the Brotherhood "machine" "manufactures" for him a new identity, that is—just as
Norton, the college, the factory, the hospital machine intended to do--it will do so at the cost of "amputating" parts of his psychological experience. Indeed, we can trace this irony back to the fact that the anxieties of splitting and disintegration are *structured by the mirror stage of subjectivity* in the first place. It is only the artificial constitution of a unified self-image, as Lacan would have it, that creates the potential for that "ego" to splinter back along the chains of signification out of which it was tentatively crystallized. In taking on the "manufactured name" of "another personality," the invisible man admits in the next paragraph, he submits himself to a second type of psychological splitting: he must cut away all past versions of his self if he is to maintain the purity and coherence of the new self. The new orientation of being "the focal point of so many concentrating eyes" might perhaps "transform" him into an entirely new "someone else," he thinks, "But what if someone from the campus wandered into the audience? Or someone from Mary's?" (328). Because such contacts would threaten his new "personality" with disillusion, he realizes, he would have to suppress them, pretending not to recognize Mary even if he saw her.

As I have suggested, we might gloss the experience Ellison is so richly depicting in these pages with the contemporaneous racially politicized psychoanalysis of Fanon. So long as the "black" subject lives only "among
his own," according to Fanon, even though conscious of the politics of race, there is no problem in maintaining the integrity of self-experience. The first encounter with the hierarchization and objectification of the "white" gaze—or the name "nigger"—however, creates in the "black" psyche a self-consciousness that has the form of—as for the invisible man—a "third-person consciousness" of the self. Fanon describes precisely the sense of vagueness and the concentration on the bodily schema that the invisible man experiences in his "machines":

In the white world the man of color encounters difficulties in the development of his bodily schema. Consciousness of the body is solely a negating activity. It is a third-person consciousness. The body is surrounded by an atmosphere of certain uncertainty. I know that if I want to smoke, I shall have to reach out my right arm...[etc.] And all these movements are made not out of habit but out of implicit knowledge. A slow composition of my self as a body in the middle of a spatial and temporal world—such seems to be the schema.

(110-11)

Precisely as if, we might say, the addition of an-Other perspective on the self has so shattered the coherence of one's self-experience that one must reproduce a mirror-stage-like understanding of the unity of the bodily schema in order to reconstitute the fiction of psychic self-unity. This bodily schema, in Fanon's formulation, is also insufficient, because the "black" self must also account for a massive discursive structure of assumptions about "blackness"—"the white man...had woven me out of a thousand details, anecdotes, stories" (111)—which brings
to bear another, racial, cultural, historical perspective on its identity and which undercut the "physiological self" (111). Taking into account this discursive historicity, Fanon says, he had to replace his corporeal schema with a "racial epidermal schema"; "whites" looking at him not only saw him as objectifiable difference, which he had to account for in his sense of himself, they thought him as difference according to an internalized discourse about "blackness," which he again, and separately, had to account for in his sense of himself. Combining these exogenous perspectives with the self-experience the "black" person brings with him or her to the situation of racial objectification produces what Fanon describes as a nauseating, triple existence (112). "What else could it be for me but an amputation, an excision, a hemorrhage that spattered my whole body with black blood?" (Fanon 112).

The objectification the invisible man faces at the arena is not merely that of a new identity imposed by a new set of peers, but clearly also the racial objectification of an established network of discursive agreements about the emotive "black" orator. (Brother Jack, it might be noted, selected him as the new "Booker T. Washington" on the basis of a speech which had virtually no substantive content and virtually no effect on the mob it was directed to; in other words, Brother Jack did not see Invisible Man, he saw only the emotive "black" orator). Experiencing a splitting
which is simultaneously a division into multiple points of self-consciousness and into present and past versions of his self, the invisible man's response is first an increased focus on his bodily schema, then a vision of the amputation of the "black" self that has been present, either explicitly or implicitly, on each previous occasion of his being disciplined into "blackness." At the battle royal, he was forced to play both the "black" orator and the sexual "black"; handed his new briefcase-ego for the first time after his speech, he splattered it with blood from an injury incurred while boxing blind on a canvas like the one he stands on to give his speech here. Disciplined by the "bleeder" of "souls" (Bledsoe) for not conforming to the image of the "nigger," he vomits. After smashing the iron bank incarnation of the "nigger" image, and just before making his futile attempt to discard this part of himself, he notices a "trickle of blood" from a cut on his hand (313). The discipline of racial identity has indeed been experienced as "an amputation, an excision, a hemorrhage."

The images of corporeal mutilation which haunt the invisible man's boomeranging pilgrimage through racial society, then, are direct derivatives of the racial mirror stage, symptoms of the fundamental psychological function of race. When "white" identity defines itself, by gesturing visually, verbally, imagistically, financially (à
la Norton), or even literarily (à la Stein) toward the difference of "blackness" in a self-constituting "white" mirror stage, the self-experience of whoever is so defined is violently disrupted. Because this disruption has the effect of reversing the self-staging mirror processes of the self so objectified, or of initiating a scrambled, compensatory attempt to reenact them, it precipitates in some form of bodily dismemberment imagery. As Fanon describes the effect of being defined as "black" for the first time, "I am being dissected under white eyes, the only real eyes. I am fixed. Having adjusted their microtomes, they objectively cut away slices of my reality... it is not a new man who has come in, but a new kind of man, a new genus. Why, it's a Negro!" (116). Similarly, it is in his moments of jolting awareness of being defined by others as "black" that Ellison's protagonist feels by turns "disemboweled" (with Bledsoe), "amputated" (in the hospital machine), and "torn to shreds" (at the arena).

As Fanon's emphasis on the production of a "new kind of man" makes clear, "whiteness" and "blackness" do not pre-exist this psychocultural process as empirical--or epidermal--realities; they are produced by it as entities of a purely symbolic, or metaphysical order. In their derivation from the mirror stage's production of a fiction of personal autonomy and ego unity, moreover, these racial
identities tend to encourage narcissistic habits of being, "sealing," as Fanon puts it, racial selves into their "whiteness" or "blackness" (Fanon 9-10). Given this "dual narcissism" (Fanon 10) of racial identity, we might expect a similar manifestation of disintegration when the "white" mirror stage is disrupted as we see for the invisible man; and indeed, Fanon later outlines the disruption of the "white" mirror stage as an anxiety fraught with visions of "blacks" and of "the liberation of the body image" (162) -- the corps morcelé.16 Combining Fanon's mirror stage speculation with an object-relations perspective on narcissistic personality disorders, finally, we might read the invisible man's disintegration anxieties and "obsession with [his] identity" as results not of the complexity of his self-experience, as he seems to believe, but of the experienced disparity between his hyperindividualistic dependence on ego unity and autonomy, on the one hand, and the contradictory voices of what Ellison depicts as a psyche of complex, multiple determinations, on the other. If the invisible man's first instinct in the novel is to throw off the shackle of Bledsoe's and Norton's "black subject," whose "racial identity certainty" "disembowels" the fluidity of his own lived "black" experience, the Brotherhood segment shows him trying to conform to the shape of an equally narcissistic, equally "certain" identity--albeit one he conceives of as significantly
"deraced." It is the individualistic tendency of his self-conception in both cases--his belief in a unified and "sealed" identity--I am suggesting, that encourages the invisible man to "amputate" parts of himself, and that keeps him stewing about the plurality of voices, emotions, and memories (many--but not all--of them derived from his distinctly African American experience) he actually hears within.

It is as a "solution" to his experience of this internal dissonance that the protagonist turns to the Brotherhood, which beckons with the possibility of a new, clear identity. One of the fine ironies of this section of the novel, however, is the protagonist's failure to recognize until much later--when the coded racism of Brother Jack's "anti-race" ideology becomes evident--that his efforts to conform to his new name constitute a mere repetition of the inhuman "disciplines" of previous episodes. Not only does the Brotherhood turn out to be yet another institution in which African Americans are allowed to be transmitters, but not agents, of power, but its "disciplines" of identity and politics constitute a denial of the complexities and vicissitudes of human experience--precisely the repression that IM has been revulsed by in the past. The Brotherhood promises the "certainty" of identity he seeks--he calls the time before he begins to sense the limitations of his Brotherhood identity his "days of certainty" (371)--but
only at the price of suppressing the multiple determinations, especially the racial and [processual] determinations, of his self-experience. That his new certainty of identity is also another discipline of identity is most clearly evidenced by the Brotherhood's demands that he forget his past, his family, his African American culture, and his status as a racially categorized human being. Indeed, the invisible man's own formulation of the new sense of vitality and identity the organization gives him ironically recalls Bledsoe and the hospital machine: "The organization had given the world a new shape, and me a vital role. We recognized no loose ends, everything could be controlled by our science. Life was all pattern and discipline; and the beauty of discipline is when it works. And it was working very well" (373). The beauty of the mirror stage is the pattern and certainty it gives to identity; the horror of the mirror stage is its suppression of the plural psyche. We are made of loose ends. Still, confronted with the dilemma of the narcissistic racialization of U.S. society--conform "wholely" to one of the "names" for "blackness" which together constitute the "black subject" or experience identity as persistently fragmented, dissonant, and invisible--the invisible man grasps at the concreteness of the role offered to him by the Brotherhood as the only means he can conceive of for completing his mirror stage
and preserving self-unity without recourse to the objectifying definitions of race. During the night following his first speech as Brotherhood spokesman, the invisible man sits up in bed, "grasping [his] knees" as if gathering to himself the scattered parts of his "orthopaedic" fantasy of totality, and decides to accept the new role given to him by an audience that "was mixed, their claims broader than race....How else could I save myself from disintegration?" (345).

Coda: The Opened Shackle and the Freedom of the Self

Within the dynamics I have outlined of an axis of disciplinary identity certainty (narcissistic egoism) and identity confusion (or fluidity), the identity quest in Invisible Man implicitly becomes a search for a conceptualization of the self that adequately allows for its inherent fluidity. One possible revision of the narcissistic individual along more fluid lines is suggested by the protean Harlemite B. P. Rinehart, a veritable living example of the "exploded" "black" self. As "the man of parts who got around" (487), the man who willingly plays a whole series of "multiple personalities" (488)--storefront preacher, numbers runner, gambler, ladies' man--Rinehart figures the absolute fragmentation at the extreme pole from the staged unity of self-presence. What is more, he manipulates this disintegration for his own ends,
suggesting the potential for reveling in identity "confusion," converting it into social power and economic profit. Momentarily living the life of Rinehart, the invisible man realizes for the first time the possibility of a new orientation to the plurality he has been experiencing all along, the possibility of recognizing and accepting that experience is a "vast seething, hot world of fluidity" (487), and making oneself at home in that possibility just as "Rine the rascal was at home in it" (487). Still, there is a dark side to Rinehart's technique for undermining the unifying, "naming" tendencies of disciplinary society. His profit-taking is, finally, cynically self-promoting and self-interested, a defacement of "communal reality" (Benston 162). Moreover, the price he pays for the liberated possibility of his existence is the sacrifice of any center of consciousness whatever; anyone, as the invisible man proves, can take on Rinehart's various roles, and the narrative itself reduces him to the signifiers he manipulates--the hat and glasses, the pamphlets, the words other characters say about him: Rinehart himself is never seen. As Kimberly Benston observes, Rinehart's strange combination of name-refusing agility and asociality "awaken the hero to an improvisational freedom but offer no stable theme off which a coherent identity could be riffed" (162).
While Benston contrasts the model presented by Rinehart with the novel's invocation of Frederick Douglass as its uplifted model of a more positive fluidity of the self, I want to conclude by focusing on two other textual figures which might be seen to stand alongside Douglass in Ellison's pantheon of icons of what Benston calls "self-creating transformation" (162). Foremost among these is the chain gang leg iron passed on to the invisible man by his African American confidante in the Brotherhood, Brother Tarp—the man who, significantly, also gives the invisible man a portrait of Douglass in an earlier scene. As he symbolically hands the protagonist the leg iron he filed open to escape the chain gang, Tarp associates the piece of steel both with his quest for "freedom" and with his precious preservation of the memory of his time in chains. This token of Tarp's identity thus reinscribes the ontological messages of the hospital machine, the Provos' possessions, and the iron bank (you must say no to the limitations of the mold, but you can't leave it behind without destroying yourself), while also signifying on the ahistorical "smoothness" of Bledsoe's "progressive" version of the "black self": 17

I took it in my hand, a thick dark, oily piece of filed steel that had been twisted open and forced partly back into place....It was such a link as I had seen on Bledsoe's desk, only while that one had been smooth, Tarp's bore the marks of haste and violence, looking as though it had been attacked and conquered before it stubbornly yielded. (379)
This revision of the novel's shackle image signals what Robert Stepto has formulated as a transition from a "rhetoric of progress" to a "rhetoric of liberation" (193), positing a fluidity of identity (including, but not only, "black" identity) that includes both a historically derived structure and an "exquisitely rude aperture that 'defiles' the otherwise completed (or closed) form of the leg iron...a void to be filled, not once and for all but continually... To fill the space is less to close the form than to shape the form; and, to be sure, there can never be only one form" (189). Translating this idea to the approach I have outlined, the revision of the shackle signals the shift from a rhetoric of individualistic, static egoism to a rhetoric of identity fluidity, precariously balanced between certainty and confusion, between the fixity of one "name" and the plurality of many.

Tarp's opened leg iron represents his decision to forge an identity that, rather than annihilating its tragic past or being simply defined by it, maintains the partial structure of his violent history as a fundamental component. It would be entirely in the spirit of both Ellison's nomenclatural tricksterism and the traditional African American "disruption at the level of the signifier" (Gates, *Monkey* 47), to say that Tarp has executed a revision within the "trap" of racial identity, transforming his trap/shackle by opening it, revising to insert a
pluralistic form of "to be" (ar[e]) forcing it back together, and bearing it with him into the future as "part" of his new identity as Tarp. The structure of the past, that is, exists in a profound tension with the formlessness of individual freedom suggested by Tarp's hard-won opening, deforming, and personal marking of the link, just as Douglass "seems to exemplify the heroic modulation of form and chaos, convention and invention" (Benston 163). In this creatively sustained tension between fixed past and ongoing renewal, between conventional structure and self-expressive riff, Ellison locates the true freedom of the plural self (and true "individuality")--a freedom that escapes both the order of discipline and the disintegration of multiplicity, both the violence of history and the chaos of historylessness. As C.W.E. Bigsby has remarked, "This tension between chaos and form, this recognition of a profound ambivalence, is a fundamental trope of Ellison's work" (174), and Bigsby goes on to read this tension as the essence of Ellison's cultural pluralism, African American existentialism, and improvisatory jazz aesthetic. Tarp's leg iron is only one of numerous thematizations of such a tension in *Invisible Man*, but perhaps the one most evocative of its hero's quest for a sense of self that neither seals the plural psyche within the closed circle of unitary (racial) ego-constructs nor dissipates it across a
politically and personally meaningless array of multiple determinations.

Though often obscured at the narrative margins and never comprehensively apprehended by the protagonist, a series of related images of the possibilities located literally in the "break" created in the "shackle," located between the rigidity of order and the creative potentials of chaos, recur: when he momentarily reaches the self-accepting "yam level" of existence and announces, "I yam what I am" (260), there is a hint of the reality of tensional, pluralistic intersubjectivity in the subconscious reading of the line as "I you am (we are) what I am"; in the name and seemingly contradictory existence of Tod Clifton, another opened enclosure (cleft-tun), the theme of Tarp's shackle is reiterated; so too, the zoot-suiters whom the invisible man sees in the (underground) subway after Clifton's death and whom he associates with Clifton, with himself, and with Douglass, exist "outside the groove of history" (433). "[B]irds of passage who were too obscure for learned classification... of natures too ambiguous for the most ambiguous words" (429), they simultaneously thwart reductive identification, yet manage to craft highly stylized, distinctive identities for themselves. They do not have a conventional, historical, above-ground, visible (in the sense of objectifiable) self-presence, that is, "yet they are undeniably present," as Houston Baker
comments, "in the fastidiousness of their style" (Blues 61).

Behind all these images lurks the recurrent figure of the "blues" (the next thing the invisible man notices, after seeing the zoot-suiters, is the sound of blues music), what Baker has defined as the "blues matrix" of Invisible Man (Blues 14). This figure is thematized most fully in the sharecropper Jim Trueblood, whose remarkable narrative of his own tragedy evidences his bending of the "shackle" of the "genitalized" identity imposed upon him by "whites" like Norton, inescapable but not paralyzing, to his own self-authenticating purposes. As the novel's primary example of what Baker calls the "blues singer par excellence" (188), Trueblood is perhaps the first representation the invisible man encounters of a possible resolution to the problem of identity posed by the racial mirror stage. Trueblood represents the recognition--recreated as the thematic of his own story as told to Norton--that he can neither live within the constrictive notions of "blackness" imposed on him by the social structure nor deny their effects on his self structure without suffering the psychic equivalent of amputation. At his personal moment of truth, the moment of his apparent commission of incest, this recognition is translated into his realization that if he moves he will commit what the social code defines as "sin," but that he is not willing to
suffer the amputation involved in physically separating himself from the situation: "There was only one way I can figger that I could git out: that was with a knife....you know I knewed that that was too much to pay to keep from sinnin'" (59). As Trueblood himself understands, this situation is figurative of the racial and economic conditions of his entire life: "But once a man gits hisself in a tight spot like that there ain't much he can do. It ain't up to him no longer....That's just about been my life" (59). Trueblood's recognition that his "tight spot" is not only a product of, but a metaphor for, the broader context of conditions in the racialized south urges a reading of his "tale" as an allegory about economic and social identity, a subversive subtext that Norton certainly, and invisible man for the most part, does not grasp. Within the context of the episode's "white" sexual mirror staging, we might say that Trueblood's story connotes his decision not to use a "knife" to remove the thoroughly "genitalized" identity construct (the "erection") being forced upon him by the racial structure, nor to compromise his humanity by simply conforming to it. Instead, he accepts the effectual realities of the incest, the "white" insistence that he is depraved, and the conditions of his life, but transforms them to his own self-expressive, self-authenticating, and economically empowering purposes. In the new life-story passed on in
his own narrative, this transformation occurs at the moment of his decision to return home despite the condemnation of his preacher, his wife, and the nearby black college (which finds him embarrassing and offers him money to move away). That night, Trueblood’s improvisatory conversion of the acquired form of a “church song” into some blues “ain’t never been sang before” (65-66) signals his epiphany of self-affirmation: “I makes up my mind that I ain’t nobody but myself and ain’t nothin’ I can do but let whatever is gonna happen, happen” (66). As Baker comments,

In translating his tragedy into the vocabulary and semantics of the blues and, subsequently, into the electrifying expression of his narrative, Trueblood realizes that he is not so changed by catastrophe that he must condemn, mortify, or redefine his essential self. This self...is in many ways the obverse of the stable, predictable, puritanical, productive, law-abiding ideal self of the American industrial-capitalist society. (Blues 190)

It is such a version of the self—what might be called, following Baker’s supple explications of the blues motif here and in other African American literary identities, the plural blues self—that is always hauntingly present as the invisible man pursues his struggle for an acceptable identity. Taking the rejected unitary self-images of its tragic past along with it into a renewable present as components of an affirmative, improvisatory identity, the plural blues self is, like Tarp’s opened leg iron, a disciplinary structure wrenched open, and personally marked, but not discarded. As Baker suggests, such a self
is opposed in *Invisible Man* by a network of racial, industrial-capitalist, and ideological disciplines that enforce the "ideal self": "stable, predictable, puritanical, productive, and law-abiding." Though the invisible man, still intent on conforming to the "shackles" of his society's individualizing disciplines, seems oblivious to the blues meanings of Trueblood's story when he hears it, he is, by the time he has retreated underground with Tarp's leg iron and prepared to write his own story, fully cognizant of the value of, as Trueblood puts it, "movin' without movin," of revising the self from within rather than leaving old selves behind.

Between the absolute discipline of "white" or "black" determined self-images that "Ble(e)d" your "soe(l)" and the absolute liberation of self-dispersal that makes your innumerable masks ("rind") your only soul ("hart"), then, Ellison locates the creative tension of the blues self—that psychoexistential nexus where you take the music that has been given to you and make of it your own "True-blood." For Ellison the ideal of democratic subjectivity is represented by the blues consciousness of Trueblood, who recognizes, in his personal moment of truth, that to deny the determining conditions and constraints of his life would be to amputate, to hemorrhage, a profoundly essential part of his self. Indeed, it is an experienced and blues-wise invisible man who, in his "Prologue," is capable of
combining Trueblood's blues with Tarp's opened shackle in the single, radiant image of Louis Armstrong's trumpet. Armstrong, he tells us, "bends" the discipline of a "military instrument into a beam of lyrical sound," making "a poetry out of being invisible" (8). True freedom for the self, Ellison suggests, can only be won through bending the "military instrument" of cultural individualization into a structure with an opening or gap. Such an aperture might serve not only as the free space of continued restyling of the self, but also as the crucial interstice where "underground," "invisible" interconnections with social, historical, and racial otherness might obtain—shattering, among other destructive dualisms, the "dual narcissism" of race (Fanon 10).

As Homi Bhabha argues, "Private and public, past and present, the psyche and the social develop an interstitial intimacy...that questions binary divisions through which such spheres of social experience are often spatially opposed" (Culture 13). Anticipating Bhabha's postcolonial critique, Invisible Man similarly formulates a subject that imports "a hybridity, a difference 'within', a subject that inhabits the rim of an 'in-between' reality" (Culture 13). To become conscious of this interstitial relationship between psyche and social, past and present, is to decolonize—and de-individualize—the racial self, turning its inherent fissuring and fragmentation to positive
political and ontological effect. Thus, the invisible man begins to truly hear Louis Armstrong's blues only when he recognizes the off-beat, nodular, and "invisible" quality of his experience, reaching that state where "Instead of the swift and imperceptible flowing of time, you are aware of its nodes....And you slip into the breaks and look around" (8). Similarly, the "breaks" in the subject, the "interstices" where the psyche and the social communicate, inform the contradiction and internal division that the invisible man, in his epilogue, recognizes as the inevitable reality of self-experience: "Now I know men are different and that all life is divided and that only in division is there true health" (563). It is the sickness of a society characterized by "an increasing passion to make men conform to a pattern," he notes, that has finally forced his complex, unpatternable existence underground. Though the novel ends ambivalently with this "patterning" passion still in force as the prevailing "trend of the times" (563), Ellison is profoundly clear about the path to both psychological and social health: "[D]iversity is the word. Let man keep his many parts and you'll have no tyrant states" (563).

Notes

1. See chapter 1, 60-70; Nielsen 5-11; and Fanon 160-65.
2. For Baker's interpretation of the economic and performative dimensions of the Trueblood episode,
especially as they relate to his conception of an African American "blues" identity, see pp. 172-199 in Blues, Ideology, and Afro-American Literature.

3. It might also be noted that Norton is shaken, drained and weak because he is, so to speak, sexually "spent." One of the hilarious jokes of this episode is the veiled metaphor of sexual satisfaction that Ellison is applying to what I have framed as Norton's self-constitution. To understand the blues motif which informs the chapter (the blues is also the mode of self-sustaining and self-creating affirmation at the heart of Trueblood's story) is to understand that Norton is "getting off" by having his ego stroked by "blacks." With classic blues subversion and indirection, Ellison riffs on the sexual components of Norton's need for "blacks" by placing the narrator in the situation of being a "driver" for the "white" man, "gazing at the long ash of his cigar" (41) as he "smokes." We might gloss this image, for example, with the sexual metaphors in the following set of blues lyrics from, respectively, Bo Carter and Memphis Minnie:

I come over here, sweet baby, just to get my ashes hauled...Won't you draw on my cigaret, smoke it there all night long, / Just draw on my cigaret, baby, until you make my good ashes come.

Won't you be my chauffeur, won't you be my chauffeur? / I want someone to drive me, I want someone to drive me downtown.

For these and other blues sexual metaphors, see Levine 242-43.

4. My phrasing is indebted to George P. Rawick's discussion of the historical formation of "whiteness." As Roediger summarizes, "Rawick's argument that the typical early bourgeois racist constructed whiteness by imagining 'a pornography of his former life' and projecting it onto Blacks might be expanded in order to consider the racism of working class Irish-American Catholics who at times created a pornography of their present lives and at other times of their past" (153). I am suggesting a similar expansion to consider the racial postures of twentieth-century bourgeois subjects like Stein and (in Ellison's fictional portrayal) Norton. See Rawick 132-33. Similarly, Joseph R. Urgo describes these scenes in Invisible Man as a "white, staged pornography" (29).
5. Fanon's entire discussion of this "genitalization" (160-180) is relevant to the scenes elaborated in Invisible Man, encompassing both the "Sybil" fantasy (178) and the Norton/Stein projection: "For the majority of white men the Negro represents the sexual instinct (in its raw state). The Negro is the incarnation of a genital potency beyond all moralities and prohibitions" (177).

6. "[T]he Negro, because of his body, impedes the closing of the postural schema of the white man--at the point, naturally, at which the black man makes his entry into the phenomenal world of the white man" (Fanon 160).

7. As in chapter 2, I am using the terms "disciplinary technology" and "individual" in the particular senses elaborated by Foucault in, for example, Discipline and Punish and The History of Sexuality: Volume One: "The individual is no doubt the fictitious atom of an 'ideological' representation of society; but he is also a reality fabricated by this specific technology of power that I have called 'discipline'....The individual and the knowledge that may be gained of him belong to this production [of power]" (Discipline 194).

8. Thus, as Kenneth Burke has observed, Invisible Man illustrates how "technology," including the "technology" of "symbolic action," supersedes "race" as the object of Ellison's social critique: "Technology transcends race, not in the sense that it solves the problem of racial discrimination, but in the sense that technology itself is the problem....With the current terrific flowering of technology the problem of self-control takes on a possibly fatal, and certainly ironic, dimension. We must all conspire together, in a truly universal siblinghood, to help us all help one another to get enough control over our invented technologic servants to keep them from controlling us" (Burke 358). I want to examine here, with specific attention to Foucault's "disciplinary technologies" that manage and organize life itself, how Invisible Man illustrates the extent and the effects of a pervasive flowering of methods of controlling and atomizing human identity.

9. Bledsoe's role as an enforcer of the "black subject" is linked to Norton's by several metaphors in the novel, the most telling of which may be the cross-referencing of spiritual and physical mutilation images. That Bledsoe's
name suggests "bleeder" of "souls" connects him directly to the crazy vet's description of Norton as a "lyncher of souls" (92).

10. Through the technique of surveillance, Foucault argues, "disciplinary power became an 'integrated' system, linked from the inside to the economy and to the aims of the mechanism in which it was practised. It was also organized as a multiple, automatic and anonymous power; for although surveillance rests on individuals, its functioning is that of a network of relations from top to bottom" (Discipline 176-77). Power, according to Foucault, "cannot be localized in a particular type of institution or apparatus," though they operate what he refers to as the "microphysics of power" (26).

11. As Harper comments, Bledsoe's insistence on his own "power" in the same speech that alludes to its real source is "beautifully self-consuming" (120).

12. See also Urgo's "Introduction" to Novel Frames for a concise but useful summary of the "postmodern" understanding of identity which he uses as a basis for reading Ellison's critique of the objectified, "individual" self. Citing theorists such as Paul Smith and Clifford Geertz, who critique the "integral, autonomous self" as a vestige of "a defunct ideological system" (xiii), Urgo argues for a reading of Ellison's novel as a "literary attempt to interrogate the idea of an autonomous self" (xvi). Although, as my own approach to individualization is meant to suggest, that ideological system is anything but "defunct," Urgo's presentation of the issues of self and racial objectification in Invisible Man is the best I have seen.

13. Harper 121-22. While Harper draws his framework here from the Marxist perspective of Lukacs, the Foucauldian approach which is so useful for unraveling the politics of identity control allows, I think, for a similar connection between subjectification and capitalism: "At a less general level, the technological mutations of the apparatus of production, the division of labour and the elaboration of the disciplinary techniques sustained an ensemble of very close relations....Each makes the other possible and necessary; each provides a model for the other" (Discipline 221).
14. The invisible man's self-recognized "obsession with [his] identity" (253) might thus be viewed in terms of what Kohut identified as the distinguishing anxiety of cases of "narcissistic personality disorder": a "dysfunctional hypervigilance" (Sussman 66) concerning the multiple manifestations of the self. See Sussman 66; and Kohut, Analysis 19-20, and Restoration 102-105. According to Kohut, "The core of disintegration anxiety is the anticipation of the breakup of the self, not the fear of the [oedipal] drive" (Restoration 104). The invisible man thus experiences a predictable "dread of the loss of his self--the fragmentation of and the estrangement from his body and mind in space, the breakup of the sense of his continuity in time" (Restoration 105).

15. That the invisible man remarks upon his sense of utter loneliness and isolation as he walks the streets of Harlem trying to rid himself of the pieces of "blackness" that are unacceptable to his new self (321), indeed, evokes the "alienated individualism" that bell hooks associates with "internalized racism" (39). The dehumanizing practices of a "colonized" society, hooks argues, encourage African Americans--even as they reject overt racism--to internalize an individualistic ethic that restricts the liberatory possibilities of "radical black subjectivity" and "black community."

16. "This is what is clinically called heautophany or heautoscopy," images of internal organs removed from the body (Fanon 162).

17. Recall here that, entrapped in the hospital machine which sought to convert him into the "unconflicted" black subject, IM realized that to destroy the machine in an escape effort would be futile, for it would destroy himself: "I wanted freedom, not destruction....There was no getting around it. I could no more escape than I could think of my identity. Perhaps, I thought, the two things are involved with each other. When I discover who I am, I'll be free" (237).

18. That the tropological revision of the shackle from its first appearance in the novel to its second, along with its apparent status as a trope for the revision of Tarp's identity and his name, refers to the tradition of "signifying" seems overtly signaled by Tarp's remark to IM that the leg iron has "a heap of signifying wrapped up in it" (379). Henry Louis Gates's definition of "Signifyin(g)" as a revision or critique of the "nature of
the sign itself" is the basis of my reading of Tarp's name (Monkey 45-47). As Gates comments, "Signifyin(g)" is not only a rhetorical but an ontological "guerrilla action" (46), an "act of self-definition, implicit in a (re)naming ritual, [undertaken] within the process of signification that the English language had inscribed for itself" (47).

19. As Stepto observes, this tension also informs Ellison's understanding of the appropriate relation between the artist and tradition, a thematic that overlaps, of course, with the invisible man's quest for a workable schema of identity. In Tarp's opened leg iron we have, indeed, something like a master trope for Ellison's visions of the dynamic interactions of self and other(s), self and developmental past, African American culture and slavery, "black" and "white," "individual" and society, form and chaos.
Chapter Four
Things Are Going to Pieces: The Psychology of Blackface in Berryman's Dream Songs

During his thirteen years of work on the poetic sequence that would eventually be published as The Dream Songs, John Berryman frequently telephoned his long-time acquaintance Ralph Ellison for consultation concerning the blackface minstrel devices that Berryman was incorporating in his poems. These long-distance colloquies evoke a confused jumble of United States cultural hybridization: a mid-twentieth-century white man, intent on articulating the racialized other within his own identity, turning to a contemporary African American as an authority on what was originally a mid-nineteenth-century white cultural representation of "black" cultural forms. Ellison later recalled these conversations:

During the period he was writing Dream Songs I grew to expect his drunken (sometimes) telephone calls. Usually he wanted my reaction to his uses of dialect. My preference is for idiomatic rendering, but I wasn't about to let the poetry of what he was saying be interrupted by the dictates of my ear for Afro-American speech. Besides, watching him transform elements of the minstrel show into poetry was too fascinating.

(Mariani, Life 387)

Far from clarifying the situation, Ellison's recollection increases the number of intriguing questions swirling around the cultural dynamic in play here. Ellison was certainly a significant authority on the minstrel show, particularly in its later manifestation as a reappropriated
performance of blackface by blacks, but what might be the relevance of any actual "Afro-American speech" to the distorted, exaggerated version of black verbal styles represented in minstrelsy? Was it Berryman's rather puzzling intention to use certain devices from blackface, but to make the linguistic style authentically "Afro-American," rather than authentically blackface? Moreover, what would authentic "Afro-American speech" be, in the context of both geographical and historical variability, and what are the politics of a white poet turning to an African American intellectual to provide verification of how uneducated "blacks" really sound? Finally, if we consider that Berryman may have been most interested in Ellison's erudite input on his use in several of the poems of genuine twentieth-century blues voices and culture--both influenced, it is true, through an almost untangleable process of cultural miscegenation, by the minstrel show itself--we are confronted with Ellison's statement that he elected not to hold Berryman's poems to the standard of "idiomatic rendering," and that he did not, in fact, so that the poet could freely utilize elements of the minstrel show. Was Berryman simply uncritically equating, as most nineteenth-century Americans certainly did, "blackface" with "black"? More implausibly, in his comment, was Ellison?
Such questions, and the complexities of U.S. racial subjectivity evoked by Berryman's effort to represent a racialized component of white identity, finally, become even more intriguing in the light of Ellison's further comment about those (sometimes) drunken telephone calls: "Fascinating too, and amusing, was my suspicion that Berryman was casting me as a long-distant Mister Interlocutor—or was it Mister Tambo?—whose ad lib role was that of responding critically to his Mister Bones and Huffy Henry" (Mariani, Life 387). The "lower frequencies" on which Ellison's nameless African American, in the haunting closing line of Invisible Man, purported to "speak for"—and out of—the consciousness of his (white?) reader in this instance appear to have been the frequencies of the telephone line.

While Ellison's remark is amusing in the light of Berryman's decision to leave his protagonist's interlocutor nameless, not to mention his delight at the whimsically expressed idea that "some assistant professor will become an associate professor by learning the name of Henry's friend" (Plotz 3), it is also of striking critical interest as an illustration of the cultural dynamics of racial subjectivity that are crucial to The Dream Songs. The tangle of representational issues evoked by those phone calls—the ambivalence, the contradictions that seem to be strung on Ellison's synopsis of the situation—speak
volumes about the presence of a "black" other within the white subject that Berryman was straining to articulate. If, in the personal terms of a unique literary relationship, Berryman posed Ralph Ellison himself as his internal "black" voice, we might further conceptualize that other as, in general terms, the sound and style of "blackness," or, in cultural terms, as the minstrel show.

The ambivalence and strangeness flavoring Ellison's own comments about Berryman's artistic method are magnified in The Dream Songs themselves, where it is notoriously difficult to decipher precisely how the minstrel show device and the black(face) voices are being employed. If on certain occasions the poems bemoan the failures of civil rights and social equality for African Americans, on others they utilize the suffering of racial persecution as a crude metaphor for Henry's metaphysical struggle with a cruel and dominating God; if in some poems the coon show device is used to counterpoint, as Ellison's comment suggests, the self-absorption of a traditional hero with internal dialogue and self-criticism, in others it is used to articulate little more than a rampant and self-disgusting sexuality. Critical assessments of the blackface elements in the Songs, incomplete and marginal in any case, have reflected this ambiguity. William Wasserstrom's early laudatory assessment was that the poems sympathetically "recreate" the "downs and ups" of "mutilated men, American
Negroes" (172)—that the poems even self-consciously reproduce the coded linguistic subversions of various black cultural modes and ironize the original white version of minstrelsy (a view that would at least begin to make sense of Ellison's apparently supportive interest in the project). But Wasserstrom's opinion is balanced by views, like those of Joel Conarroe, which have taken into account the obviously racist impulses of white minstrelsy in categorizing Berryman's reproduction as naive, ignorant of the black experience, and exploitative (Conarroe 104). Perhaps the poet Michael Harper's indignant verse rejoinder best illustrates the potential for insult in Berryman's extensive use of a degenerative "black" voice: "[Y]ou wrote in that needful black idiom / offending me, for only your inner voices / spoke such tongues . . . / That slave in you was white blood forced to derision."

My own contention is that the most productive approach to Berryman's minstrel technique lies somewhere between these two extremes of response, taking into account not only the strength of the poet's genuinely sympathetic identification with victims of racism, not only the exploitation inherent in his assumption that he could adopt "blackness" as the fit expression for his own sense of alienation, but also the irresolvably ambivalent and contradictory impulses of the minstrel show itself. Indeed, Eric Lott has recently used an astute blend of historicist
methodology and cultural theory to show that the minstrel show was always a cultural phenomenon riven with unclear racial antecedents, flatly contradictory motivations, equivocal subject matter, and ambiguous political effects. The most popular—and hence most powerful—entertainment mode of the nineteenth century in the U.S., blackface minstrelsy was capable of projecting anti-slavery sentimentalism and anti-abolitionist derision, liberatory cross-racial identification and oppressive racial distancing, from the same stage, effecting, for example, an ambivalently "derisive celebration of the power of blackness" (Lott 29). It is thus insufficient, Lott argues, "merely to read off racial oppression from minstrelsy's inauthenticity" (100-101), both because blackface was a culturally creolized form with an undeniable, if unquantifiable, measure of "black" involvement and because the racist tendencies of blackface production were rooted in a thoroughly "contradictory structure" of racial feeling in society, a structure also capable of evoking cross-racial solidarity and affection on the same stage (29). A century later, Berryman's reproduction of blackface performance was fraught with many of the same contradictions, and it is this slipperiness—of both psychological motivation and representational "authenticity"—that is registered in Ellison's
noncommittal description of those remarkable telephone calls.

Lott's explanations of the ambivalent nature of minstrelsy are particularly valuable because of his attention to not only the political, but also the psychological contradictions that were at play in its production, and it is on the latter that I want to focus in approaching *The Dream Songs*. The condensed and displaced themes of the blackface act, Lott suggests, functioned as a sort of "theatrical dream work" of both the social (135) and the personal (147), working to symbolically resolve a whole range of anxiety-ridden economic, sexual, moral, and identity conflicts. Berryman's rather derivative minstrel effects, as I will show, are orchestrated to analogous symbolic ends, forming a critical dimension of what he explicitly conceptualized as a contemporary social and psychic "dream work." The representation of race, in Berryman's dream version of the coon show as much as in its prototype, is above all a way of playing with intimations of disorder, sexuality, and corporeality—enacting a subversion of the "white" social subject that is at once desired and feared—by identifying with a "blackness" that can be simultaneously distanced, ridiculed, and controlled. By slipping into and out of the blackface mask at will, momentarily impersonating the hell-raising "black" and then just as quickly returning to the security of "whiteness,"
Berryman engages in precisely what Lott refers to as the "disappearing act in which blackface made 'blackness' flicker on and off so as simultaneously to produce and disintegrate the body" (117).³

In what follows, I read the seeming ambivalence of Berryman's own simultaneous identification with and degradation of "blackness," every bit as consumed with the body and its transgressive libidinality as was his nineteenth-century model, yet often gesturing toward a rhetoric of social anti-racism, in terms of what I view as Berryman's profound crisis of the subject. The precise emotional configuration of this crisis might be formulated psychopathologically in terms of the narcissistic personality disorders, and even borderline conditions, outlined in Kohut's "self psychology" and various object-relations approaches to subjectivity. Indeed, the persistent symbolization of orality, threatening authority figures, and states of physical disintegration in Henry's "dream-work" is suggestive of the dream content Kohut associates with such disorders. The theme of the contrast between coherent identity and extreme identity loss, however, becomes so pervasive in The Dream Songs as to become implicated in the much broader, less clinical concerns which can be and have been read as central to Berryman's work: the proliferation of voices, a proto-postmodern attention to the self as a construct, his
donning of Yeatsian "masks" to mediate between self and nonself, and his overriding concern with the very nature of the poet, defined--in a fashion indebted to both Whitman and Keats--as a mere vessel for transmitting other identities. What I want to suggest here, specifically, is the way in which Berryman resolves the anxieties associated with fragmented identity precisely through poetry--through the manipulation of various poetic masks that include minstrelsy.

The minstrel show device itself, that is, becomes one of Berryman's most ingenious methods for inflecting his text with masks, voices, and personae, condensing as it does into a single form his own aesthetic and personal needs and the most politically overburdened signifier of the racial construction of the subject in his culture. Ultimately, I propose, we might read The Dream Songs as Berryman's effort to depict in verse a basic structure of subjectivity: the constant tension or, in the case of the extremities of narcissistic disorder, alternation between an autonomous, egoistic--and well-disciplined--self, on the one hand, and its dispersal into a fragmented, intersubjective--and transgressive--plurality of connections, pieces, or masks, on the other. One of these masks, and one of Berryman's names for the slippage of the subject they imply, was blackface minstrelsy, a discourse that, like the (racial)
mirror stage itself, inescapably casts the body as the template for the unity and disintegration of the self.

A case of disintegration anxiety

Berryman links the crisis of the subject at the core of his long poem to a complex set of causative factors, outlining it as a product of his protagonist Henry's personal, psychological, narcissistic injuries and of the perceived loss of structure in the social environment of the late twentieth century. As even Kohut would agree, personal and social factors in the pathogenesis of narcissistic disorders can never be entirely untangled: reading ego crisis in a different, but instructively parallel, literary example, he notes that "Hamlet's psyche is 'out of joint' because it has to confront the fact that the world in which he had believed has become 'out of joint'" (Analysis 236). Similarly, Berryman's Henry is "the poor man" who "is coming to pieces joint by joint" not only because of a catastrophic childhood paternal loss but also because of economic, moral, and political "conditions"--"& the faceless monsters of the Soviet Unions" (Song 140). Thus, the death by suicide of Henry's father during Henry's childhood and the equally devastating "death" or absence of the heavenly Father (the loss that causes Henry's consuming preoccupation with his dicey metaphysical status) blend almost seamlessly into the
deaths of critical social values--love, compassion, equality, honesty--that characterize the nuclear, cold war, hyperindustrialized age in which Henry finds himself.

Elsewhere, I have examined in more detail Berryman's extended development of Henry as a case of what Kohut calls "disintegration anxiety," focusing on poems like Song 137, where Henry glibly observes that "things are going to pieces," and Song 311, where the function of Henry's/Berryman's poetry in the symbolic resolution of that anxiety is suggested by the line, "The pieces sat up & wrote." Here, I want to refer briefly to those causative factors in Henry's disintegration complex that might be conceptualized in terms of the increasing disciplinarity of twentieth-century culture, eventually relating those disciplinary forces to the Kohutian model of self pathology. While Henry is unnerved by the threats of a militarized, nuclear, and ecologically deteriorating age, his dream-work also reflects a sort of grim unease precipitated by the more insidious forces of alienation in society. There is, for example, the pervasive disciplinarity evidenced by Henry's frequent paranoia about a carceral network in which he is always at risk of being criminalized--caught, tried, imprisoned, executed--and a surveillance network in which there is always the threat of being watched, often by the police. What Henry feels as the pressures of an intense effort to control the modern
subject, I would argue, are manifested in distorted dream form in poems like Song 12, which weaves together intimations of surveillance, illegality, and execution; Song 101, a dream in which a vague police presence combines with a vision of universal insanity and incarceration to evoke a sense of "total LOSS" and of the "absolute disappearance of continuity and love"; and Song 95, where such themes converge in the shape of a single police officer whose surly gaze reduces Henry to a Kafkaesque insect and provokes his most psychotic criminal fantasies.

The atmosphere of disciplinary order and morality is perhaps only a function of the culture of commodification and technologization that persistently threatens to reduce full human identity and erode spirituality. Henry is particularly irked by his complete subjection, even as a poet, to the labor, wage, and production-driven economic system. He articulates the threat of what Marxist theory might call the modern rationalization of the subject--and what Kohut noted as the effects of "industrialization" (Restoration 270)--with images like the "pinched chest" and the "thinky death" of Song 10, the implied "rat race" and the hypertechnical social science that reduces human beings to machines in Song 13, and the strange forces of mechanization that threaten spirituality when they invade the "Temples" of Songs 73 and 99. So too, the intensive labors and economic imperatives of a rampant capitalism
leave Henry sweating throughout the book to earn enough money, pay bills, consume goods, and shell out taxes; noncommodifiable matters of the "fathomless heart" (10) like the writing of poetry, for which he is paid nothing (67), must take a back seat to the pecuniary exigency of teaching: he "taught & taught & taught / ...to mollify one creditor / or another... // [mostly]...the grindstone & the nose / had it, & him..." (211).

Though the profound racialization of U.S. society is not, finally, a central concern of the poems, it recurs often enough to be considered an important feature of the social "conditions" that are putting Henry out of joint. The "race bigotry" (24), segregationism (60 and 68), and ultimate commodification of humanity of which they are a legacy (273), decried in several Songs, are, indeed, closely tied to the tendencies toward criminalization and economic rationalization mentioned above. Of course, as I suggested in chapter 1, the tendencies of a disciplinary society to criminalize and to commodify the bodies of (to convert into pure labor) certain segments of the population probably played a critical historical role in the racialization of the U.S. population, but Henry tends to reproduce this channel for the production of "race" rather than subvert it, frequently adopting a mask of "blackness" for his own sense of himself as a moral transgressor and as a purely economic subject. It is precisely this ambivalent
relation to "race" that I want to examine in greater
detail—along with the Songs that critique bigotry—below.
In any case, this sense of racialization is only a
particularly violent—and visible—component of the social
context of alienation underlying what we might think of as
Henry's narcissistic personality disorder. For Henry, as
for "tragic man"—Kohut's iconic modern sufferer of the
narcissistic disorder—a comprehensive environment of
empathic and relational disjunctures is experienced as an
outright fragmentation of the self and results in a
desperate, compensatory need to "perform" one's own self-
presence.6

At the core of the narcissistically damaged
configuration that includes Henry's well-remarked rage,
paranoia, hypochondria and compulsive oral and phallic
preoccupations, I am suggesting, is a basic structural
deficiency of the self. Eventually, I want to read Henry's
condition, and his minstrelsy, in terms of Kohut's
formulation of the fragmentation of the self as a
"splitting off" of fundamental libidinal and narcissistic
sectors of the self from the "central" personality
(Analysis 183-85). I want to begin, however, by focusing
on his condition as an instance of the comprehensive
disorganization and "precariousness" of self-experience
that Kohut also describes (Restoration 103-5), a total loss
of the self that can result in the former splitting
tendency as a defensive mechanism. Henry, with his
current dreams that "things are going to pieces" (Song
137), suffers from what Kohut terms "disintegration
anxiety": "the dread of the loss of his self--the
fragmentation of and estrangement from his body and mind in
space, the breakup of the sense of his continuity in time"
(Restoration 105).

Henry's tendency to "come to pieces joint by joint,"
already noted in Song 140, first manifests itself in Song
8, which describes a similar progressive fragmentation of
the self and the body. Here, as with the analytical social
science of Song 13, which reduces Henry to a machine
(which, appropriately, falls apart), an indeterminate
"they" destroy the spiritual levels of experience and
reduce identity solely to its bodily manifestation:

They blew out his loves, his interests. 'Underneath,'
(they called in iron voices) 'understand,
is nothing. So there.'

...They lifted off
his covers till he showed, and cringed & pled
to see himself less.
They installed mirrors till he flowed...

The sense of extreme objectification registered here is
linked to a literal disintegration of the body, for not
only does Henry "flow" when surrounded by the mirrors which
force him to objectify himself, but the "they" also engage
in a progressive removal of Henry's teeth, hair, eyes, and
"crotch." While the "iron" voices certainly evoke forces
of technologization, most signifiers in Berryman's "dream-work" are overdetermined and, within the context of the book as a whole, I would read the cryptic "they" in Song 8 as a figure of authority in general; it encompasses not only the enforcement of the industrialized body-as-subject and the threat of total surveillance, but also, to place such social forces within Kohut's post-Freudian paradigm, the interpellative power of the superego. Indeed, in a discussion of how both workplace and parental denials of the "total self" can destroy one's sense of self-cohesion, Kohut suggests a direct link between the fragmentation of the self and the kind of threatening but indistinct "voices" of authority that Berryman evokes here:

The cold voices...which the paranoiac often reports as commenting on aspects of his behavior, details of his looks, etc., are perhaps to be understood not only as the criticism of a projected superego but also as the projected expression of a feeling of fragmentation which arose as a result of the patient's insufficiently developed or declining psychic capacity to maintain a solid cathexis of the self. (Analysis 121-22)

Henry's own crisis of subjectivity, as we shall see, is consistently played out within a disciplinary context set by such projected voices of authority.

Throughout The Dream Songs, Henry seems inordinately obsessed with damage to his bodily integrity. In Songs 42 and 65 the focus of this anxiety is a damaged ankle, while Songs 163-70 bemoan a broken arm in particular and a breaking body in general. Elsewhere, Henry has nightmare
visions of being pursued and bitten by the dentist's drill (Song 185) and of having his left leg "sawed off / at the knee," leaving him to continue life as a "peg-leg" (Song 319). Many of these references conflate bodily mutilation as a concrete "verbalization" for an otherwise indescribable state of identity anxiety (Restoration 103) with the more specific anxiety of bodily deterioration leading toward death, as in the Opus Posthumous Songs of Book 4, where Henry actually imagines himself to be dead and buried. In the first of these, there is "something bizarre about Henry": portions of his "subject body" (a phrase that correlates well with Kohut's references to what we experience as a "body-self") are being "slowly sheared / off" as he becomes "smaller & smaller": "Henry's parts were fleeing" (Song 78). In Song 81, "they" are again at work, removing various pieces of Henry's now buried body. Finally, imagining the worms of the grave to be at hand, Henry alludes to a perceived failure or lack which lies at the heart of his fragmentation: "I am--I should be held together by-- / but I am breaking up" (Song 85).

In these and similar references to the absence of some outside agent as a structuring device, the role of personal and developmental narcissistic injuries in the etiology of Henry's disintegration anxiety become more evident, taking their place alongside the social factors I have focused on so far. At the foundation of Kohutian self psychology is
the theory that the development of a balanced and realistically structured sense of self is dependent on the presence of properly empathic "self-objects" which serve both as approving mirrors for the self's inherent narcissism and as idealized images of identity which the self can internalize as the basis for its own structure. If these self-objects—particularly in the case of parental self-objects during the crucial developmental years—are unempathic, unrealistically admiring, or absent altogether, and the mirroring and idealizing functions are thus disrupted, there is a tendency for the self to split or fragment resulting in narcissistic disorders like disintegration anxiety. This framework has considerable explanatory value for The Dream Songs, in which Henry's representations of both his maternal and paternal imagos are deeply troubled. Much of his anxiety clearly revolves around a single traumatic failure of paternity: the suicide of his father, who, when he "shot his heart out in a Florida dawn" (Song 384), "wiped out [Henry's] childhood" (Song 143). This abandonment is Henry's most insistent complaint, and is often directly associated, as when he links the broken ankle of Song 42 directly to the memory of his father's corpse, with his anxiety about a decaying bodily structure. And though, in one instance, Henry makes a somewhat forced effort to idealize the image of his mother (Song 100), even then the homage is confusedly and
tellingly interfused with the orality of his alcoholism; in its other appearances the maternal imago is at best ambivalent, at worst extremely threatening--she is "the armed mother" of the night, "with her knives" (212).

The identity crisis precipitated by both modern conditions and "self-object failures" (Kohut, Restoration 190) is represented in The Dream Songs as a tension between grandiose assertions of autonomy and self-presence--captured in Henry's repeated recourse to rhetorical constructions beginning with an emphatic "I am"--and anxiety-ridden meditations on the fragmentation of that "I"--literalized in his recurrent idiom of "going to pieces." In song 195 Henry evokes the psychological paradigm I have outlined in connecting his disintegration directly to his father's critical absence: "I stalk my mirror down this corridor / my pieces litter. Oklahoma, sore / from my great loss leaves me." Shattered by the loss of his father (who lived and was buried in Oklahoma), Henry seeks the mirror--the self-object--that might keep his tenuous self-structure from "breaking up." The poem concludes, however, with a desperate effort to deny the reality of his father's suicide and a hopeful vision of the reconstruction of the self and the body: "All my pieces kneel and we all scream: / History's Two-legs [the father's corpse] was a heartless dream." Instead, Henry imagines, "reality is [feasts] // & reskinned knuckles & forgiveness
This poetic symbolization of a reconstituted self is crucial because, as I want to show, it is precisely through poetry, and through manipulation of the various poetic masks that include minstrelsy, that Henry quiets his screaming pieces by making them sing: the songs themselves become the "dreams," the mirror—a sort of artistic self-object—that symbolically resolve the horror of identity fragmentation. In these lines, where Henry dreams himself whole, we see literalized the process by which Henry the poet—long noted as an autobiographical simulacrum of Berryman the poet—experiences through representation the solace of moving from "I am in pieces" to "I am."8

Indeed, Henry's ability to work toward such symbolic reconstitutions of his "I" suggests a modicum of psychological health; the condition represented in The Dream Songs, even if we consider Henry's alcoholism, is perhaps not so uncontrolled or debilitating as to be categorized as "diseased" along the lines of some of the more serious cases discussed by Kohut. In this regard, it is important to note that Kohut views the continuum between a narcissistic cathexis of the self (Henry's "I am"), on the one hand, and a tendency to experience fragments (drives, sectors, imagos of others, archaic versions) of the self in isolation (Henry's "going to pieces"), on the
other, not only as a clinical paradigm for psychotherapeutic analysis but also as the fundamental structure of everyday psychological life (Sussman 66). While Berryman's poems gesture toward a restoration of wholeness through creative, narcissistic performances of the self, then, it is nevertheless Berryman's evocation of a fragmenting self in a fragmenting world that is perhaps his most lasting contribution to modern poetry. In Song 137, in the midst of a horrific sequence of songs (134-45) that evoke oral and anal obsession, environmental disaster, bodily disintegration, violent rage, massive failures of paternal and divine nurturing, and--repeatedly--the suicide of his father, Henry sounds the definitive lament of "tragic man": "I don't understand this dream...why, / things are going to pieces." Henry in pieces is Henry at his most representative of the modern condition and at his most poetic, but I am most interested in the fact that Henry in pieces is also Henry at his most "black." Having outlined a Kohutian model for Berryman's crisis of the subject, I now want to examine exactly how the representation of "blackness" functions as one of the strategies, with profoundly contradictory results, in Henry's/Berryman's symbolic resolution of the conflicts inherent in that crisis.
"I am the blackt-out man"

We can begin to see the psychic function of Berryman's minstrel mask by examining Dream Song 22, which seems to depict in particularly explicit fashion what Kohut referred to as the "crucial psychological oscillations between the cohesive and the fragmented self" (Restoration 77):

I am the little man who smokes & smokes.
I am the girl who does know better but.
I am the king of the pool.
I am so wise I had my mouth sewn shut.
I am a government official & a goddamned fool.
I am a lady who takes jokes.

I am the enemy of the mind.
I am the auto salesman and love you.
I am a teenage cancer, with a plan.
I am the blackt-out man.
I am the woman powerful as a zoo.
I am two eyes screwed to my set, whose blind--

It is the Fourth of July.
Collect: while the dying man,
forgone by you creator, who forgives,
is gasping 'Thomas Jefferson still lives'
in vain, in vain, in vain.
I am Henry Pussy-cat! My whiskers fly.

There are several possibilities for making sense of what is going on in this typically wry and cryptic Dream Song. Following Denis Donoghue's emphasis, in one of the earliest critical approaches to The Dream Songs, on Berryman's technique of breaking the "egotistical sublimity" of his poet's voice into various "voices" or "fragments," we might think of the first twelve lines of the poem as the voices of the others, especially "victims," for whom Henry is so fond of speaking (Donoghue 24). Donoghue also noted the
similarity of this "voicing" to the Yeatsian "mask," and Jerome Mazzaro has more schematically outlined Berryman's use of such "masks" as a means for defining the self negatively, by assuming versions of the nonself. As Mazzaro suggests, in a Lacanian, relational world these various masks and roles literally constitute, though tenuously, the "I." From this perspective, we might formulate Song 22 as a construction, through the assumption of a series of "masks" or "identifications with or oppositions to another," of a "never fully realized" "image of the self" (Mazzaro 131): "I am Henry Pussy-cat!" By virtue of its very otherness, this "I am" already contains the grounds of its own disintegration: "My whiskers fly."9 Similarly, Song 22 illustrates Paul Mariani's description of the thoroughly Whitmanian "I" of The Dream Songs: the "I" as a conduit that fills up and then pours out, singing with "the range of voices we have come to identify with Henry" (Mariani, "Lost" 223). In this view, the opening lines of the song evoke a modernized, foreshortened, Berrymanesque version of a Whitmanian catalogue, a listing of what Berryman, in his own insightful essay on "Song of Myself," called the poetic "'I's' identifications outward" (Freedom 237).

While this identificatory poetics is a crucial component of Berryman's assumption of "blackness," I want to approach that dynamic by first reading Song 22 in terms of the more
psychoanalytic structure of subjectivity that I have outlined above. From the viewpoint of Henry's disintegration anxiety, the poem reads as a literal representation—in Henry's typical dream idiom—of the oscillation between his regressive sense of nonidentity, or at least splintered identity, on the one hand, and his hypernarcissistic assertion of complete identity (poetically, a sort of egotistical sublime), on the other. Within the limits of this single poem, that is, the poetic persona modulates from an undifferentiated series of self-images or assumed personae to the single, emphatic declaration of self-presence and autonomy of "I am Henry Pussy-cat!", and back again to the bodily fragmentation of the closing image.

Song 22, we might say, is indicative of the dramatic oscillations Kohut ascribes to the narcissistically disordered self: such personalities fluctuate between grandiosity, overexcited exhibitionism, and overidentification with an idealized imago, on the one hand (the posturing of "I am Henry Pussycat!", the identification with "the king of the pool," the invocation of the nation's idealized founding "fathers"), and a depressive, ashamed, hypochondriacal preoccupation with the disintegration and "deadness" of the self and with its isolated fragments, on the other (the "flying" off of body parts, the interest in the powerlessness stressed by the
deaths of Jefferson and Adams on the same day, the
preoccupation with orality). With the authority of an
absent, unforgiving God looming in the background, the
persona incorporates a series of disconnected images of
"self" from the external environment ("objects") to prop up
or stand for its own faltering psychic structure. These
imagos, moreover, tellingly reemphasize the narcissistic
damage: they are, by turns, obsessively oral, grandiose,
powerless, ruthlessly manipulative, and helplessly
manipulated. Indeed, the series of voices that seem to
speak through Henry's voice in the first twelve lines of
Song 22 themselves bespeak the very oscillations of
narcissistic disorder: if the first sounds helplessly
addictive and oral incorporative, the fourth pretends to a
self-sufficiency so total as to deny even the possibility
of incorporation or the disruption of the bodily schema by
closing off the oral orifice altogether; if the "king of
the pool" is positively regal in his sense of grandiosity,
the "woman powerful as a zoo" seems ironically disempowered
and caged; if "the enemy of the mind" and the disingenuous
auto salesman suggest ruthless refusal to recognize the
full humanity of others, the disembodied eyes of line 12
seem helplessly manipulated by the unilateral power of a
television set that cannot acknowledge even the presence,
much less the humanity, of those it interpellates.
Following such a reading, we might well interpret "the blackt-out man" of line 10 as a heavy drinker lapsed into an alcoholic dead zone, an instance of the drunken memory "blackout" noted elsewhere in *The Dream Songs* by critics, like Lewis Hyde and George F. Wedge, who have written on the significance of alcoholism in the book. An equally compelling reading within the context of the themes developed throughout the book, however, is to view this as a reference to blackface and, thereby, to the "man" whose full humanity has been most comprehensively "blackt-out" in the U.S., the "man" with "black" skin. In fact, a careful analysis of the role played by the "blacked up" man throughout *The Dream Songs* suggests that these two readings are not contradictory: my analysis of Berryman's deployment of "race" suggests precisely the complementarity of the alcoholic "blackt-out man" and the minstrel "blackt-out man" in his poetry, and it is on the psychology and politics of this identification that the balance of my study will focus.

Dream Song 22 provides a condensed figuration, then, of one of the important structuring devices of the entire book: Henry's dual tendencies toward an overly unified, autonomous, and grandiose identity and toward a looseness of identity that allows him to indulge the libidinality of the body, play multiple roles, don various masks, and identify with others whom he views as damaged or
dispossessed. One of Henry's "roles" is assuredly the manic substance abuser; one of his masks, blackface; one of his imagined identifications, the racially oppressed. All of these are encapsulated in "the blackt-out man" of line 10, but his placement within an undifferentiated series of such self-images helps us to understand how Henry's "minstrelsy" fits within what I have referred to as the poem's larger crisis of the subject--how it relates, that is, to the "I am Henry Pussy-cat!" of line 18. Blackface is Henry's favorite mask for the "disintegration products" of a fragmenting self (Kohut, Restoration 119): autoerotic drive fixations, a preoccupation with the mutilation and deterioration of the body, and exhibitionistic "performances" of self-presence.

The phrase "I am Henry Pussy-cat!", which I am relating to the grandiose pole of the narcissistically damaged self, is one in a series of "I am" refrains enunciated by Henry. John Haffenden has identified this construction as a major, recurrent structuring device in the sequence as a whole, relating it to Henry's desire for a self-sufficiency as complete as that expressed by the "I am that I am" of the Old Testament God of the Jews, and opposing it to Henry's fears of psychic and bodily disintegration (Haffenden 96-97). If, in Song 141, for example, Henry declares--in admitted emulation of Yahweh--that a self-interested "I am" shall be his credo, we might view it as a direct response
to the intense disintegration anxiety expressed in Song 140, where, the reader will remember, Henry was "coming to pieces joint by joint."

The frequency of Berryman's references to this crisis of the subject in his long sequence is perhaps obscured by his oneiric method, which employs a sort of dream symbolism for its elements: as often as Henry declares "I am" or dreams of withdrawal to the stability of the confines of a tree (9, 10), tower (140), citadel (372), house (163, 357, 376), temple (73, 102), cathedral (161), monastery (370), "centre" (221, 368), or body, he imagines his self swarming with "others" or falling from the tree (9, 57), leaving the house (376), flowing (8, 137), leaking (10), spilling (43), pouring out (131, 221), excreting (134), bleeding (176), radioactively decaying (51), or--in a plethora of nightmarish ways--disintegrating. The dream imagery of Song 137 is thus typical in its representation of a subject--symbolized by "heroes' bodies" and a temple--in crisis: the bodies are collapsing, the temple is knocked apart, Henry's "honey" is "flowing off," and "things are going to pieces" generally. Indeed, almost everything that makes The Dream Songs so famously difficult, from the plurality of voices to the fractured syntax to the interruptions of minstrel dialogue itself, can be referred to this disruption of the subject, to Berryman's stated sense of himself as "a strange man, not unitary like other
people." Yet, in the same journal entry, Berryman goes on to declare, "I am really Henry Pussycat." Song 22, we might say, versifies this crisis as a tension between the powerful, heroic stand of "I am Henry Pussy-cat!" and the "pieces" of its first twelve lines.

It is through poetry, in short, that both Berryman and his surrogate, Henry, allay the anxieties associated with their consciousness of impending disintegration. Song 311 is explicit, for example about the relationships among Henry's libidinal drive fixations, his disintegration, and his art:

Hunger was constitutional with him, women, cigarettes, liquor, need need need until he went to pieces. The pieces sat up & wrote. They did not heed their piecedom but kept very quietly on among the chaos.

While Denis Donoghue is quite right to find in these lines an "ingenious" poetic technique in which the poet, "living in various degrees of chaos, dissociates himself; allowing to each fragment its corresponding voice" (27), I believe that only a psychoanalytic model like Kohut's can explain the strange association here of Henry's object hungers with that poetic technique. For Kohut, the intensification of narcissistic and autoerotic drives (orality, sexuality, aggression, exhibitionism, etc.) is a "disintegration product" released when broader configurations of experience are destroyed (Restoration 119). Both the hypercathexis of
fragments of the self and the exaggeration of assertiveness through creative expression, in this view, are compensatory modes through which a disintegrating self desperately attempts to experience itself as whole.

We cannot fully comprehend how the use of blackface fits into this psychopoetic dynamic, however, without taking into account the moralizing and normalizing valuations that are attached to such subjective states by the dictates of the social order. The ambivalent moral, sexual, and corporeal conflicts that are tied up in Henry's oscillations between "I am" and "I am in pieces" are nowhere in greater evidence than Song 43, where the oscillation is figured as a polarity between the interpellative imperative to "Be...consist" and his libidinal, fragmenting tendencies. In the song, an intense sense of transgression and criminality is attached to the fragmentation of subjectivity when Henry imagines himself to be on trial not only for his uncontrolled adultery, smoking, and drinking, but also, literally, for his failure to maintain proper masculine unity:

Be.
I warned him, of a summer night: consist,
consist. Ex-wives roar.
Further, the Crown holds that they spilt himself,
splitting his manward chances, to his shame,
my lords, & our horror.

Behind, oh worst lean backward them who bring
un-charges: hundreds & one, children,
the pillars & the sot.
A phalanx of social authority figures (banks, cops, lawyers, "the Crown," lords), reinscribing the earlier projected "iron" voices of the superego, bring charges here against Henry for spilling or splitting his "manward" ego, a dispersal of self doubly significative as his masking and roleplaying (he is guilty of being both "hundreds & one," of the pronominal confusion of "they spilt himself") and as his spilling his seed illicitly, spawning various illegitimate children (a concern of Henry's expressed on several occasions, including in the song that immediately follows this one). His other transgressions of the moralized, unified, economically functional subject are, of course, his libidinal indulgences of cigarettes ("the pillars") and booze ("the sot"). At the end of the poem Henry admits his guilt and finds uncertain solace in using his dissipation as the occasion for making poetry.

We might say that Henry's "crisis," then, is not reducible to a simple effort to secure the boundaries of the "I" and its bodily structure against the threat of disruption: clearly, he finds both a conflicted pleasure and an ambivalent use in the disruptions of the subject. The pleasure lies in finding release from and/or manipulating the strictures of an imposed social subject position, and has much to do with the sexual and oral preoccupations--feasting, smoking, drinking--that surface in these poems; the use is nothing less than poetry itself,
through which, similarly, Henry gains both a symbolic power over and a release from the static subject. Indeed, the voices of authority and the sense of transgression they bring to the fragmented moment of Henry's subjectivity suggest we should read the odd confluence of themes located there—excessive indulgence of bodily appetites, disintegration, mask wearing, the slipping in and out of various identities—not only in terms of the mischanneled narcissism of self-fragmentation, but also in terms of what cultural critics Peter Stallybrass and Allon White have outlined as the carnivalized transgression or subversion of the socially disciplined subject. Stallybrass and White posit a historical repression of the "'grotesque body' of carnival by the emergent middle and professional classes from the Renaissance onwards"; thus, "a fundamental ritual order of western culture came under attack--its feasting, violence, drinking, processions, fairs, wakes, rowdy spectacle and outrageous clamour were subject to surveillance and repressive control" (176). The outcome of this social repression, they argue, was a dramatic return in the discourse and psychology of the individual of a wide-ranging "thematics of carnival pleasure" (182): not only the feasting, drinking, and "grotesque aspects of the body" (183), but also clownism, nursery behavior, sexual scenes, pantomiming (175), and masking (183).
I would argue that a crucial--and much neglected--component of Berryman's dream-work is a similar neurotic or hysterical return of those carnival elements repressed from the "manward" subject of the twentieth century by the forces of social authority and surveillance who bring their charges of dissipation against Henry in Song 43.15 Henry's incessant concerns with the body, its fluids and orifices, and with slipping in and out of a series of poetic identities--the "wide cast of characters" mentioned by Berryman in his 1968 prefatory note--are thus not only products of anxiety but also represent a carnivalesque transgression of the well-disciplined subject. Henry's half-comic, half-guilty revelries of fragmentation share the function, and many of the features, of the carnival impulse theorized by Stallybrass and White:

It attacks the authority of the ego (by rituals of degradation and by the use of masks and costume) and flaunts the material body as a pleasurable grotesquerie...it denies with a laugh the ludicrous pose of autonomy adopted by the subject...at the same moment as it re-opens the body-boundary, the closed orifices of which normally guarantee the repressive mechanism itself. (183-84)

The rationalized, "wise" character of Song 22 may sew its mouth shut to maintain the integrity of its body-boundary, but the sheer number of masks that the "I am" is capable of wearing--including the smoker and the alcoholic "black-out man"--subverts the pose of egoistic self-sufficiency.
Centrally involved in the pleasures, the terrors, and the symbolic resolutions of Henry's experiences of self-fragmentation, then, is none other than "the blackt-out man." As a racially oppressed Other in Song 22, he fits in among Henry's series of Whitmanian identifications, located in the gaps or disruptions of the subject; as an alcoholic "blackt-out" in drunken revelry, he figures the carnivalized obliteration of the ego through the total opening of its body-boundary to pleasurable intake; and, as Henry in blackface, he encompasses both the masking through which Henry can be both "hundreds & one" and the pantomimic acting out through which Henry can safely indulge the pleasures of the body. The "minstrel" of Song 231, for example, seems directly connected to the smoking, drinking, self-splitting transgressor and poet of Song 43, since he is again on trial, about to be punished by "them," both, it seems, for doing "bad" and for his poetic activity. In this later song, closely connected to Song 43--they were written just weeks apart--Henry worries that, if punished for his transgressions, "He'll lose his minstrelsy."16

I am suggesting that "blacking up" has a crucial function in the larger crisis of the subject that pervades these poems: it is one of Henry's codes for the fragmentation of the cohesive self, in Kohutian terms, or the subversion of the bourgeois subject, to apply the social approach of Stallybrass and White. Berryman's use
of blackface thus parallels what the latter theorists describe as a

reconstruction of the idea of carnival as the culture of the Other. This act of disavowal on the part of the emergent bourgeoisie, with its sentimentalism and disgust, made carnival into the festival of the Other. It encoded all that which the proper bourgeois must strive not to be in order to preserve a stable and 'correct' sense of self.

Minstrel performance in its original form, as Lott's analysis shows, was precisely a production of the discipline-subverting pantomimic carnivalesque in the form of such a "reconstruction of the idea of carnival as the culture of the Other." Berryman simply resurrects this politically overdetermined, racializing cultural mode as the characteristic pose of his twentieth-century "tragic man." That is, whether Henry is pleasurable transgressing the parameters of his acceptable identity--white, adult, law-abiding, economically sound, family man--or agonizing the possibility of its complete collapse, and whether he does so through the libidinal pursuits of sexuality and substance consumption, or through the self-representations and masked roleplaying of the poet, he has a distinct tendency to do so in blackface.

"Find out about the Mr. Bones business"

In his crucial 1958 essay "Change the Joke and Slip the Yoke," Ralph Ellison described precisely such a disavowal of the negative and chaotic side of the "white folk mind"
and a correlative transference of the carnival to the "black" Other as the cultural mechanism at the heart of blackface performance in the United States:

Because these things are bound up with their notion of chaos it is almost impossible for many whites to consider questions of sex, women, economic opportunity, the national identity, historic change, social justice—even the "criminality" implicit in the broadening of freedom itself—without summoning malignant images of black men into consciousness....the Negro is reduced to a negative sign that usually appears in a comedy of the grotesque and the unacceptable. As Constance Rourke has made us aware, the action of the early minstrel show—with its Negro-deprived choreography, its ringing of banjos and rattling of bones, its voices cackling jokes in pseudo-Negro dialect, with its nonsense songs, its bright costumes and sweating performers—constituted a ritual of exorcism.

(Shadow 48)

This theory of a ritualistic comedy might be directly applied to the rampant sexuality and drinking of the sweating, grotesque body; the wild dancing, music and costuming; the "pseudo-Negro" dialect; and the insinuations of economic and social transgression that tend to characterize Henry's moments of blacking up, but before examining this aspect of Berryman's work more closely I want to place it within the context of an important qualifying observation. What I find most interesting about the possible relevance of this passage to The Dream Songs is that Berryman, during the earliest phase of their composition, almost certainly must have read it.

Ellison's comments on minstrelsy, written in response to Stanley Edgar Hyman's assertion of the African American folkloric background of minstrel performance, appeared in
the spring 1958 edition of Partisan Review, one of the central publishing organs in Berryman's literary and intellectual career. Berryman's own publishing relationship with Partisan Review was long and involved, including the 1953 debut of his long poem Homage to Mistress Bradstreet in its pages and the publication of several of his critical essays on modern poetry. The poetry editor of the review from 1939 to 1953 was Delmore Schwartz, perhaps Berryman's closest friend and the man whose death is elegized in almost messianic terms by the "solid block of agony" (Song 157) of Dream Songs 146-159. Most importantly, Berryman's own poem "American Lights, Seen Off From Abroad" appeared in the same spring 1958 issue that contained Ellison's essay. Berryman was both a regular reader of Partisan Review and, we can guess, a particularly interested reader of this issue, which contained not only his own work but the essay by Ellison, the long-time literary acquaintance whom he later called "one of the best writers in the country" (Plotz 9).

My hunch that Berryman read "Change the Joke and Slip the Yoke" when it appeared and found it to be of significant interest for his own current creative project seems to gain support from the fact that there is no record of minstrelsy being a part of Berryman's evolving plans for his long poem from 1955, when the first Dream Song was written, until late in 1958, just a few months after the
discussion of minstrelsy in the *Partisan Review* appeared. During the final months of 1958, John Haffenden's study of Berryman's notes suggests, the first poems employing conversations between Henry and a murky "interlocutor" figure who calls Henry "Mr. Bones" were composed; they would eventually become Dream Songs 26, 67, 75, 76, 77, and 217 (Haffenden 45-46, 158). Indeed, despite a voluminous archive of the poet's manuscripts, notes, and later remarks, all of which document the remarkably complex process of shifting conceptualizations and structuralizing devices for the sequence that characterized these early years of composition, we have no record that Berryman considered a minstrel show effect as such a structural device until January, 1959, "a date from which it may be inferred that Mr. Bones and his friend, the interlocutor, had not before figured very consciously in his plan" (Haffenden 46). Berryman's note to himself that month is suggestive of the newness of the minstrel idea--"Find out about the Mr. Bones business"--as is the next reference recorded by Haffenden: "where does 'Bones' stuff begin?" (Haffenden 46-47).

This is not to deny the significance of other sources and precursors which have been suggested as critical influences on Berryman's minstrel impulse. Arpin has convincingly connected Berryman's deployment of "black" voices to his knowledge of the French Symbolists: for the
revitalizing effect of infusing poetry with a racialized "low" diction Berryman had the model of Rimbaud's "nigger" persona and Corbière's penchant for "talking negro" (Arpin 7, 75-77). Much closer to the time and spirit of Berryman's own work is Conrad Aiken's *Ushant*, which, as Davis has suggested in her intriguing reading of Berryman's copy of the work (and the notations he made in it in 1955), contains a possible seed for the idea of using the minstrel show as a representational format for the contrapuntal "dance, dialogue or dialectic" of consciousness ("Ushant" 290-91). And of course, Berryman's definite—though apparently not very extensive—reliance on Carl Wittke's *Tambo and Bones* for information about the history and format of minstrelsy has been well-noted. Whatever the relative weight of such influences, however, only Ellison's theory of blackface as "negative sign" could have stressed to Berryman the actual historical psychological role of blackface imagery in U.S. "white" consciousness—"a symbolic role basic," as Ellison put it, "to the underlying drama of American society" (Shadow 47). Berryman's new sense of this basic symbolic role may have been the immediate spark to a decision, late in 1958, to develop the minstrel theme as a way of staging the internal otherness—but especially carn(IV)al Otherness—within the identity of what he intended to be a representative "white" American—and to revise even poems written before that decision to
evoke the new carnivalizing, exorcizing, masking Other "bound up with [Henry's] notion of chaos": that lurked at Henry's fragmented pole: line 10 of Dream Song 22, originally penned on July 4, 1958, as "I am the shuddering man," would only later become "I am the blackt-out man" (Haffenden 89).

If Berryman was indeed familiar with the ideas in "Change the Joke and Slip the Yoke," it certainly affects how we assess his own subsequent creation of a sort of derivative minstrel show and possibly clarifies Ellison's recollections of the strange phone calls with which I began this chapter. It is hard to imagine a cultural scholar of Berryman's thoroughness reading Ellison's essay and almost immediately proceeding to unselfconsciously write poems that trifle with the chaotic, sexual, carnivalesque, and marginally criminal borders of "white" middle-class identity yet disavow them by, in part, "summoning malignant images of black men into consciousness" (Ellison, Shadow 48). If Berryman knew the essay, that is, it is also possible that he intended his manipulation of minstrel devices as a representation of minstrelsy, and how (he knew Ellison had said) it functioned in white culture, not, in mere reenactment of the original minstrel show, as a naive and racializing representation of "blackness." Similarly, it seems unlikely that Berryman would have called Ellison with the presumptuous intention of verifying that the
styles he was incorporating sounded like "black" voices, but rather more likely that he now conceptualized Ellison as an authority on the "pseudo-Negro dialect" of minstrel performance that Ellison mentions in the essay. If this indeed was the tenor of the phone calls about "dialect," then Ellison's description of those conversations may reflect what both conversants acknowledged as the ambiguous status of a recorded cultural language--"pseudo-Negro" blackface--rather than the outright contradiction that his shifting references to "dialect," "Afro-American speech," and "minstrelsy" seems at first to suggest.

The actual political effects of Berryman's minstrel device will, I hope, be better judged by looking at the examples I discuss below, but I am suggesting that the "blackt-out man" and the "pseudo-Negro dialect" that erupt within the fragmented consciousness of Berryman's typical white U.S. citizen should not be viewed simply as instances of naive racialism, romantic or otherwise. At worst they reflect what was, from the moment of their composition, the racial ambivalence borne of a conscious questioning of the meaning of the "black" image in the "white" mind. Berryman's various, and ostensibly contradictory, uses of racial content in The Dream Songs are more productively viewed in terms of the ambivalent identifications of Berryman's racial milieu and of Henry's crisis of the subject.
"The blackt-out man," most indicatively, is not simply a racialized figure of carnival but the voice of one of Henry's sympathetic identifications as well: the racially oppressed. As I noted above, several Dream Songs use "black" voices to develop a social critique of racist practices and segregationist policies. In Song 60, for example, Henry convinces his unnamed friend that, despite the 1954 Brown vs. Board of Education ruling, racial denial of equal access remains the de facto law of the land. The poem also illustrates the typical format and diction of Henry's blackface dialogues with his interlocutor:

After eight years, be less dan eight percent, distinguish' friend, of coloured wif de whites in de School, in de Souf.
--Is coloured gobs, is coloured officers, Mr Bones. Dat's nuffin? --Uncle Tom, sweep shut yo mouf,
is million blocking from de proper job, de fairest houses & de churches eben.

Although this dialect "bears only a tangential relationship" to any actual spoken black English (Davis, Honey 33) and is not an accurate reproduction of even the language of minstrelsy--not even as it is reported in Berryman's ostensible source for such particulars, Wittke's Tambo and Bones--one can see immediately from the content here why early commentators like William Wasserstrom and J. M. Linebarger suggested that the Songs bespeak "the lives of mutilated men, American Negroes" (Wasserstrom 172) and suspected that they partake of political subversion and
even anti-racist satire. Wasserstrom went too far when he assumed, however, on the basis of a few grammatical irregularities and slurred diphthongs, that Berryman had somehow reproduced America's "black" voice and its suffering and its linguistic subversions, for a "straight" reading of this pseudo-dialect as "black," as Aldon Lynn Nielsen has noted, surely evinces more of demeaning racial insult than of empathetic interracial solidarity (141).

A reading that can begin to make sense of the ambiguous political positioning of this poetic voice, however—and here it is surely significant that sentimental identification with black suffering and anti-oppressive symbolism were integral parts of the linguistic distortions of the historical coon show (see Lott, Ch. 1)—is one that takes into account Berryman's possible acknowledgement—vis-à-vis the Ellison essay—of minstrelsy as a white representation of "blackness" and even of "race" as a discourse. Berryman "is not attempting to represent black speech," as Nielsen goes on to argue in distinguishing Berryman's use of such language from that of the many other modernist poets Nielsen critiques; rather, "this dialect is an enactment of the white mind playing at blackness within its system of stereotypes" (Nielsen 141). This perspective allows, I think, the content of Song 60, which bears an explicit critique of social oppression, to stand in consonance with its degenerative style, which bears
(potentially) an implicit critique of the very discursive racialization that makes such oppression possible. If this was part of Berryman's approach, then Arpin is making a defensible claim when he asserts that the epigraph of Wittke's nostalgic *Tambo and Bones*, "'Go in brack man, de day's yo' own," is ironized in its reappearance as one of the epigraphs to *The Dream Songs*. His description captures, nonetheless—and perhaps unintentionally—precisely the confused ambivalence that characterizes this nexus of Berryman's understanding of minstrelsy, his expropriation of "blackness," and his racial sympathies: "Wittke enjoyed this painful grotesque [Jim Crow] and all the white men who imitated him in fun; Henry identifies with him, and sees the desperate irony in the comedy, for to jump Jim Crow is to sing under torture" (Arpin 75).

In 1968 Berryman tried to summarize his use of the blackface device as a function of just such an identification with victims of racism. Asked why he chose to employ "the Negro dialect" in his sequence, Berryman clarified neither the definition of the dialect nor his understanding of minstrelsy, but explained his inflection of "blackness" as an extension of his effort, in his 1945 short story "The Imaginary Jew," to undermine the structure of racial bigotry by recognizing his own status as "imaginary Jew." Tellingly, his example of the inescapability of racial categorization for those it
victimizes was none other than his ostensible source for blackface credibility, Ralph Ellison:

...the Negro business--the blackface--is related to that. That is, I feel extremely lucky to be white, let me put it that way, so that I don't have that problem. Friends of mine--Ralph Ellison, for example, in my opinion one of the best writers in the country--he has the problem. He's black, and he and Fanny, wherever they go, they are black. (Plotz 9)

There is no reason to doubt either the sincerity or the political value of Berryman's social engagement here, yet his words also evoke all over again the ambiguity of Ellison's descriptions of the telephone calls--an ambiguity reiterated in many of the critical comments on the dialect--as to where "Negro" ends and "blackface" begins: does the inserted term "blackface" supply a correction of "Negro," an alternative phrasing, or a notation of his (self-conscious) "white" performance of "Negro"? I am not suggesting that we can definitively answer this question, but that Berryman was on some level problematizing the materiality or authenticity of "race" such questions assume, both by recognizing the very discursivity of "blackness" and by using "Mr. Bones" to gesture toward its emergence from his own construction of himself as "white."

This problematization provides much of the moral impetus of that earlier story, where we might substitute "black" for "Jew" to better grasp the meaning of "Mr. Bones" in Berryman's mind: "The imaginary [black] I was was as real
as the imaginary [black] hunted down, on other nights and days, in a real [black]" (Freedom 366).

Song 68 returns to Henry's identification with blacks who are victimized by a racist social order. In this poem, however, the minstrel format is gone and Henry has taken up the role of black blues artist, imagining that he is literally performing on stage with blues great Bessie Smith. Here the idiom is more understated and the evocation of a "blues" atmosphere is convincing, especially when the rowdy tenor of the "performance" gives way to the mournful blues lament of the final stanza, which recalls that Smith died when denied admittance to a whites-only emergency room after an auto accident. In the closing lines, Berryman ironically juxtaposes the rhetoric of love specific to the Christmas season--when he wrote the poem--with the prevailing segregation by "color" that led to Smith's death: "they all come hangin Christmas on some tree / after trees thrown out--sick-house's white birds' / black to the birds instead." In this instance, at least, it seems entirely possible that Berryman did depend on Ellison for verification of the blues voice and sensibility: Mariani reports that Berryman called Ellison about this poem and, when he sent Ellison a copy of 77 Dream Songs, inscribed it "Affectionally & with thanks for help on 68."
"Or keep so-called black & raise new hell"

Still, the social critique articulated in these lines is an extremely limited theme in The Dream Songs, broached in no more than five or six of the 385 songs (the blues theme is even more rare), and a closer look at the situation of Song 68--as it relates to other instances of "blacking up" that do not end in the same kind of political indignation--reveals a regressive, oppressive countervalence to what initially comes across as a politically progressive identification with "blackness." The ambience of Henry's performance as a "blues artist" evokes "strange horns," shouts, nightlife, and the excitement of a hot blues session: "the house is givin hell / to Yellow Dog, I blowin like it too / and Bessie always do..." The stimulating musical scene, that is, has the distinct flavor of a carnivalesque atmosphere that banishes the usual stresses and anxieties of work, life and death: "I feelin fair mysef, taxes & things / seem to be back in line, like everybody should / and nobody in the snow on call..." Not only is it unusual for the complaining Henry to be feeling "fair," but here two of his most frequent gripes--taxes and the deaths of friends--are in abeyance. (Based on Berryman's development of the theme of winter, I take "in the snow" to be a reference to death.) The significant point here is not that a night in a blues house would not or should not have such associations, for both the blacks
and whites who might enjoy them, but that Henry needs the blues atmosphere and its "blackness" to achieve them.

His "masked" participation in the blues performance thus hints at a tendency that is less benign in other Dream Songs, the tendency to make "carnival into the festival of the Other" (Stallybrass and White 178). Here, musical "blackness" "encode[s] all that which the proper bourgeois [tax-paying, reserved, hard-working] must strive not to be [loud, revelrous, free of social responsibilities] in order to preserve a stable and 'correct' sense of self" (Stallybrass and White 178). By assuming imaginary "blackness," Henry transgresses the usual parameters of white subjectivity and achieves imaginative resolution of the anxieties normally associated with those (disciplinary) parameters--without really endangering his sense of self. The complement of this carnivalization of the Other is of course the anxiety-ridden encroachment of musical "blackness" on the "white" subject, which both Stallybrass and White and Toni Morrison have illustrated by referring to a single incident involving a similar "black" musical "form of the modern carnivalesque scene" (Stallybrass and White 181) in Marie Cardinal's autobiographical novel Les Mots pour le Dire (1976). In the passage they cite, the first hysteria attack of Cardinal's extended psychological crisis is precipitated by a Louis Armstrong jazz concert which Cardinal perceives as so musically frenzied, so
uncontrolled, so intersubjectively physical as to cause the young French woman to be overcome with panic and a fear of death. As Morrison suggests Cardinal is using musical "blackness" for the literary "shorthand, the taken-for-granted assumptions" (Playing x) that make it figurative of the structure of her own subjective crisis: rushing from the concert in terror, she finds an objective correlative for her internal disintegration in a vision of a white camellia "svelte in appearance but torn apart inside" (quoted in Morrison, Playing vii). Like Henry, she is superficially unified, svelte and "white," but internally torn apart--and carnivalized, musical "blackness" is the signifier of her chaos.19

While Berryman's sympathetic use of a "blues" metaphor in Song 68 may have been inoffensive to Ellison, then, we must attend to the fact that the same musicality, dancing, physicality, and revelry obtain in numerous songs where the performance is explicitly minstrel in nature. This is to say that, despite Berryman's best intentions of both cross-racial identification and/or self-conscious inflection of the "sign" of minstrelsy within "white" U.S. identity, the overall effect of his representations slips into a carnivalization of the Other that reinforces racial difference. As Nielsen puts it, "It is difficult to speak in this dialect to a white audience without activating the entire racial image structure of our language" (142-43).
The psychology and politics of Henry's carnivalized transgression of his "white" subject through minstrelsy are perhaps most obvious in Dream Song 2, the premiere performance of blackface in the sequence and possibly the only song that draws specifically on the Wittke text. In the poem, titled "Big Buttons, Cornets: the advance," Henry, in blackface, is trying to resist the temptations of sexuality and alcohol:

The jane is zoned! no nightspot here, no bar there, no sweet freeway, and no premises for business purposes...

Arrive a time when all coons lose dere grip, but is he come? Le's do a hoedown, gal, one blue, one shuffle, if them is all you seem to require. Strip, ol banger, skip us we, sugar; so hang on one chaste evenin.


This is slippery poetic terrain to traverse, not least because there are several layers of reference structured into the content. The first level is Henry's present time, a holiday in November (1962, when Berryman was writing the poem) on which Henry mulls the legal closure of drinking establishments. Davis and Haffenden have suggested it is Thanksgiving (Davis, Honey 40), but the references to polls and voting in the final two lines strongly indicate Election Day, when bars are closed in reverence for that
crucial rite of U.S. civic life. The second level of reference is the traditional carnival trappings of the minstrel show, as described in Wittke: both the title and the holiday atmosphere of the first stanza refer, as Davis has shown, to Wittke's description of the traditional "parade" and costuming that signaled the "advance" of traveling minstrels when they arrived at each new town. The third level of reference, more internal to the sequence, involves Henry's ongoing struggle to put off the temptations of lust and drink in order to remain a "legal" and "good" wage-earner, householder, family man, and citizen--the dynamic of the socially disciplined subject as I have noted it with reference to Song 43. And a fourth, narrative level of meaning involves, as Davis again points out, Henry's sexual "advance" on a "jane" who, however, is "zoned"--off-limits to Henry's attentions and hence causing him to "hang on" to his morality and spend a "chaste evenin" instead. Skipping the "strip" and "ol banger," Henry settles for a dance.

There is a remarkable degree of oneiric condensation and displacement among these levels of reference, but it is precisely by attending to those entanglements that the political reading I intend comes clear. The structure of social authority which I have noted in other poems is almost the reason for this poem's existence, personified only by the "poll-cats" ("politicals"? poll monitors? poll
tax collectors?) who are "coming" in line seventeen, but implicit in the enforcement of legality and "zoning" that make up the poem's matrix. But condensed here into this broader sense of legal and political authority (recall Henry on trial in Song 43) are the moral "laws" against Henry's abuses of both alcohol and sexuality, the closing of bars in deference to governmental processes, the foreclosure of the "nightspot" revelry that prevails at Henry's blues appearance, the social reserve that the minstrels disrupted with their parade revelry, and even the "zoning" of the Jim Crow system--especially its two most powerful proscriptions, those preventing voting by "blacks" and sexual contact between "black" men and "white" "janes." The latter idea, of course, imports the obtrusion of yet another level of reference, what I have noted as Henry's sympathetic identification with the racially oppressed. The meaning on this level of social racial relations is, I think, fairly clear: if the treed coon falls out of his tree--enters either the voting booth or the preserve of white womanhood--he will be lynched.

It is this intimation that Henry in blackface is Henry speaking for oppressed blacks that led Wasserstrom to surmise that "Sir Bones speaks from behind his mask a satiric language" taken from real black cultural forms like rhyming slang, blues, and black minstrelsy, "the kind of speech devised in order to hide true meaning from the Man"
(175). It is a contention with which other critics (Linebarger, Gustavsson) have concurred, though it seems to be at odds with the fact that Berryman dedicated the poem to T. D. "Daddy" Rice, the original "white" minstrel of the 1830s, and I have already noted the troublesome nature of identifying this dialect as "blues," "black," or even "minstrel." More importantly, to read interracial identification in the coon trope and the semantic obfuscations of the dialect is to read the metaphor of blacking up in only one direction, ignoring its movement back in the other direction, a direction that is actually far more dominant in The Dream Songs. Here, that regressive movement is present as "white" Henry's recourse to blackface, and to the blackface partner of his consciousness, the interlocutor, as the format for addressing libidinal, carnal desires and his own--not blacks'--subversions of social authority.

In this view, the referential levels involving historical minstrels, Mr. Bones and his friend, election day bar closures, and Jim Crow degradation are merely the code, or the vehicle, for the real "story" being told in the poem/dream--the story of identity crisis that I have already connected to the recurrent themes of role playing, drinking and sex, played out in so many of the songs. The interlocutor summarizes the two poles of the subjective/moral crisis here: is Henry the transgressive,
blacked up "Sir Bones" or is he a moral, "white" Sir "Galahad"? It is significant that the blackface interlocutor is thoroughly complicit in the libidinal impulse of Henry's struggle between "legality" and transgression; he seems incredulous that Henry remains, for the moment, "legal" and "good" and points out that indulgence is lavishly available. This contravenes the theories presented by various commentators that Henry's friend is either a minstrel show interlocutor who remains "white" or a critical, ironizing counterbalance to Henry's narcissistic extremes, and further connects Berryman's use of the minstrel device to Henry's carnivalized subversions of both subject and social authorities.

The latter, of course, make their appearance in line seventeen as the "poll-cats" who may be enforcing the election laws, collecting taxes, or even, to return to the foreclosure of Henry's sexuality and move from the social to the personal content level, cutting off the pertinent horn or head (or bone). In any case, the subversive, hidden meanings of Mr. Bones's blackface discourse give him the last word, as he punningly converts these enforcers into skunks. When Mr. Bones flaunts U.S. political authority with his sarcastic "I votes in my hole" (I vote by pouring down a shot), he also transgresses the civically and socially disciplined (white) subject by, again, "deny[ing] with a laugh the ludicrous pose of autonomy
adopted by the subject" and "re-open[ing] the body-boundary, the closed orifices of which normally guarantee the repressive mechanism itself" (Stallybrass & White 184). But by doing so emphatically in blackface, Henry engages precisely that ambivalence--managing to elicit the critical claims about subversive "black" content mentioned above and to attribute the "detested .qualities" of experience to "blackness"--with which, as Lott argues, the original minstrel mask resonated: "a derisive celebration of the power of blackness; blacks, for a moment, ambiguously, on top" (28-29).

The convergence of the carnivalesque "advance" of the minstrels with Henry's illicit sexual "advance" and his desire for an "illegal" drink aptly summarizes the significance of Henry's minstrelsy throughout The Dream Songs. Henry on the verge of transgressing various social and legal proscriptions, of losing his grip and falling from the "tree" of respectable identity, is generally Henry in the role of Mr. Bones or coon--Henry in the guise of "the blackt-out man." A basic Freudian framework makes the psychological dynamics of Henry's dream-work clear enough: the structure of authority that enforces legality corresponds to the superego; Henry in his narrowly defined, socially disciplined sense of self is Henry in his tree, or "in" his ego; and Henry falling from the tree, or indulging his carnal impulses, is Henry under the sway of the id.
But within the Kohutian paradigm of narcissistic personality disorders, this macrostructural view of psychology already implies a severe fragmentation of the self, since Kohut's central adjustment of Freudian theory was to posit a healthy "nuclear self" which includes both the object-based ideals and limitations of authority "imagos" and the self-assertive, narcissistic energies of ambition and grandiosity, rather than "splitting" these elements off as agencies oppositional to the experiential center. In Kohut's view, then, the more regressive forms of such narcissistic energies--fixations on sexuality, orality, anality, segmented body parts, aggression, etc.--are not "primary biological drives" but what he calls "disintegration products," results of damage to the organization of the self (Restoration 128). Such tendencies are literally distorted forms, produced by lack of empathic response to the "total self," of the normal and healthy narcissistic impulse. As a victim of just such self-object failure and consequent "splitting" of the self, Henry tends to experience his narcissistic energies in the form of distorted sexualizations, object hungers, bodily obsessions and grandiose pretensions. It is these "vertically" split off--alternatively lived, not repressed--narcissistic energies that he so pervasively assigns to his "blacked up" self. If Henry's multiple personae present a less severe version of the "side-by-side
existence of cohesive personality attitudes with different
goal structures, different pleasure aims, different moral
and aesthetic values" that Kohut finds in certain of the
narcissistic personality disturbances, I am suggesting, the
particular manner in which he, "motivated by shame," denies
the "reality of the split-off sector" is by referring it to
"blackness" (Analysis 183). In this case, the "veil of
ambiguity and indirectness" through which the
narcissistically disordered personality distortedly
describes the "perverse fantasies" of its "other self"
(Analysis 184) is the blackface mask.

Applying Kohut's formulation of what amounts to a
developmental mirror stage--but for the formation of the
"nuclear self," not the "ego"--we might think of Henry's
creation of Mr. Bones in terms of a racialized distortion
of the process by which "some archaic mental contents that
had been experienced as belonging to the self become
obliterated or are assigned to the area of the nonself..."
(Restoration 177).21 For the narcissistically disordered
Henry, both the excessive exhibitionisms of his
narcissistic sector and the sense of complete
disintegration inflicted by the excessively limiting "iron
voices" (Song 8) are consistently assigned to his
"nonself," his alter ego, his racialized other.22

Hence, in numerous poems Henry in burnt cork is Mr.
Bones hot with lust. In the midst of the voyeuristic and
gustatory orgy of Song 4, Henry pauses from his salivations long enough to note, "There ought to be a law against Henry," and the interlocutor replies, "Mr. Bones: there is," adding significant context to the "legality" matrix of Song 2. Placed within this context, the treed or lynched "coon" trope of Songs 9, 10, 57, and 66 becomes much less Henry's way of identifying with the potential cruelties and degradations of racism and much more his use of "blackness" as a metaphor for his own transgressive, shame-ridden sexuality: in Song 57, yet another drinking poem, Henry imagines himself to be "a 'coon treed," but it is again in the sense of wanting, but being kept from, sexual contact (by his target's refusal) and an alcoholic bender (by social rules). The role of the minstrel dialogue format in Henry's consciousness is clear enough, finally, in Book V, which, after it opens with a recuperative hospital stay, concerns itself largely with Henry in his role as husband and father and with themes of death and disintegration, and almost completely eschews the illicit sex theme. Crucially, then, Songs 142 and 143, at the very end of the book, reintroduce Henry's lust and bring back the minstrel format after an absence of nearly thirty songs. In Song 142, Henry is musing upon an adulterous "rump session" but decides he is glad to keep "chaste." The interlocutor's comment on this decision is notably equivocal: "Mr Bones, you strong on moral these days, hey? / It's good to be
faithful but it ain't natural..." Song 143 continues the
dialogue, with the friend suggesting some sexual healing
for Mr. Bones's despair over marital disputes: "That's
enough of that, Mr Bones. Some lady you make. / Honour the
burnt cork, be a vaudeville man..."23 Again, it is
impossible to distinguish here Berryman's toying with the
historical use of the minstrel mask in the "white" mind
from his enjoying the psychological dividends of that use
himself. Lott aptly captures the contradictions already
implicit in such representations on the blackface stage:
"...in a real sense the minstrel man was the
penis...invoking the power of 'blackness' while deriding
it, in an effort of cultural control, through the very
convention that produced its power--the greasepaint and
burnt cork of blackface" (25-26). Then too, Berryman may
have been well aware of Ellison's wry comment in "Change
the Joke and Slip the Yoke": "The mask was the thing (the
'thing' in more ways than one)" (Shadow 49).

Dream Song 72 deserves note in this regard, since it
transforms the potential tree-hung lynching rope of Henry's
"illegal" sexual self into a "twine" on which Henry, in the
role of respectable father, "is swinging his daughter."
Under the watchful monitoring of "The Elder Presences,"
which combine gods, Supreme Court justices, and "the high
statues of the wise," Henry strives toward family
respectability, but the almost parenthetical middle stanza
of the poem seems to suggest the sexuality which that identity must repress. In the middle of this stanza, as the justices threaten, Henry seems to speak to himself as "negro" and beg pardon for his behavior. When the suppressed, parenthetical middle stanza--what the "gods of the garden" will not talk about--dissolves, Henry returns to the present moment, with his daughter and the respectability she gives him, and notes, "Henry's perhaps to break his burnt-cork luck." Henry is negotiating in these poems the slippery ground between the "white," adult, "good," "legal," subject position toward which he repeatedly aspires and the freedoms and transgressions of that subject toward which he feels himself continually driven. He describes the former, as in Song 163, when the "lust-quest seems [briefly] to be over," in terms of "knighthood" (Galahad?) and being "respectable, / a householder, child & all"; he describes the latter, we know, in terms of blacking up and talking to his friend. Thus, as Lott claims, "the assumption of dominant codes of masculinity in the United States was (and still is) partly negotiated through an imaginary black interlocutor" (53). Berryman literalizes Lott's conclusion that "white male fantasies of black men undergird the subject positions white men grow up to occupy."

Henry's blackface moments thus tend to combine the adolescently sexual, the infantilely oral, and the poet's
masking, roleplaying freedom from a fixed subject position in a weird combination of what Stallybrass and White have referred to as the "carnival" and what Lott adduces, in nineteenth-century minstrelsy, as the "widespread preoccupation in minstrel acts with oral and genital amusement" (Lott 145), a subversion of adult identity that highlights the convergence of "blackness" figured as what Lott calls the "world's body"--to symbolically resolve social and economic indignities--with the corporealizations and maskings of carnival--to subvert the suffocating autonomy of the ego. Frequently, for example, Henry blacks up to get "blackt-out," as it were, or at least to have "a drink or three." In Song 232, though Henry is "pigging" down food (recall that this too can be read as compensation for ego crisis), he is trying to give up smoking and "stand...off the sauce." But he seems to become bored with the spiritual life of philosophizing with Pascal and "waiting upon the Lord." Overwhelmed with the materiality of the body, Henry, in a particularly egregious instance of using blackface as shorthand for the corporeal, calls for both cigarettes and booze: "Negroes, ignite! you have nothing to use but your brains, / which let bust out...//...The decanter, pal! / Pascal, we free & loose." Here, it is clear, Henry is not blacking up to call for black civil freedom in a gesture of interracial solidarity;
he is doing so to get "free & loose" of the rationalized and moralized subject.

Reference to a series of Dream Songs in which assumed "blackness" connotes the "world's body," the carnival impulse, the poet's freedom from the "egotistical sublime," or some combination of the three, suggests that Berryman resorted to the device as a figure for the transgression of the subject in general--or what I have earlier reffered to as both a Kohutian and a poetic crisis of the subject. Henry overtly carnivalizes his sexual self in Song 97, where "Henry of Donnybrook bred like a pig." The line evokes both the carnal pleasures of the great English fairs referenced by Stallybrass and White and the central oppositional role they ascribe to the "pig" trope in the discursive formation of respectable identity (62-66, 147-48). Tellingly, then, Henry is forced by his indiscretions to convert himself into the subjectified body of labor: "how he's sweating to support them." The primary agony of the poem is, despite its reveries about Shakespeare and death, once again the tension between the adult father as responsible social and economic subject, and the dissipation or dissolution of that subject through the revelries of bodily pleasure. In the third stanza, Henry enunciates a paroxysm of release which, predictably, involves both brutalizing and blackening himself. We might note not only--once again--the open mouth of that release,
but its focus on the nakedness, sexuality, and materiality of the body: "Of brutal revelry gap your mouth to state: / Front back & backside go bare! / Cats' blackness, booze, blows, grunts, grand groans" (emphasis mine).24

If this poem figures the corporeal disruption of the rationalized "white" subject (see Lott 147-49) as a pleasurable yet shameful reversion to "blackness," in other Dream Songs Henry blacks up to signify his more literally internal division, as when his "performances" of the many others that traverse his poetic "I" imply the disruption of that subject through intersubjectivity. In Song 179, the interlocutor again returns after an extended absence (a hiatus remarked by Henry), this time on the occasion of Henry's dissolution, in the previous poem, into his poetic identifications. There, Henry the poet suggests that though critics will look for the "man actual" in his dreams/poems, he does not exist; instead, there is only "a tumult of seems"—not only, perhaps, an uncontrollable cycle of Yeatsian masks, but a pieced-together subjectivity riven with disruptions and fractures as well: a subjectivity therefore in danger of literally coming apart at the "seems." (Henry's equation of shaving with dreaming in lines three and four, in fact, provides a crucial connection to the poetic identifications of Song 22.) In the next poem, Henry is on the verge of giving up his art (and, possibly, his life), but the interlocutor suddenly
reappears, urging him to do "more shows" tomorrow, for which he must "rest & rehearse." Reluctantly, Henry agrees to go back to the drudgery of "work, work, work"--from which he takes significant consolation in heading off to the bar. The incommensurability of the plural psyche to the bourgeois fantasy of unified, proper identity is, in both of these poems, too much for Henry to endure except as spectacle--as blackface stage performance.

The most explicit connection of minstrelsy to the poetic act, however, occurs in a poem which, by invoking Ellison, once again casts these possible abuses of the "black" image in the ambiguous light of Berryman's self-conscious plays upon the "blackness" inside respectable "white" identity. Song 119 clarifies, moreover, the significance of shaving and whiskers in Berryman's dream language. It is the role-playing, persona-switching poet who wears the beard, but he is a transgressive presence who must shave to return to white respectability:

Fresh-shaven, past months & a picture in New York of Beard Two, I did have Three took off. Well...
Shadow & act, shadow & act,
Better get white or you' get whacked,
or keep so-called black
& raise new hell.

The fluctuation here is clearly between the clean-shaven, proper, "white" subject and money-earning "scholar" (l. 17), whom Berryman sometimes felt it necessary to become, and the bearded, blackface poet, the identity in which he
would have posed for a picture in New York. As the latter, he is capable of "raising [political?, personal?] hell" but also at risk of punishment by social authorities for his transgressions.

The remarkable allusion of the lines, however, is to Ellison's collection of nonfiction, *Shadow and Act*, which included both "Change the Joke and Slip the Yoke" and a much older (1949) essay on cinematic and literary representations of blacks, entitled "The Shadow and the Act." Indeed, we can establish a fairly direct chronological relationship between Dream Song 119, which Berryman wrote in October, 1964, and *Shadow and Act*, which had appeared earlier that year. The allusive presence of Ellisonian cultural theory within this poem puts a deeply ambivalent but racially politicized spin on the personal identity crisis the lines ostensibly reference: if the ambiguously positioned, plural identity of the performing poet is mere shadow to a kind of social "whiteness," "whiteness"--as Ellison's essay on "The Shadow and the Act" of U.S. cultural identity formation suggests--is also an act. The fluctuation, that is, as in Ellison's stunning ironization of cultural "blackness," is not between unified identity and a hellish chaos, but between what is already nothing but an act, and the shadow of that act which makes the "act" (whiteness) appear to be reality or self-presence. Berryman acknowledges by allusion the
oppositional, "hellish" role which "black" plays in the constitution of properly behaved "whiteness," and by direct statement both the imaginary nature of "race"--it is, after all, "so-called black"--and the use he makes of it in his own moral identity.

In the final stanza of the poem that moral role becomes more explicit, though it remains inextricably entangled with the poetic function:

No tremor, no perspire: Heaven is here now, in Minneapolis.
It's easier to vomit than it was, beardless.
There's always the cruelty of scholarship.
I once was a slip.

Henry, always in danger of being "whacked" by wives, police, respectable friends, doctors and so on for his dissipative, unproductive, alcoholic indiscretions, has here passed to the momentary "heaven" of sobriety--where the beard is gone and, with it, the identity-shifting role of the poet. As in Dream Song 2, where the minstrel format first appeared, the possible racial meanings of the poem dissolve into the single enduring refrain of Henry's drinking problem and his crisis of the subject: better get sober or you get whacked. The enigmatic final line of Song 119, then, might be placed exactly at the conjunction of two earlier, similarly disconnected parting shots. If "I votes in my hole" (2) articulated a sarcastic, revelrous rebuttal to the dictates of the social order, and "My
whiskers fly" (22) was an initial instance of the poet recoiling from his maskwearing to the unity of "I am"--the poet getting straight--I take this signature to mean ("I may have shaved now but") "I once was a slip." To slip from identity to identity, to slip from the tree of unified morality by drinking until you wretch, to raise social and intersubjective hell: such are the possibilities of Berryman's blackface coon.

"What I am looking for (I am)"

While John Berryman's minstrel stage does allow him to cast the "black" image in the role of what Eric Lott calls the "world's body," I have suggested, it also must be read in the context of his conscious effort to deconstruct the racial "mirror stage" by tunneling through the imaginary nature of "race," as in the closing lines of "The Imaginary Jew." These lines and the interview remarks I have cited, however, constitute virtually the entirety of his recorded views on "race," aside from the wholly unanalytical and almost obligatory liberal anti-racism of the postwar intellectual that shows up in some of his occasional remarks (a perfect example is Berryman's statement to the effect that he would never take a job in the South, because that is where "racism" is practiced) and poetry, including The Dream Songs. What we have seen in the latter as the occasional surfacing of vague arguments for equal rights
and of indications of solidarity with black protest are representative of both the tenor and the extent of the "race" content in much of Berryman's earlier and later poetry, as well.

Taken together, this material is simply not extensive enough or developed enough to constitute an achieved political poetry of the "race" problem in the United States or a "theory" of the effects, causes, manifestations or psychology of "race" as a cultural discourse. Then too, the minstrel device came somewhat secondarily to the compositional process that produced *The Dream Songs* and figures in only some eighty or eighty-five of them. Race issues seem to have been at best a marginal concern of Berryman's philosophy and art. Still, there are consistent gestures in his life and poetry--early, middle, and late--to a kind of interracial identification that demand we take seriously his efforts to represent the "black" voices within twentieth-century U.S. "white" identity. An example from *Love & Fame* (1970) captures an instance of this tendency from both the later poetry and the earlier life. In the poem "Nowhere" Berryman articulates both his love of blues culture and some intriguing experiences from his Columbia University days:

More comfortable at the Apollo among blacks
than in Hartley Hall where I hung out.
A one named Brooks Johnson, with it in for Negroes,
I told one noon I'd some coon blood myself
and he spread the word wide while the campus laughed.
Magical mourning blues,
Victoria, Bessie. Teagarden. Pine-top Smith
the sightless passionate constructor. (Collected 180-81)

Indeed, such gestures have the feel of what Lott has referred to as the "utopian or emancipatory moment" in the bohemian romance with "blackness," which played no small part in the evolution of the original minstrel show (Lott 51). Yet they also evince a kind of exoticization of "black" culture which aims at "class abdication through gendered cross-racial immersion" (Lott 51), a tradition, as Lott notes, that persists even today. It is precisely this persistence, I have argued, that is registered in the combination of Dream Song 68, with its bluesy but rowdy identification with black suffering, and Dream Song 2, with its blackface abdication of white, middle-class citizenship through sexual and libational dalliance. Here too, we find perhaps the most accurate way of assessing Berryman's strange and drunken nocturnal phone calls to the black man he knew best--and of assessing Ellison's strange and equivocal recollection of them. The moment of cultural interchange through which those earlier bohemians secured the authenticity of their art had a tendency to involve not mere observation or distant mimicry, but "a white man and a black man becoming, [as one of them] put it, 'brothers for the time being'....it shows up often enough to be a defining interest of these 'white Negroes,' and we might
pause over its enabling role in cultural theft" (Lott 52). These passing nineteenth-century artistic friendships find a ghostly resurrection in the strange literary collaboration through which, on the lower frequencies, as it were, Ralph Ellison became the "blackness"--and perhaps the interlocutor--within Henry the modern "white Negro." A degree of sincerity on both sides of the collaboration seems probable, yet in Ellison's contradictory mixture of "fascination," "amusement," and abdication of authenticity (Mariani, Life 387) are captured both the emancipatory and the expropriative impulses of Berryman's black(face) art.

Empathic identification and self-serving exploitation; appreciative immersion in a liberating cultural style and degrading representation of a biologized Other: as both the original minstrel show and The Dream Songs suggest, the two strands are inextricable in American representations of "blackness." Though Berryman exploited blackface as the designated mask for the ego-transgressing, carnal, and split-off elements of Henry's conflicted, "tragic," white self, he also exploited the gaps in the "white subject," showing how its class, racial, and moral parameters reveal its very constructedness--reveal it to be literally in pieces because constituted out of various "others" whose voices traverse its frequencies. As Berryman elsewhere put his definitive concern with the autonomy and alienation of subjectivity, "What I am looking for (I am) may be /
Happening in the gaps of what I know." In the U.S., it was his singular but wrenchingly conflicted poetic insight to recognize, the "white" "I am" could only be glimpsed, though never known, by peering into the shadows of its own act.

Notes


2. As Lott notes, the questions of an "authentic" "black" culture or cultural element or of an "accurate" or "derivative" blackface imitation are hopelessly muddled, reminding one of nothing so much as Ellison's idea of the "mulatto" character of American culture. According to Lott, "The researches of Hans Nathan, Robert Toll, and others suggest that the minstrel show's humor, songs, and dances were so culturally mixed as, in effect, to make their 'racial' origins quite undecidable....The creolized character of black forms themselves, of course, not to mention their casual and undocumentable influence on white ones, muddies this whole question considerably and makes all cultural labeling a provisional matter" (94).

3. Thus Lott reads the sheer irrationality of the linguistic, musical, corporeal, sexual, racial, and infantile revelries common to the minstrel stage as the regressive "dream" formations of an ever tenuous process of self-staging by the rationalized white ego, a return of the Other and a subversion of the subject both pleasurable and revolting. His description of the contradictory tendencies of minstrelsy for a working class facing an increasing industrial discipline of the subject provide one example: "Ascribing [corporeal excess] to the 'degraded' blackface Other, and indulging it--by imagining, incorporating, or impersonating the Other--workingmen confronting the demand to be 'respectable' might at once take their enjoyment and disavow it....All the standard elements in the repertoire of inversion--filth, scatology, racial marking itself--returns here to assault the white subject whose self-possession had been constituted by their disavowal" (148). The ambivalence of this "dream-work" of the body is thus an identification so powerful that it requires racism as its counterbalance: see also p. 260, n. 13.
4. On Berryman's use of voices, see Donoghue; for Berryman's own remarks on the importance of the "ambiguous" "I" of the poet in his work, see his "One Answer to a Question: Changes" in The Freedom of the Poet; on his understanding of the self as a construct see Davis, "The Li(y)es of the Poet" and "The Freedom of John Berryman"; on his use of Yeatsian masks, see Mazzaro; for Berryman's explication of the Whitmanian and Keatsian conception of the poet as a vessel, and its intersection with the manipulation of voices and identity, see his "'Song of Myself': Intention and Substance" in The Freedom of the Poet.

5. In Song 23, Henry ridicules a U.S. political scene dominated by Dwight Eisenhower--vacuous, unintellectual, and a representative of both industrial-military hegemony and spreading McCarthyism, whose minions destroy one of the country's most valuable scientists when they "bile Oppenheimer out of use." Song 162 criticizes the cynicism and inhumanity of the Vietnam "war," instrument of a disguised foreign policy that "kept us unaware / that we were killing Asiatics, daily." And in Song 197, the only imaginable response to the "bloody fucking news" and the "nuclear devices H & A" that converge "on miserable Henry" is to hide from them.

6. The argument I am making here is analogous to that forwarded by Gary Q. Arpin, who finds that Berryman, beginning with his earlier work, demonstrates how "the disruptions of the outer world produce their analogues in the inner landscape" (25). Just as, in Berryman's 1945 short story "The Imaginary Jew," the protagonist realizes he personally bears "our general guilt" for bigotry when he himself is mistaken for a Jew, in The Dream Songs various modes of cultural violence become the violence of psychic fragmentation--a dynamic nowhere more clear than when Henry experiences interracial fracture as internal fracture through his assumption of the role of "imaginary Negro" (Arpin 75). On "tragic man," see Kohut, Restoration 206-207, and Reflections 36-37.

7. Following John Haffenden's note on Berryman's manuscript for Song 195, I have noted what seems to be the very plausible restoration of the word "feasts," which is omitted from the published version, to line 12. See Haffenden, p. 111.
8. For a more complete presentation of my understanding of the psychological aspects of Henry's fragmentation, see my "Things Are Going to Pieces: Disintegration Anxiety in The Dream Songs" in Kelly and Lathrop 189-201.

9. Kathe Davis's assumption that Berryman treated the self as an almost Derridean construct, always "under erasure" even in the moment of the discursive act it makes possible, also seems relevant here. See, especially, her comments on the uncollected Dream Song in which Henry admits that "Henry under construction was Henry indeed" ("Li(v)es" 50).

10. See Kohut, Analysis 9.


12. Haffenden records this statement from one of Berryman's journals, and Mariani dates it to spring, 1957. It continues, "...and I am also a bastard, and I am hopeful and good-natured, and I am a man insulted and injured" (Haffenden 50, Mariani, Life 314). Later comments suggest that Berryman came to view disharmony less as abnormal and more as the inevitable condition of personality. In 1965, as "a man nearing fifty," he wrote, "I am less impressed than I used to be by the universal notion of a continuity of individual personality" (Freedom 323).

13. Kohut, for example, discusses not only psychological maneuvers intended to compensate for a faltering self structure, but also those which provide pleasure by giving the subject power over or the ability to "play" with the loss of self: symbolization of the mutilation and reconstruction of the self in both artistic and dream material provide this outlet, as does the infantile "little piggy" game Kohut describes in which the child takes thrilling joy in the "removal" of its toes and fingers, knowing that the "terror" of mutilation will be banished when the game ends with the warmth and wholeness of a parental hug (Analysis 118-19).

14. Stallybrass and White borrow the term and the concept "grotesque body" from Bakhtin's discussion of the carnivalesque.

15. It is certainly plausible, though not fundamental to my argument, that Berryman's text seems exemplary of what Stallybrass and White call modern "transgressive literature" because of a more direct link than the cultural
context they describe. That link would be Freud's "Studies of hysteria," which provide the spark for Stallybrass and White's theory of the return of the carnival repressed and which Berryman, a careful reader of Freud, no doubt knew well. Freud's descriptions of the "clownism," "imitation of animals and circus scenes," "nursery games and sexual scenes," pantomimic fantasy, and the fragmented, disconnected presentation of such elements in the discourse of his hysterics might have been a significant influence on the form and content of The Dream Songs. In any case, little has been written on the fair and carnival theme that is developed in The Dream Songs not only through Henry's feasting and drinking but also through the regular appearance of "holiday" poems and such references as "Henry of Donnybrook bred like a pig" (97) and the "little fair" of Song 109.

16. The chronological relationship between these poems is suggested by John Haffenden's incomplete but invaluable dating of many of The Dream Songs according to notations on Berryman's original manuscripts. According to Haffenden, Songs 231 and 43 were written on August 15 and November 1, 1961, respectively, despite their extreme separation in the sequence of the book and in time of publication (Haffenden 158).

17. William Wasserstrom was perhaps the first to note, in 1968, that one of the initial epigraphs to The Dream Songs was also the epigraph to Wittke's book: "'Go in, brack man, de day's yo' own'" (Wasserstrom 169). See also Arpin (75), Haffenden (48, 51, and 82), and Gustavsson (80-82). Kathe Davis's reading of Berryman's own copy of Wittke, and his marginal notes, is particularly interesting but, if anything, suggests how little Berryman actually drew on the 1930 history of minstrelsy: outside of his striking use of one passage as the basis for Song 2 (to be noted below), "Berryman's own copy of the book is only lightly marked and annotated" and the noted references do not seem to be directly developed in The Dream Songs (Davis, "Honey" 39).

18. Wasserstrom and Linebarger, to cite two egregious examples, shift seamlessly back and forth between the idea that Berryman is performing a "minstrel" show and the idea that he is doing something "Negro." See Wasserstrom 172-80, and Linebarger 85-87.

19. As Stallybrass and White argue, the spectacle of the carnival in its modern, "subjective articulation" can be experienced as both a threat to the disciplined subject, as
for Cardinal, and as a pleasurable release from it, as for Henry: "these carnivalesque fragments formed unstable discursive compounds, sometimes disruptive, sometimes therapeutic, within the very constitution of bourgeois subjectivity" (182). As Lott points out in describing the function of the minstrel show, of course, the "phobia and fascination" (Stallybrass and White 182) of the carnivalized Other are often inseparable.

20. My connection of the concept of carnival, which I have borrowed from Stallybrass and White, to the minstrel performances Berryman here commemorates is thoroughly pertinent to Berryman's own source for the latter. On the page immediately following his description of the minstrel parade with its "gold cornet band" and "big brass buttons," Wittke notes, "The minstrel parade is another example of the close relationship between the circus and minstrel shows. It was borrowed directly from the circus parade, and became an established part of every minstrel outfit in America" (145-46).

21. Kohut defines the "nuclear self" as "the basis for our sense of being an independent center of initiative and perception" (Restoration 177). I have drawn the terms of this discussion from The Restoration of the Self, pp. 177-91; from The Analysis of the Self, pp. 114-25, where Kohut was still using the overtly post-Freudian terminology "narcissistic libido" and "reality ego"; and from the diagrams which appear on Restoration 213 and Analysis 185.

22. It is precisely in the assessment of this dynamic, I want to argue, that Wasserstrom's argument for a solely sympathetic reading of the racial content of Berryman's sequence most clearly undercuts itself. Analyzing the minstrel device in terms of a Freudian "dramatis personae of the inner life," but reading the metaphor only in its liberatory direction, he notes, "Instead of Henry, read ego. In place of id, visualize Bones, end man of minstrel shows, unruly in the beat of tambourine and rattle of bones....Sometimes, like id, that olio of vulgar and irrepressible want, Bones's black need bursts his own and even, beyond disentangling, Berryman's bounds" (179-80).

23. We can further sense how Berryman was manipulating the blackface material by noting that these two poems are radically removed from their sequence of composition. Written much later than the poems that immediately precede them in Book V, written even after the majority of poems that make up Books VI and VII, they were among the final
Dream Songs written before publication of the second volume but were inserted here when Berryman ordered the Songs for publication, as if he sensed the need to reinvoke Henry's sexual temptations--and his minstrelsy--before ending a book in which Henry struggles toward respectable family-man status (see Haffenden 164). The blackface device allows Berryman to direct a stage on which these figures of bodily fun suddenly stand and speak, and just as abruptly sit down as rationalized "whiteness" returns, reproducing the "disappearing act in which blackface made "blackness" flicker on and off so as simultaneously to produce and disintegrate the body" (Lott 117).

24. For additional nuances of these meanings of the "burnt cork" in Henry's life, see Songs 25, 194, 205, and 228.

25. Lott's description of the "bohemian" artisans who created the minstrel phenomenon is an instructive gloss on Berryman's resurrection of their art and his Columbia memories: "Marginalized by temperament, by habit (often alcoholism), by ethnicity, even by sexual orientation, these artists immersed themselves in blackface to indulge their felt sense of difference....if for men sexuality is where freedom and play meet, "blackness" was for antebellum bohemians its virtual condition--that fascinating imaginary space of fun and license outside (but structured by) Victorian bourgeois norms" (51).
Chapter Five
Crying Because She Has No Self:
The Psychology of Slavery in Morrison's Beloved

In the preceding chapters, I have posited the presence of two different mechanisms in the social order of the United States that inhibit the abilities of people to conceptualize their own psychic wholeness and that foster profound anxieties of self-disintegration. Taking Gertrude Stein's literary response to middle-class conventionality and Ralph Ellison's literary evocation of racial personality models as my starting points, I outlined the effects of cultural disciplines of the self that deny aspects of psychic experience. In chapter 4, I then suggested how failures of self-object empathy during development might lead to deep, structural deficits of identity such as those represented in John Berryman's poetry. We might characterize the first of these dynamics as cultural, with psychological effects, and the second as psychological, with cultural effects. Thus the racial disciplinarity outlined by Ellison, which precipitates a sense of non-identity that reads as nameless invisibility, finds its counterpart in the anxieties of psychic disorder that Berryman in part resolves by participating in the cultural production of a particularly pervasive version of "Africanism."
Moreover, the Kohutian formulation that I found useful for explaining the personal, developmental mechanism in Berryman's case also rather aptly describes the experiential effect of the sociocultural disciplines of the self: if a child's need for empathic response from its self-objects is not met, Kohut comments, "then the broader psychological configuration--the joyful experience of being a whole, appropriately responded-to self--disintegrates and the child retreats to a fragment of the larger experiential unit" (Restoration 81). I am suggesting--and here we can speak of the ongoing identity formation processes of adults, as well as children--that if the empathic needs of some parts of the broader psychological configuration are denied by various cultural strategies of individualization, we can similarly expect the joyful, "whole" self to disintegrate and the person to retreat to a fragment of his or her possible experience.

I want now to articulate a more intimate relationship between these two mechanisms of fragmentation by suggesting that they constitute different moments of a single process of distorted identity formation, and proposing that each is productive of the other in a sort of cyclical symbiosis of psychocultural pathology. Neither precedes or bears a strictly causal relationship to the other, but, intertwining in the conduit of psychocultural transmission through which narcissistically damaged psyches cause the
development of narcissistic damage in the psyches that must relate to them, the two become almost inextricable components of a vicious circle of psychic discontent. Anxieties about the unity of the self are produced and enhanced by a complex combination of both childhood rejections, especially through the self-object dynamic elucidated by Kohut, and cultural subjections, especially in the sense explored in historical contexts by Foucault. But it is crucial to see as well how psyches so damaged communicate their damage to others, both by becoming parenting self-objects incapable of responding wholly to their children and by turning for salvation from their internal discord to the very cultural systems that enforce such fragmented existences: disciplines of race, gender, sexuality, health, productivity, and so on.

Within the problematic of racial discipline that I have examined, perhaps Stein's Three Lives most suggestively collapses these concerns into a single text. It refers, seemingly autobiographically, to both child abuse and disciplinary identity management as causative factors in psychic pulverization, encoding such concerns in a text that reproduces wholesale a set of culturally circulating racial personality models. Forced to retreat to "a fragment of the larger experiential unit" by both parental mistreatment and cultural subjectification, I am suggesting, Stein responds by thematizing the psychological
transmission of psychic damage from parent to child in a text that enacts the cultural transmission of disciplinary forms of racial identity. In turn, as Ellison's novel shows, the latter forms encourage similar retreats by (racialized) others to fragments of their broader self-experience.

Toni Morrison's *Beloved* provides a fit conclusion to this study of the meanings of disintegration within the problematic of racial identity, since it traverses an imaginatively historiographical recreation of the terrain of United States slavery and racism to explore precisely how the two mechanisms of fragmentation alluded to here work together. Examining the personal and developmental ramifications of a social and economic system based on white supremacy, Morrison focuses on the very instance of disciplinary propagation: the parent-child relationship and its formative significance for emergent consciousness. For Morrison it is in the family structure itself that the two mechanisms of identity disfiguration, which I have described as operating coproductively or in tandem, fuse with and enhance one another: individuals crippled by disciplines of racial identity are both materially--because of the brutal rupturing of family relationships in slavery--and psychologically--because of the brutal rupturing of internal relationships among psychic components--unable to provide the models of psychic wholeness and strength in
relation to which healthy subjectivities might develop. That is, the process that Kohut calls "transmuting internalization," through which healthy selves develop in relationship to a "self-object's highly developed psychic organization" (Restoration 86), is inhibited by either the self-object's own lack of healthy structures or by its absence altogether.

This is the cruel cycle of relational failures and psychic retreats that characterizes the family at the center of Beloved, even years after the end of economic slavery and the achievement of material freedom. Indeed, it is precisely in her exploration of this cycle and its transmission from generation to generation that Morrison develops what numerous critics have noted as her unique emphasis on the cataclysmic psychological impact of slavery, particularly in its extension into an indefinite future after the Emancipation Proclamation, and on the therapeutic value--for both the characters she represents and for the U.S. as a social group--of revising the way we remember that horrifically damaged past as a means to remembering our selves (Henderson).¹

I want to continue the work that has been started on this psychological aspect of Beloved, particularly in the directions articulated by critics like Jennifer FitzGerald, who notes that "psychoanalysis, vigorously modified by objects relations theory, can be explored as one of the set
of meanings which can be read into, or onto, Beloved" (685). The derivative version of object relations theory Kohut calls self psychology, specifically, allows us to apply the Kohutian concepts of self-object empathy and the relational self to an analysis of the kinds of severe narcissistic personality damage, especially disintegration anxiety, depicted in Morrison's novel. Morrison creates characters whose intensive hungers, withdrawals, dependencies, and fears of fragmentation suggestively evoke the psychopathological considerations of self psychology. Foremost among these characters are Denver, the daughter delivered during an escape from slavery, and Beloved, who is the incarnate ghost of not only the daughter Sethe killed to save from re-enslavement, but also of the empathically deprived child-selves of almost every African American character in the novel. In her figurations of wounded selfhood, Morrison suggests that the salient effect of the violence of slavery on "black" identity was the formation of what we might read as the disintegration anxieties and stunted, archaic self-object relationships characteristic of narcissistic personality disorder.

The U.S. historical epoch of institutionalized slavery, as Morrison rewrites it, wreaks its havoc on the "black" self in two interrelated and mutually reinforcing ways, imaging the two mechanisms of self-disintegration I alluded to above: its material practices fragmented the larger
experiential unit of the family, initiating a cycle of isolation and dysfunction; and its imaginative practices—the symbolic violence of discourses of "whiteness" and "blackness"—fragmented the larger experiential unit of the psyche. Kohut's self psychological perspective allows us to view that psychic unit precisely as a function of the kinds of empathic relationships made available in structures like the family, and thus to better grasp the insidious reproductive effect of such practices to which Morrison calls attention: the self which develops in the relational context of such diminished structures can only reproduce the mutilation of its environment, retreating to a fragment of the full psychological configuration.

**The ghost of slavery past: Beloved**

The most marked case of such stunted emotional development in the novel is, of course, the "ghost" Beloved herself. This is of far-reaching significance, for Beloved represents the general psychological condition of "blacks" under and after slavery as much as she incarnates the particular sense of injury and abandonment of the infant daughter killed by Morrison's maternal protagonist, Sethe. Beloved embodies not only the "haint" that spitefully terrorizes 124 Bluestone Road as the novel opens, but also the primal African American experience of the middle passage and the injured past selves of Paul D, Sethe,
Halle, and Denver, each damaged by slavery in related ways despite differences of age, sex, and historical situation (Denver, for example, is the child of another "middle passage"—Sethe's escape—and grows up in a state of nominal "freedom").

As Deborah Horvitz astutely surmises, Beloved shares the spirit of both Sethe's daughter and her mother, who survived the middle passage as a child but was apparently abandoned when her mother—Sethe's grandmother—jumped into the ocean to avoid bondage (Beloved 210-14; Horvitz 157-58, 163). This historical connection establishes parental abandonment, predicated on the inhumanities of slavery, as a sort of familial primal scene for the novel and as the context of Beloved's emotional state. We must read her condition not simply in terms of her enraged infantile response to Sethe's act of aggression, that is, but in the sense that she represents the common daughter in an extended historical succession of such violent disruptions of the mother-daughter relationship. Beloved's monologue in Part 3 recalls the original African mother's leap into the ocean, the abandonment of Sethe's mother (214). As a child, Sethe learns from her nurse Nan how Sethe's mother abandoned a series of children who were products of slave-rapes (62), and as an adult she eventually pieces together the central horror of her own childhood: that this mother eventually abandoned her by trying to escape without her
and being hung for the attempt (203). Sethe's own desperate resort to infanticide to put her child out of reach of slavery, intelligible to the ghost-baby only as an abandonment, is thus literally a product of both a psychological legacy of emotional damage and the immediate material cruelties of slavery.

But the matrilineal connections that Horvitz so fully explicates do not mark the limits of Beloved's symbolic import in the novel. In her fragmented recall of the experience of the middle passage, she also is a figure for the "Sixty Million and more" African people who died in transit to the Americas, alluded to in Morrison's epigraph, and thus an important past "self" for all African Americans. For Sethe, of course, she represents not only Sethe's violently traumatized daughter, but also the traumatized daughter that Sethe herself once was--the past she has repressed and only begins to remember under Beloved's influence. In both ways, she is the image--of a deeply narcissistically damaged self--Sethe has been "dreaming" for years (132). Similarly, she functions as a literal projection of the memory that Denver has repressed--the infanticide--a repression readable in Denver's two-year period of deaf withdrawal from the world (103) and her nightmarish fear of violence at Sethe's hands (103, 206). And if Paul D has also retreated from the unimaginable parts of his past to a fragment of his self-experience,
locking away his memories of brutal abuse under slavery "in that tobacco tin buried in his chest where a red heart used to be" (72-73). Beloved's seductions of him represent his own desire to recover full identity: during their lovemaking he chants "'Red heart. Red heart,' over and over again. Softly and then so loud it woke Denver, then Paul D himself" (117). Beloved is literally Paul D's dream of his repressed, damaged self.

Indeed, at the end of the novel Beloved vanishes along with the community members' memories of her, as if she were nothing more than their "bad dream" as well: they "began to believe that, other than what they themselves were thinking, she hadn't said anything at all" (274). Beloved is the damaged element of the consciousness of the African American community and its novelistic representatives, a past "self" long "unspeakable" but suddenly emerging into their physical world. Morrison does not settle the question of whether the ghost is a real agent in the story or a mere figment of each character's psychic damage: she is both. As FitzGerald comments, citing Morrison's 1988 interview with Marsha Jean Darling, "[Beloved] can thus be read in two ways, as Morrison herself suggests: both as a psychically damaged real-life slavegirl and as a ghost (fantasy object for the emotions of others)" (672-73).

Specifically, as her preeminent role as Sethe's literally mutilated--almost beheaded--daughter makes clear,
Beloved is a projection of the narcissistically damaged child within all of the victims of slavery, the embodiment of their collective retreat from full self-experience in the face of slavery's almost total denial of the empathic responsiveness and proper self-object relationships necessary to the development and sustenance of mature identity. "A wounded, enraged baby," Barbara Schapiro writes, "is the central figure of the book, both literally, in the character of Beloved, and symbolically, as it struggles beneath the surface of the other major characters" (195). Indeed, numerous commentators have noted Morrison's extensive depiction of the psychology of Sethe and her family as a condition of undeveloped, injured, infantile narcissism. The preoedipal, preverbal, or narcissistic state lived out by Sethe and Beloved—and by Beloved as a part of Denver and Paul D—has been variously characterized in Kleinian (Fitzgerald, Wyatt), Winnicottian (Mathieson, Wyatt), Benjaminian (Schapiro), Freudian (Mathieson) and Lacanian (Wyatt) terms. Kohut's framework for narcissistic damage makes a useful contribution to this already productive discussion, particularly in the light of his sensitivity to the very empirical or, to borrow one of his favorite phrases, "experience-near" qualities of empathic relations and the intersubjective context of the self. His outlook shares many of the interests of the modification of object
relations theory Jessica Benjamin calls "intersubjective theory," but it also presents what we might think of as an empathically revised version of the psychoanalytic legacy of Freud and Lacan. If, as Jean Wyatt convincingly argues, Morrison revises the Lacanian symbolic model of social identity into a vision of healthy subjectivity that combines nurturing with intersubjectivity, bodily contact with language (Wyatt 475, 484), Kohut's revision of the analytic situation (subject relating to subject by way of mutual, discursively mediated empathy) provides one possible explanatory device for a text that also "teaches [us] that caring is 'what language was made for'" (Beloved 252, Wyatt 475).3

The intense hungers, the extreme dependencies and transgressions of self-boundaries, and the general loss of selfhood that Morrison thematizes at 124 Bluestone Road, then, might all be referred to the archaic self-object relationships characteristic of, in Kohut's view, both preoedipal childhood and the narcissistic personality disorders precipitated by the traumas of early self-object failure (Restoration 28). That is, we can better understand how Morrison is depicting the emotional damage of the culture of slavery if we treat Sethe and Beloved's relationship not simply as a Kleinian or Winnicottian preoedipal relationship, though it certainly has those qualities, but also as a representation of the
narcissistically damaged modes of adult identity that can arise from childhood self-object trauma. Morrison's ingenious device for representing this connection is, of course, to make Beloved both the ghost of an infant stranded--cut off--at the phase of hungering, undifferentiated, preverbal, and preoedipal relationship with its mother, and the twenty-year-old, narcissistically disordered result of infantile empathic failure; the result, that is, of being treated by its mother not as a full self (a subject, in Benjamin's parlance), but as a mere extension of that mother's own self.

Almost from the moment of her appearance Beloved "hungers" for anything that Sethe can give her: stories, company, looks, games, sweets, foods. Both metaphorical and material, this is the "bottomless" longing that Denver immediately notices in Beloved's eyes (58), observing both the young woman's lust for sweet foods (55) and "how greedy she was to hear Sethe talk" (63). Both Sethe's storytelling and the sweets "became a way to feed her" (58). Beloved's reliance on Sethe becomes so constant, demanding, and possessive that she gradually maneuvers Paul D out of the household so that Sethe's attention will be devoted exclusively to her. Ultimately, the two become so entwined in what Wyatt describes as a bodily connected, "maternal continuity" (477) that both withdraw into the house, neglect the outside world, and continue a "feeding"
relationship so intense that Sethe begins to waste away physically while Beloved whines for sweets and grows bigger "by the day" (239-43).

Morrison thus creates a nuanced representation of the condition Kohut associates with failures in empathic response. In the passage I have earlier used to summarize the child's retreat to "a fragment of the larger experiential unit," the specific retreat being discussed is, in fact, a retreat "to pleasure-seeking oral stimulation...or, expressed clinically, to depressive eating," potentially resulting in "addiction to food" (Restoration 81). Indeed, Beloved's temper tantrums (242) and accelerated desire and demandingness (240) during part 3 of the novel, together with the insistent depiction of her explicitly oral, incorporative, and hungering relationship to Sethe throughout evokes nothing so much as the "unusually great demandingness vis-à-vis the mother," "the intensified oral greed," and the "tendency toward violent temper tantrums" Kohut observes in certain children who have "suffered severe traumatizations in early infancy" (Restoration 27-28). If we view Sethe's infanticide both as such a severely traumatizing act for the baby that has "survived" it (as a ghost) and as indicative of a larger inability on her part to respond empathically to her children--to treat them as whole and separate selves--we can understand Beloved's characteristics as part of what
Kohut calls a "depressive-disintegrative reaction to the unempathic self-object milieu" (*Restoration* 81).

Beloved's initial "hungry" dependence on Sethe--she begins to wait longingly for Sethe to come home from work, "as though every afternoon she doubted anew the older woman's return" (57)--is only a precursor to the "frighteningly boundless narcissism" (Schapiro 203) of their withdrawal into the house and of the later pages of the novel. As the novel moves on we discover the full extent of Beloved's hungers for Sethe's smile, her gaze, her face: like the preoedipal infant she was when Sethe first left her, and like the narcissistically disordered adult that might result from such abandonment trauma, Beloved has trouble recognizing any boundary between Sethe and herself, a "breakdown of the borders between self and other...that is bound up with incorporative fantasies" (Schapiro 202).

It is in the series of monologues that immediately follows the withdrawal of Sethe, Denver, and Beloved from the outside world that the boundaries between self and other in Beloved's experience are shown to be completely soluble--and so, too, are the boundaries between Beloved as the "crawling-already?" baby and Beloved as the survivor of the middle passage. In Beloved's monologue, she expresses the very essence of predifferentiated, infantile narcissism, placing both Sethe and a woman on the slave
ship in the position of mother, yet as part of her own self: "I am not separate from her there is no place where I stop her face is my own...Sethe's is the face that left me Sethe sees me see her and I see the smile her smiling face is the place for me" (210-13). Beloved's own identity is utterly dependent on, is literally coextensive with, Sethe's presence and her smiling, empathically responsive face. Correlative to Beloved's more and more complete merger with Sethe is her growing inability to tolerate any failure in Sethe's responses to her, as we learn in a passage that again implicitly connects the smiling--but abandoning--woman of the middle passage to the smiling--but abandoning--Sethe who sent Beloved ahead during her escape from Sweet Home:

Beloved accused her of leaving her behind. Of not being nice to her, not smiling at her. She said they were the same, had the same face, how could she have left her? And Sethe cried, saying she never did, or meant to—that she had to get them out, away....Beloved wasn't interested. She said when she cried there was no one. That dead men lay on top of her....Sethe never came to her, never said a word to her, never smiled and worst of all never waved goodbye or even looked her way before running away from her. (241-42)

This remarkable passage conflates no less than three moments of perceived parental abandonment or unresponsiveness precipitated by the extremities of slavery, articulating them from the enraged, narcissistic viewpoint of the child who experiences them (or from the viewpoint of the narcissistically damaged adult that child
will become): the original African mother's leap into the sea, Sethe's (and her mother's) flight from plantation and children, and Sethe's desperate act of infanticide. Eloquently, and realistically, it also emphasizes the preoedipal child's all-important visual dependence on its mother and on her face and smile--the "mirroring" through which the child sees its own self-worth reflected back to it in the face and smile of the self-object, in "the gleam in the mother's eye," thus building its own strong sense of self (Kohut, Analysis 116-17). These are the "visual interactions" that can become--and indeed seem for Beloved to have become--"hypercathected" as a result of traumatic empathic failures, the "gaze" that can be "the carrier of the wish to be held and carried [and suckled] by the mother" (Kohut, Analysis 117; see also Restoration 8-9).

Not only does the archaic emotional state pursuant to what Kohut calls "self-object failure" (Restoration 190) involve a retreat to a fragment of the experiential unit--frequently to an excessive orality like Beloved's--it also often eventuates in the conscious experience of that fragmentation. "After the self has broken into fragments," Kohut observes, there is still a "residual part of the self that experiences its own fragmentation" and "attach[es] its anxieties and complaints to this or that fragment of the body" (Restoration 156-57). When the child-woman Beloved
loses a tooth, we learn how intensely she feels this "disintegration anxiety":

Beloved looked at the tooth and thought, This is it. Next would be her arm, her hand, a toe. Pieces of her would drop maybe one at a time, maybe all at once. Or one of those mornings before Denver woke and after Sethe left she would fly apart. It is difficult keeping her head on her neck, her legs attached to her hips when she is by herself. Among the things she could not remember was when she first knew that she could wake up any day and find herself in pieces. She had two dreams: exploding, and being swallowed. (133)

In Kohut's clinical terms, we might read Beloved's imputation of her condition to her bodily structure as paralleling the disintegration anxiety "patient's attempt to give a circumscribed content to a deeper unnamable dread experienced when a person feels that his self is becoming seriously enfeebled or is disintegrating," often actualized with a "clearly hypochondriacal and phobic cast" (Restoration 105). Like the self psychological framework I am foregrounding, Morrison emphasizes the absence of self-objects, when the fabric of relationship that structures the self is not visibly present, as the situation when this threat of bodily fragmentation is most acute.5 Thus, Beloved's feelings evoke both the specific shocking experience at the core of her fragmentation and a general condition of archaic overdependence on self-object empathy: her difficulty "keeping her head on her neck" links her fragmentation to the crucial incident when violent aggression came from the expected source of caring empathy,
and her inability to maintain her sense of self in the absence of others bespeaks the lack of mature self-functioning produced by an environment of developmental self-object failure. In this case, that environment is a culture of slavery where, as for Sethe and for her mother before her, parents are always running away, sold away, or too emotionally crippled themselves to be effective models.

As a particularly concretized description of the literal fragmentation of identity, I take this evocation of disintegration anxiety to be absolutely central to Morrison's articulation of the psychology of slavery. Beloved is both the preoedipal infant for whom the absence of the parent's mirroring gaze precipitates an existential crisis and the victim of slave culture for whom adult life is a constant, infantlike quest to establish firm grounds for an identity. In normal maturation, according to Kohut's formulation, "the mother's exultant response to the total child (calling him by name as she enjoys his presence and activity) supports, at the appropriate phase, the development from autoerotism to narcissism--from the stage of the fragmented self...to the stage of the cohesive self" (Analysis 118). Having experienced the traumatic loss of her mother's responsive smile and affirmative naming--on several historical levels at once--Beloved is stranded in the immature emotional state of disintegration anxiety,
experiencing only various autoeroticized (oral, sexual, tactile) fragments of the self.

When Beloved makes her ghostly visitation to Paul D in the cold house, intent on her narcissistic design of removing a distraction from Sethe's purview, she is also engaging in a furtive, eroticized attempt to fill her empty sense of self. But what is most revealing is her connection of that eroticism to the crucial lack in her past--the lack of having her total self acknowledged by being called by name by a joyful parent. She tells Paul D, "I want you to touch me on the inside part and call me my name" (116). Homi Bhabha, indeed, emphasizes this request as the crucial moment of "Beloved's naming of her desire for identity." That "inward and intimate desire," he adds, is the very "'inscape' of the memory of slavery" that Morrison is recreating (Bhabha, Culture 16).

Historically, we might trace this destruction of the African American self to the violent disorientations, deterritorializations, and familial separations of the abduction from Africa, as Morrison suggests by making the disintegration theme a critical presence in the aforementioned monologue section, when Beloved's middle passage life is literally contiguous with her "lives" as Sethe's baby and as the ghost at Bluestone Road. Beloved's fragmented discourse in the monologue, as Wyatt observes, "robs the reader of known demarcations, creating a
linguistic equivalent of the Africans' loss of differentiation in an 'oceanic' space that 'unmade' cultural identities." In a broken, unattached recollection that combines geographical displacement, maternal abandonment, child sexual abuse, and brutal racial persecution into a single, horrific psychology of self-disruption, Beloved remembers

I watch him eat inside I am crouching to keep from falling with the rain I am going to be in pieces he hurts where I sleep he puts his finger there I drop the food and break into pieces she took my face away there is no one to want me to say me my name. (212)

It is unclear whether the sexual abuse "Beloved" recalls here (and on 215) occurred on the slave ship (the place of "crouching"), after her mother jumped overboard, or after enslavement, since the immediately preceding statement that "the others are taken I am not taken" may refer to an auction. We do know that Sethe's mother--the woman who came from the sea--bore several children, the progeny of rapes at the hands both of crew members during the Middle Passage ("many times") and of later white slavemasters--children whom she abandoned (62). What is clear is that these lines recount the primal psychic cataclysm when the self-experience of Sethe's mother broke into pieces, expressing that fragmentation in the crucial infantile discourse of hunger for a parent's self-mirroring, self-naming presence.
Historically generated and generationally descended, represented by the child who is a victim of both the Middle Passage and Sethe's desperate act of violence, a product of geographical, cultural, physical, and parental violations of the total self, this disintegration is fundamental to the postslavery African American consciousness, as Morrison reemphasizes in the novel's closing pages. Here, Beloved, forgotten by the community members whose consciousness created her, returns to "the place where long grass opens"—Africa, where the story began—and "erupts into her separate parts" (274). Here, Beloved becomes a historical version of the wounded "baby" who "struggles beneath the surface" of all of the novel's major characters (Schapiro 195). Here, Morrison takes us back to their ancestral infancy, to the infancy of "African American" identity itself. In the archetypical moment when Sethe's mother, picking flowers in the "long grass" with her mother, was abducted and removed into the galley of a slave ship, African American identity was "born," and born into a fragmentation that images the preoedipal fragmentation theorized by Klein, Lacan, Kohut, and others.

As the preoedipal, pre-mirror stage, predifferentiated child occupies no coherent subject position (and here I am using the term "subject" not in a Foucauldian sense but in its Benjamining, intersubjective sense), so the native African removed to the galley of the slave ship had her
subjecthood revoked. Indeed, this systematic displacement of a racialized other represents perhaps the most complete annihilation of full subjecthood in world history: the complete "unmaking," as Hortense Spillers has described it, of cultural identities in their historical, geographical, and relational specificity (72). Like Ralph Ellison's hospital machine—perhaps this was its first incarnation—the slave ship was the scene of a violently coercive (re)birth, a reduction to racialized objecthood, an enforced retreat to a fragment of one's full psychic configuration, and—in all these senses—a disintegration of the body-self.7 Through the single figure of Beloved, Morrison accomplishes nothing less than a stunning revision of the often racistly deployed concept of ontology-recapitulates-phylogeny. In Morrison's revision, however, personal ontology recapitulates ethnic phylogeny because of the generation-to-generation transmission of narcissistic damage that made the culture of slavery so devastating. Beloved's "archaic" disintegration anxiety in the novel's "present" time recapitulates the disintegration inflicted during the most archaic phase of African American ethnicity.8

The ghost of slavery future: Denver

By focusing on Sethe's less ghostly daughter, Denver, we can move this discussion of U.S. racial psychopathology to
more material grounds and from the historical epoch of
preslavery to that of postslavery, for, as Mae Henderson
writes, "The connection of Sethe's present with her past is
figuratively embodied in her relationship to Beloved while
the connection with her future is figuratively embodied in
her relationship with Denver" (75). For Denver Sethe's act
of violence against her own flesh and blood is not a
personally experienced memory of parental aggression but
only a collection of "certain odd and terrifying feelings
about her mother" that conglomerate around the horrible
truth she has blocked from her consciousness (102). Yet
she suffers from a variation of the same gnawing hunger
that characterizes Beloved and from the same intense need
to be responded to as a total self. Her psychological
journey to that archaic state might be traced through her
passages from preverbal infancy to a normal, early
childhood development of a linguistically socialized self,
characterized by her acquisition of "the little i" at Lady
Jones's school, and then to the destructuring moment when
Nelson Lord enunciates her mother's past to her, bringing
its violence momentarily to consciousness and putting "the
little i and all the rest that those afternoons held out of
reach forever" (102). It is at this moment that her
formative "little i" evaporates and she retreats, first to
two years of isolated silence and deafness, then to her
"green bush house" in the woods, an enclosed, withdrawn
subjectivity she can rigidly control while she "keeps watch" for the only object of desire and relationship she feels she can safely allow herself, the ghost-baby (105).

Denver's reaction to Beloved when she appears, then, indicates that Beloved is that object--or, more accurately, that self-object: Beloved is not only the self-object Denver begins to look to for company, empathy, and mirroring appreciation, she is also the self-object that is a projection--as I have suggested in the case of Paul D--of Denver's own injured past and her desire to restore it to wholeness. Her own ungovernable need for Beloved thus mimics Beloved's un governed need for Sethe, encompassing both a similarly intense hunger and a similar desperation for full empathic response. For Denver the catastrophic end of the "wonderful little i" brought about what she thinks of as "the original hunger" (121), an orally and visually hypercathected desire that only Beloved satisfies:

To go back to the original hunger was impossible. Luckily for Denver, looking was food enough to last. But to be looked at in turn was beyond appetite; it was breaking through her own skin to a place where hunger hadn't been discovered...It was lovely. Not to be stared at, not seen, but being pulled into view by the interested, uncritical eyes of the other. Having her hair examined as a part of her self, not as material or a style. Having her lips, nose, chin caressed as they might be if she were a moss rose a gardener paused to admire. (118)

That is, the disintegration of her fragile "i," precipitated by her unnameable fear of her own mother as a threatening, rather than nurturing presence, has catapulted
Denver into an archaic mode of self-object relationship, characterized by similar hungers, similar infantile merger fantasies, and, above all in this passage, a similar need to be responded to appreciatively as a full self.\(^{10}\) Again notable here is the hypercathexis of these desires onto the "visual interactions" through which, "by looking at the mother and by being looked at by her, the child attempts not only to obtain the narcissistic gratifications that are in tune with the visual sensory modality but also strives to substitute for the failures that had occurred in the realm of physical (oral and tactile) contact or closeness" (Kohut, *Analysis* 117). Instead of directing it toward her mother, however, Denver has displaced this needy, injured, infantile self-object relationship onto Beloved--both her long-lost sister and a version of that common childhood compensatory mechanism, the imaginary friend.

Denver's own version of the "depressive-disintegrative reaction to the unempathic self-object milieu" (Kohut, *Restoration* 81), then, like Beloved's, involves a marked tendency toward "depressive eating," oral-incorporative fantasies, and a vulnerability of the self structure that threatens its complete dissolution in the absence of the mirroring self-object. The novel's opening chapter, for example, emphasizes Denver's weight problem and her eating binge in response to Paul D's preemption of Sethe's attention (19). Denver only has a "little i," we might
say, in the context of Beloved's gaze and presence; without Beloved, Denver literally has no self. When Beloved momentarily vanishes one day in the darkened cold house, the portrait of Denver, too, as a chronic case of disintegration anxiety is completed: without Beloved "she does not know where her body stops, which part of her is an arm, a foot or a knee. She feels like an ice cake torn away from the solid surface of the stream....Breakable, meltable and cold" (123). If Paul D's arrival at 124 Bluestone Road threatened the carefully controlled self she had managed to retreat to within the green walls of her boxwood "bower" (28), causing Denver to cry "for herself"--really, as the Kohut framework suggests, a fragment of her self--Beloved's seeming disappearance is far more devastating, erasing Denver's identity altogether: "Now she is crying because she has no self" (123, my emphases).11

The fact that Beloved is stranded in an immature psychic state of narcissistic personality disorder that borders on psychosis can be traced to her dual embodiment of the infant itself--which never got a chance to grow out of primary narcissism--and of the "adult" who is responding in enraged, narcissistically damaged ways to what she experienced as childhood abandonment (at Sweet Home) and physical violence (at Bluestone Road). Denver's less severe case cannot be understood in quite the same way, however, since she was born during the escape from Sweet
Home, did not feel the direct violence of her mother's handsaw, and seems only subconsciously aware of what Sethe did that day, experiencing "odd and terrifying feelings" (102) and recurrent nightmares about her mother: "She cut my head off every night" (206). Indeed, it is the obscure rather than direct presence of Sethe's particular, isolated act in Denver's pathogenesis that allows Morrison to focus attention on a broader context of dysfunctional intersubjective relations and familial disruptions that are precipitated by slavery and its associated racist practices. In one of his signal modifications of Freudian psychoanalysis, Kohut theorizes that "gross events" in childhood memory "often turn out to be no more than crystallization points" for the child's experience of "the specific pathogenic personality of the parent(s) and specific pathogenic features of the atmosphere in which the child grows up," a matrix of empathic response failure that is actually far more important in the genesis of later psychological disturbances than any particular "gross events" (Restoration 187, my emphasis). If the shock of Sethe's infanticide is such a "gross event" in Denver's childhood, Morrison nevertheless creates a vision of Denver's disturbance that urges us to view the moment in the shed--and/or Nelson Lord's enunciation of it--as a mere "crystallization point" for a much more comprehensive
"atmosphere" of faulty responsiveness that actually leads to her damaged state.

Correlatively, it is the portrait of Denver that invites us to disregard the seemingly important, but profoundly misguided, question of Sethe's maternal competence, "morality," "guilt," or "innocence" in her commission of this particular act of violence--or rather that permits us to avoid falling into the trap of asking that question--and to focus our attention instead on an entire culture of slavery that has produced both Denver's and Sethe's psychic deficiencies. Denver is damaged, that is, not by the memory of her mother's commission of a subhuman murder, though even Paul D and other members of the African American community in the novel attempt to read Sethe's act as such, but by the broader absence of anything but "pathogenic personalities" in Denver's and Sethe's formative relational matrices. The Kohutian paradigm suggests that it is Sethe's "disturbed empathic capacity," not her moment of defensive violence, "that, by depriving [Denver] of maturation-promoting responses, sets up the chain of events leading to psychological illness" (Restoration 188). Even more importantly, the object relations approach helps us to position both Sethe's infanticide and the "disturbed empathic capacity" of which it is a manifestation within a larger cycle of emotional damage, for, as Kohut observes, "a mother's faulty empathy
can rarely be judged in isolation....it has to be evaluated as a failure vis-à-vis an unusually difficult task" (Restoration 29).

The case of Denver, I am suggesting, redirects our attention from the "gross event" that seems to be the emotional vortex of the novel to the atmosphere of relational failures and pathogenic personalities that was the condition of the postslavery African American family. This atmosphere, Morrison suggests--the abandonments, degradations, and violences that have already, by the present time of the novel, wrought their havoc on Sethe's own sense of self--make her parental "task" not only difficult, but very nearly impossible. If the depiction of Beloved connects that "gross event" to the disintegrations of the African American past, then, it is in the depiction of Denver that Morrison most clearly connects slavery's disintegration of the African American self to its disintegration of the African American family (and, thereby, to the postslavery future). In the cold house, when Beloved vanishes and Denver is overcome with panic that she is both psychically and physically disintegrating, that she literally has "no self," she immediately connects her loss of identity to what she has experienced as an extended, familial atmosphere of abandonments: "She won't put up with another leaving, another trick. Waking up to find one brother then another not at the foot of the
bed..."; then the loss of her grandmother, Baby Suggs, and now, Beloved, the "dream-come-true" replacement for two losses--her sister and the baby-ghost--"comes true just to leave her on a pile of newspaper in the dark" (123). And while the brothers, Howard and Buglar, left the family ostensibly to escape the ghosts of Sethe's violence, their choice of isolated wandering, too, must be read in the context of a family network, devastated by the practices of slavery, that fails to provide the necessary empathic support.

The two gaping holes at the center of that network, of course, are Sethe's own damaged, "pathogenic personality" and the more absolute absence of the father, Halle, whose redemptive return is another of Denver's dreams. Halle not only failed to rejoin the family after the escape from Sweet Home, he did so because, as Paul D explains to Sethe, his witnessing of Sethe's rape at the hands of her youthful white masters was the final blow that caused his self structure, too, to disintegrate. If, in the Kohutian framework, every psyche has two opportunities to develop a healthy self structure through empathic relationship to first one parent, then the other, Denver has suffered a double self-object failure: her father has not been present at all and her physically present mother has virtually no self to internalize. As Schapiro puts it, less clinically, "The 'other'--whether represented by mother or father--is
always untrustworthy in Morrison's world, rendered thus by the social environment" (205). It is this untrustworthiness of the crucial familial relations that structure the self, enforced by an environment of slavery that ruptures both the family and the subject, that Morrison pinpoints as the intersubjective mechanism of her characters' disintegration.

This emphasis is explicit in the case of Baby Suggs, Halle's mother and the family's matriarch, who, before Halle buys her into freedom and she recovers enough of an identity to begin her career of inspirational preaching, records her lack of identity as a sadness "at her center, the desolated center where the self that was no self made its home" (140). If the rhetoric of this sadness echoes Denver's "crying because she has no self," its cause also has much in common with the disruption of familial bonds at the root of Denver's lack of a self. "White" slaveholders separated Baby Suggs from all of her children but Halle: "it wasn't worth the trouble to try to learn features you would never see change into adulthood anyway. Seven times she had done that....All seven were gone or dead. What would be the point of looking too hard at that youngest one?" (139). This passage dramatically inverts the language of Denver's hungering for a maternal "look" to notice her in all her physical detail, pointing to the critical cycle, the transmission of self-fragmentation from
generation to generation, which the Kohutian framework enables us to understand: Baby Suggs, her own self-structure eradicated by the continuing destruction of her family relationships (she has also lost a husband who, given the opportunity, had to make an escape to freedom without her), is unable to give the crucial "looks" that recognize and affirm the total child; Denver has no self--or at best a fragmented and tenuous self--because she has not received the "looks" that were essential to moving from the infantile "stage of the fragmented self...to the stage of the cohesive self" (Analysis 118) and because she, too, has found every one of her crucial relationships to be untrustworthy.13

It is Sethe, of course, who "looks" both ways in this dynamic, having been separated from the "looks" of, and, as she perceived it, abandoned by, her mother, thus developing the "pathogenic personality" that is incapable--much like Baby Suggs--of giving the appropriate recognition to Denver. Indeed, the text emphasizes Sethe's experience of the lack of the smile of her mother, who was both physically separated from Sethe and facially deformed from being forced to wear a bit on the plantation where Sethe grew up (203). The consequent destruction of Sethe's own self is written as a profound emptiness of the eyes (9)--signalling also her inability to look at Denver with true empathic responsiveness--and as a lack of self-boundaries:
like Beloved in the role of preoedipal infant, "Sethe didn't know where the world stopped and she began" (164). Such boundaries can only be developed, according to Kohut, in empathic relationship to an appropriately structured self-object.

The ghost of slavery present: Schoolteacher

In Beloved, however, this destruction of the self through the disruption of familial relations is both a direct product of and cofunctionary with the debasements of a racist system of oppression, or, as FitzGerald puts it, "the responsibility for Sethe's confusion lies in slavery, which positioned her as object and denied her the experience of bonding with her own mother through which she could arrive at a separate subjectivity" (678, my emphasis). Significantly, the two strands of the destruction of the African American self which FitzGerald gestures toward here correspond to the two mechanisms of fragmentation with which I began this chapter. In pursuing my interest in how the admittedly depoliticized self psychological view I have presented can be modified to include a consciousness of how racial politics impinge upon the (mis)construction of subjectivity, I want to separate out the first strand of Fitzgerald's formulation—the positioning of slavery's victims as objects—as a component of the slavery system Morrison represents that is worthy of
specific study in its own right. In the case of Paul D, for example, Morrison's focus is much less on the severance of familial bonds and much more on the dehumanizing effects of racist objectification. The lack of empathic recognition or responsiveness that causes him to "retreat to a fragment of [his] larger experiential unit" (Kohut, Restoration 81), we might say, takes the form of his being treated as an object rather than as a subject. The tortures inflicted on him at Sweet Home, which make him feel like even less of a subject than the rooster he must look at eye-to-eye (72), and the disciplinary enforcement of the identification "nigger" on the chain gang (107-8), are the cultural strategies of individualization that deny the empathic needs of his "broader psychological configuration" (Kohut, Restoration 81), causing his "whole" self to disintegrate. More explicitly than any of the other characters in Beloved, Paul D has survived the idea of "nigger" in his symbolic world, and the literal box in the ground that physically enforced it on him, by retreating to a fragment of his "larger experiential unit": "After [the chain gang] he had shut down a generous portion of his head, operating on the part that helped him walk, eat, sleep, sing....The box had done what Sweet Home had not, what working like an ass and living like a dog had not: drove him crazy so he would not lose his mind" (41). The subterranean box in which he is forced to sleep on the
chain gang, I am suggesting, is only the disciplinary instrument through which is executed his individualization in the symbolic box "nigger"—the sexual, economic, and psychological servitude to which he returns each morning at the utterance of the words "Hungry, nigger?" (108).

Contemplating another degradation a few pages later, Paul D reiterates this retreat to a fragment of experience as the enclosure of part of himself within a "tobacco tin buried in his chest where a red heart used to be" (72-73). The unthinkable memory in question here involves Schoolteacher, the slavemaster who replaced the marginally more humane Mr. Garner at Sweet Home, and who becomes the crucial figure in Morrison's depiction of this second, more symbolic strand of slavery's annihilation of the "black" self. Forced to wear a bit in his mouth by Schoolteacher, Paul D realizes that the barnyard rooster, Mister, is allowed more of a self than he is: "wasn't no way I'd ever be Paul D again, living or dead. Schoolteacher changed me. I was something else and that something was less than a chicken sitting in the sun" (72). This recollection provides our first glimpse of Morrison's recreation of the fact that racism was an integral part of slavery. That is, Schoolteacher as a "white" man is after more than just the material benefits of physical domination and economic exploitation; he has an equal if not greater investment in this reduction of Paul D to less than subject status, to
less than human status—to, in fact, the position of object. What we see in this torture session is Schoolteacher short-circuiting the intersubjective matrix to position himself as "white" and as subject and to position Paul D as "black"—as racialized other, and, thereby, as object. I am not saying that Schoolteacher does this to Paul D because of the power invested in him as a "white" man, or because Paul D is "black"; I am saying that Schoolteacher here creates himself as "white" by, in fact, reducing Paul D to the position of object.

The disciplinary session Paul D remembers in this passage is really only a material practice in what is actually Schoolteacher's far more extensive systematic, discursive, and rationalized methodology of objectification. Schoolteacher is a sort of pseudoscientific disciplinarian, bent on inscribing the African Americans on his farm in a discourse of biologization, biological segmentation, and taxonomical differentiation. Arriving with a supply of notebooks and papers, his intention is not only to work his slaves—to exploit their bodily labor for profit—but also to (rationally) study them as bodies, thus doubly concretizing his own autonomy as rational, thinking, and knowing subject. Engaging a practice of slavery that is far more devastating to the self-experiences of the Sweet Home residents than the simple denial of freedom they were accustomed to under the previous owner, both because
of its more draconian methods of torture and because of its positioning of them as objects of study, Schoolteacher begins observing, measuring, quantifying, testing, notetaking, and classifying his human chattel. In doing so, as Mae Henderson phrases it, "he divides or dismembers the indivisibility of the slaves' humanity to reconstruct (or perhaps deconstruct) the slave in his text" (70).

It isn't the "measuring string" that he applies to Sethe's head, nose, and behind (191) that devastates her self so much as it is her textualization as subhuman object of study, signified by two particular recollections in her gallery of horror. The first, which she relates to Beloved as justification for the infanticide, is the day she overhears Schoolteacher instructing his pupils on how to "do" Sethe as a write-up in their notebooks: "'I told you to put her human characteristics on the left; her animal ones on the right. And don't forget to line them up.'" (193). The, second, which occurs the day of the escape attempt, is Schoolteacher's instigation of an "experiment" in which Sethe is "milked"/raped by his pupils, "two boys with mossy teeth, one sucking on my breast the other holding me down, their book-reading teacher watching and writing it up" (70). Inferring that physical death is preferable to the psychic death of being reduced to a sexualized, biologized, and bestialized object in the
scientific discourse of another, Sethe swears, "No notebook for my babies and no measuring string neither" (198).

"The dismemberment of Schoolteacher's method," then, as Henderson notes, "is the discursive analog to the dismemberment of slavery" (70). Indeed, Sethe identifies Schoolteacher's manipulation of discursive objectification as more destructive than his physical abuses. As she describes his effect on another of the Sweet Home slaves, "'He commenced to carry round a notebook and write down what we said. I still think it was them questions that tore Sixo up. Tore him up for all time'" (37). As Sethe's rhetoric here suggests, moreover, the psychic death imposed by Schoolteacher's objectifying disciplines is indeed an exact, discursive analog to the "dismemberments" of slavery's material practices: like the disruption of familial relationships, it imports the complete fragmentation of the self. Schoolteacher's notebooks form a critical symbolic link in his total system of discipline for "the dis-membering of slaves from their families, their labor, their selves" (Henderson 71).

Schoolteacher, no less than the fabricators of literary "Africanism," is engaged in the practice of writing "race" here, though his methodology, as Barbara Christian suggests, is probably meant to evoke that of the legion of nineteenth-century "white" "scientists" and ethnographers who tried to establish physiological justifications for
race differentiation and for slavery. That is, though he aspires to the scholarly objectivity of scientific empiricism, studying a "thing" that is already "there," Morrison shows him to be actually creating "race" in his objects of study as he studies them. His method of inquiry is not intersubjective or empathic, to use the terms of my psychoanalytic perspective, but is structured, like his physical humiliation of Paul D, to confirm his own position as knowing, thinking subject, by defining others as objects. His "study" of "race" thus takes the form, as his anatomical segmentation of Sethe suggests, of a creation of "race" that constitutes his subjectivity as culture and civilization, hers as nature and body; his as human, hers as animal. His writing of "race," to borrow Henderson's cogent summary, "espouses a concept of difference and 'otherness' as a form of subhumanity that serves, through a process of negative self-identification, to confirm his own sense of superiority. It is Sethe's 'savagery' which confirms Schoolteacher's 'civilization,' her 'bestiality' which confirms his 'humanity'" (70).

Morrison's fictional portrayal of Schoolteacher thus dramatizes her critical assertion, in Playing in the Dark, about the psychological instrumentality of "black slavery": "in that construction of blackness and enslavement could be found not only the not-free but also, with the dramatic polarity created by skin color, the projection of the not
From forcing Paul D to wear the bit to observing, questioning, and "writing" his slaves, we can see Schoolteacher constructing a system of both "race" and enslavement that projects his "not-me," allowing him to self-legitimatingly clear his own subject of "savagery." Morrison thus represents fictionally how it is this psychological function—what she calls, in Playing in the Dark, "ego-reinforcement"—that made the practice of racial objectification itself—especially the deployment of "race" as a discursive discipline—essential to the practice of slavery.

This constitution of "blackness" as "savage," "sexual," and "bodily" as a means of reinforcing the subjecthood of a "white" ego, of course, is what I have been describing throughout this study as a racial mirror stage. As I have tried to show—as Fanon so poignantly represents his response to the epithet "nigger"—being positioned as "black" object to the "white" subject in such a constitution of subjectivity is inherently fragmenting for the "black" self, a fragmentation Morrison captures in the images of both Sixo, torn up by the discursive discipline of Schoolteacher's notebooks, and Paul D, who shuts down a portion of his head to survive the bodily discipline of Schoolteacher's bit and collar. The symbolic, imaginative, and discursive destruction of the "black" self articulated by Schoolteacher's modes of racial individualization, then,
are the novel's particular instances of a larger, cultural mirror stage that implements the symbolic violence of "white" and "black." Indeed, Morrison thematizes this cultural mechanism in a crucial passage that seems to forego, for the moment, both narrative voice and the implied consciousness of her character--Stamp Paid--in order to engage in a bit of blunt cultural analysis. In effect, her description of the constitution of "whiteness" as a process by which "whites" project onto "blackness" a "jungle" that actually "lived under their own white skin" (199), provides the interpretation of what she has shown Schoolteacher doing with his notebooks. Like Schoolteacher, "whites" at large have created the "savagery," disorder, and subhumanity that they claim only to observe or respond to in "blacks:

Whitepeople believed that whatever the manners, under every dark skin was a jungle. Swift unnavigable waters, swinging screaming baboons, sleeping snakes, red gums ready for their sweet white blood....But it wasn't the jungle blacks brought with them to this place from the other (livable) place. It was the jungle whitefolks planted in them. And it grew. It spread. (198)

Moreover, Morrison's cultural mirror stage, like that of Fanon, is powerful and destructive: those positioned by it as "black" object cannot help but engage a desperate, disordered effort to regain the position of subject--"human," in the mirror stage's own symbolic code--which is a necessity for the experience of total selfhood: "The more
colored people spent their strength trying to convince them how gentle they were, how clever and loving, how human, the more they used themselves up to persuade whites of something Negroes believed could not be questioned, the deeper and more tangled the jungle grew inside" (198).

The inevitable growth of this disordered "jungle" corresponds to the profound sense of objectification experienced at Schoolteacher's hands by Paul D and Sethe. Not only does it mandate a perpetual, and virtually impossible, struggle to reconnect with the "human," "rational," and "emotional" components of self-experience, as Stamp Paid here suggests, but that very struggle also implies a segmentation of the total self. We might understand the denial of full self experience implicit in objectification in terms of Jessica Benjamin's intersubjective theory, which argues that the splitting of the intersubjective field into subject and object can only be experienced as fragmenting for human psyches that are inherently relational and intersubjective (63). Or, as I have suggested, we might understand Schoolteacher's objectifying disciplines as denials of full empathic recognition, forcing the paradigmatic "retreat" to a fragment of the "broader psychological configuration" (Kohut, Restoration 81). Or, as Sethe herself describes the objectifying force of the racial mirror stage, "anybody white could take your whole self for anything that came to
mind. Not just work, kill, or maim you, but dirty you. Dirty you so bad you forgot who you were and couldn't think it up anymore" (251).

This symbolic strand of slavery's destruction of the "black" self, then, reinforces the familial and relational destruction of the slave identity. Insomuch as it functions as a more insidious symbolic structure within the African American psyche, it propagates that destruction into the postslavery future correlative (and overlappingly, as I have noted) with the intergenerational transmission of self-object damage that Morrison most notably thematizes as a sort of matrilineal dysfunction. But what I have tried to suggest, in bringing the intersubjective and object-relational perspectives to bear on the racial mirror stage, is that these two mechanisms of slavery's fragmentation of the African American self are not only related and similar, but related and similar because they are versions of the same process of identity formation; more accurately, of the same process of identity distortion. From the perspective of an intersubjective context in which the experience of a whole, total, or integrated self has its being through "mutual recognition" with other "subjects" (Benjamin), or in relationship with others that are experienced as "self-objects" through the mediation of "empathic response" (Kohut), that is, the racial mirror stage is understandable as a form of self
object failure. The racial mirror stage, like its Lacanian antecedent, relies on a denial of intersubjectivity and its empathy, postulates an "I" by violently splitting the experiential world into knowing subject and external object, and, thereby, closes off the intermediate, internalizing position of self-object. When the current flowing through empathy flickers off, entire sectors of the self disappear, as Paul D discovers when he loses his "red heart" and shuts down a portion of his head. Both the perpetrators and the victims of the racial mirror stage, then, will experience a fragmentation analogous to those who, robbed in development of the empathic response and internalizability of healthy parental self-objects, are stranded in a perpetual quest for a more integrated experience of identity. Psyches struggling to survive in the absences of "mutual recognition" pursuant to either the cultural or the personal process I have outlined here, Morrison's novel illustrates, will retreat to fragments of their experience. Her "'inscape' of the memory of slavery," a product of both processes working together, provides a racially politicized analog to Kohut's understanding of the psychic misery of "Tragic Man": "The deepest horror man can experience is that of feeling that he is exposed to circumstances in which he is no longer regarded as human by others; i.e., in a milieu that does
not even respond with faulty or distorted empathy to his presence" (Reflections).

The pieces I am, she gather them

When Denver walks out of the boundaried structure of the house at 124 Bluestone Road, which has become a site of "consuming narcissism" (Schapiro 204) isolated from the outside world, she makes a first, tentative step toward reinstating mutually supportive, empathically communicative relations with a community of self-objects (248-49). In response to Denver's attempt at connection, the narcissistically disordered structure of her life suddenly inverts as her requests for help, her offerings of service, and her efforts at conversation are rewarded with food, education, and friendship. When Paul D finally overcomes the blindness of a white-derived rhetoric that defines Sethe as beast, part of his own internalized "jungle," he is able to reach out to her with a gesture of affirming, bodily, empathic responsiveness, converting his discourse about the number of her feet to an offer to rub her feet (272). Both instances point to the possibility that, despite the formidable replicative capacity of slavery's mutilations of the self, neither its infliction of narcissistic damage nor its cultural disciplines of objectification are impenetrable.
Sethe is still, as Paul D offers to bathe her, only able to imagine the kind of attention, the kind of looking, that segments her as a body—"If he bathes her in sections, will the parts hold?"—but it is precisely his offer of close, loving attention to her as a total self, almost as a "total child," that initiates the process by which she might recover a sense of her own, still tentative, "Me? Me?"

Though the novel provides no guarantees, that is, we are invited to imagine that Paul D's "holding fingers" "holding hers," together with his affirming response—"You your best thing, Sethe"—could provide the structure—like the pathogenically missing mother's smile—for rebuilding her self (273). Sethe's closing "Me? Me?" suggests a possible revision of not only the narcissistically damaged Sethe, who can only think of her children as extensions of her self (and the "best" part of her self), but also of the racially individualized Sethe, who is accustomed to being sectioned, measured, and animalized.

The way out of the fragmentations of slavery, as Paul D recalls in this scene while trying to cope with the "too many things" he feels about Sethe (272), is suggested by Sixo's relationship to the "Thirty-Mile Woman." An empathic friendship of the mind that involves neither making the other a part of oneself nor responding to only a part of them, neither reducing the other to an object nor exalting them as an ideal, this relationship offers a model
for the reintegration of self-experience. As Sixo described it: "She is a friend of my mind. She gather me, man. The pieces I am, she gather them and give them back to me in all the right order" (272-73). In suggesting that we take a lesson about empathic responsiveness from this passage, I do not want "empathy" to be construed as anything as simple as "caring," "sympathy," or "closeness." What I take friendship of the mind to mean is the continual, mutual attempt to recognize the full psychic configuration of another as if from within it, hence enabling each party to sense the important "pieces" of the other that they might be constantly reflecting that psychic configuration back in "all the right order."

bell hooks has described this passage as "paradigmatic" for a "transformed" notion of how black men and women can bond (214), and, given our similar need for transformed modes of bonding across a multitude of identity modes, I would extend that application. hooks is quite right to note that the passage evokes the need of black women and men for "that space of recognition and understanding, where we know one another so well, our histories, that we can take the bits and pieces, the fragments of who we are, and put them back together, re-member them" (214). But it is precisely in the significance of these historical pieces, the past versions of the self, the "yesterday" that Paul D gestures toward in beginning to think of building his and
Sethe's "tomorrow" (273), that Sixo's paradigm is most applicable to additional, broader social dynamics. As Mae Henderson argues, Morrison's call for a "re-memberance" of the self imports not only Sethe's need to "claim and surrender the past in order to refigure the future," but also the reader's need to do likewise (82). For culturally "white" readers like myself, then, Beloved provides a critical first opportunity to become empathically immersed in the full psychology of the African American past, that we might avert what Henderson refers to as the "continuation of a 'national amnesia'" about the "personal aspects of the story of slavery" (83). In rereading Morrison's story of my own historical and racial "others" from an empathic perspective, I am most interested in how such a friendship of the minds across the cultural and psychic boundaries of the U.S. racial mirror stage could contribute to an interracial restoration of the self.

Notes

1. The work of reading the psychological implications of Beloved has already been initiated in productive, and productively different, ways by Schapiro, Henderson, Fitzgerald, Wyatt, and Mathieson, among others. As Morrison has commented in comparing her fiction to the histories of slave life contained in the slave narratives, the impulse of her artistic effort was to "find and expose a truth about the interior life of people who didn't write it" ("Site" 113, emphasis mine).

2. Although Benjamin's focus on the "self who suffers the lack of recognition" (19) has much in common with Kohut's emphasis on the self damaged by failures of empathic response, she explicitly distances her conception of
intersubjectivity from Kohut's idea of self-object relationships, arguing that the latter "fails to distinguish between using others as 'selfobjects' and recognizing the other as an outside subject, missing the key point of the intersubjective view" (251, n.16). While this would seem to place Kohut midway between Klein's strictly object-relations view and Benjamin's subject-subject paradigm, I believe it somewhat mischaracterizes self psychology, failing to take into account, for example, the recognition of the other as subject that is implicit in the deep empathy of the healthy or therapeutic self-object relationship.

3. In my reference to Wyatt, as in my discussion of Horvitz above, I have somewhat deliberately avoided their emphasis on the identity issues in Beloved as questions of specifically maternal, feminine, or African American women's identity or recovery. I do so not to deny the validity of what critics like Wyatt, Horvitz, and Henderson have interpreted as the novel's emphasis on women's subjectivity, but to suggest how the validity of their observations extends to the novel's concern with racial subjectivity, across, for the moment, gender lines. Morrison herself has insisted that she writes "without gender focus" ("Interview" 54), suggesting a willingness to think beyond the mother-daughter identity dynamic that manifests itself in at least two textual details: Denver is crippled not only by Sethe's inability to provide a healthy "maternal" model, but also by Halle's equally significant physical absence; and it is Paul D who eventually moves into the role most evocative of what Wyatt calls the "maternal symbolic," offering a caring, bodily, "mothering" relationship to Sethe in the final scene.

4. Rick Moreland finds another useful psychoanalytic model for this relationship in Julia Kristeva's descriptions of the autoerotism of the mother-child dyad. Without the crucial presence of what Kristeva calls the "Third Party," he notes, "Sethe retreats again into this 'inside loneliness' with Beloved....this retreat functions in the way Kristeva describes the mother-infant romance that from two into an indistinguishable one threatens to collapse into abjection and devouring" (519).

5. Beloved's disintegration, FitzGerald suggests, can also be read as a version of what Klein called "the feeling that the ego is in bits," a result of infantile ambivalence about or splitting of a maternal imago that the infant, still preoedipally unseparated from the mother, can only
perceive as totally nurturing or totally abandoning (674). Barbara Mathieson, meanwhile, finds both Freud and the object relationalist D. W. Winnicott useful in understanding the distinctly narcissistic and preoedipal identity (mal)formations of characters in the novel, especially Beloved (2-3). The ghost-baby’s fear of disintegration, Mathieson notes, can also be referred to Winnicott’s observation of anxieties of self-disintegration in young children as a response to maternal absence (Mathieson 17).

6. Wyatt 480. Wyatt draws her characterization of the middle passage from the remarks of Hortense Spillers in her essay "Mama’s Baby, Papa’s Maybe: An American Grammar Book."

7. In Invisible Man, the protagonist, his head encircled by a piece of iron like the iron collar worn by the smiling woman in Beloved’s recollection of the Middle Passage, experiences the hospital machine not only as a place where he "had just begun to live" but also as an amputation of his limbs and a dissolution of his bodily boundaries, and as a desperate quest to name himself (228, 232-35).

8. In other words, a psychoanalytic recovery of the past that would be therapeutic for victims of racialization like Sethe would have to include retelling and repossessing not only her personal past, but some recovery of the history of slavery as well, like the retelling Morrison herself is engaged in here. See Henderson 72-75 and n. 30, especially her observations on the concept of ontology’s recapitulation of phylogeny that Morrison may be revising to her own purposes.

9. Rick Moreland has argued, somewhat differently from my own formulation, that Beloved serves as a sort of Kristevian "Third Party" for Denver, facilitating her emergence from an isolated, abject relationship to Sethe and enabling her to revise and retell her "story" about herself in a way that gives her an interactive, "different role than that of either the hero or the powerless victim" (514). While I find Moreland's reading of Denver's condition in terms of the isolation and polarization forced on her by the "romance" discourse of either "heroism" or "helplessness" a useful addition to the psychoanalytic framework of infantile narcissism (which similarly polarizes possession and dependence), I think his view idealizes the therapeutic nature of the Denver-Beloved relationship in ways the text does not support, neglecting
what seem to be the distinctly unhealthy, narcissistically damaged aspects of their interaction after Denver's "retelling" of her story/self: for example, Denver's panic of total disintegration (123) and the threesome's later withdrawal inside the isolating boundaries of their house.

10. See also Kohut's description of such relationships, in an analytical context, as involving "editions of a child's demands for attention, approval, and for the confirmatory echoing of its presence," and "an admixture of the tyranny and overpossessiveness which betrays a heightening of oral-sadistic and anal-sadistic drive elements" (Analysis 124-25).

11. The cold house where Denver's disintegration panic occurs seems to be an important locus in the novel for the associations of the characters' disintegration anxieties. It is, of course, where Paul D and Beloved enact their eroticized quest for wholeness, but it is also where Beloved becomes transfixed by the "sunlit cracks" in the ceiling, causing her to curl into a fetal position (124), and where Paul D lives among "old newspapers gnawed at the edges by mice" and "moonlight seeping through the cracks" (263-64). Such images evoke the way Kohut's patients link "the dread of the loss of [the] self" to the structural integrity of their living quarters: "a negligible crack in the plaster in one room might indicate the presence of a serious structural defect of the patient's house....or, in dreams, the frightening infestation of the living quarters with spreading vermin" (Restoration 105).

12. We might include in such a characterization of Sethe her hyperprotective refusal to consider Denver as a full, separate subject in her own right (44-45), what Paul D refers to as her "too-thick" love (164), and the fact that, at the moment of crisis, she can only think of her children as "parts" of her own self that she "collects" (163), which, indeed, is the mental configuration that enables her to think in terms of killing the "crawling-already?" baby to protect it from slavery, as FitzGerald points out (678).

13. In a parallel and productive interpretation, Schapiro reads the "looking" dynamic I am emphasizing here in terms of Benjamin's concept of "recognition," equally critical to the development of the self as an experiential whole--the subject, in Benjamin's framework. Noting that "empathize" is one of the possible "near-synonyms" for what she means by "recognize," Benjamin observes, "The idea of mutual
recognition seems to me an ever more crucial category of early experience" (16).

14. Characterizing Schoolteacher as a "disciplinary" "ethnographer-as-historian," Henderson claims that Morrison uses his portrayal as "an indictment of the kind of 'scholarly' and 'scientific' discourse and representation in which the preconceptions and presuppositions of the inquirer subject the results of the inquiry to gross distortions" (84, n.18).

15. Citing Morrison's 1989 interview in Time magazine, Henderson reports, "Morrison tells us that Beloved is a book 'about something that the characters don't want to remember, I don't want to remember, black people don't want to remember, white people don't want to remember.' The author's remarks speak to a public desire to repress the personal aspects of the story of slavery." See Morrison, "The Pain of Being Black," Time (May 22, 1989): 120.
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