

## THE COLD-WAR LITERATURE OF FREEDOM AND RE-CONCEPTION OF RACE: RICHARD WRIGHT'S *THE OUTSIDER* AND LIONEL TRILLING'S *THE LIBERAL IMAGINATION*

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### I. *Mapping the Studies of Cold-War Culture*

In the studies of the culture of Cold-War America, there are basically three axes of analysis. One axis concerns the emergence of “modernism” in art and literature during the fifties when the former ally of the Soviet Union turned into its main enemy. Another relates the significance of gender roles in the oppressive climate of the era epitomized by McCarthyism. The last focuses on the opposition between conformism and individualism that worked as a paradigmatic polemic among the Cold-War intellectuals. Although my argument stands altogether on these three axes, it can also be safely said that the third one has some critical privilege when I attempt a historical reading of the era’s culture, as far as the paradigmatic polemic was the matter for Cold-War intellectuals themselves. In order to articulate the critical value of the culture that sheds light on the historical meaning of our present in the twenty-first century, the cultural configuration of the third is to be examined with reference to the former two axes.

In *Creating Faulkner’s Reputation*, Lawrence H. Schwartz argues that the blistering critical ascent of William Faulkner after World War II symbolizes a “shift in cultural emphasis” on “a formalist aesthetic” that “advocated a solipsistic literary modernism that repudiated 1930s realism”: “The postwar art-for-art’s-sake formalism was a way to evade the world and, in the guise of avoiding the explicitly political, to give the appearance that there were no underlying political criteria for literature” (138-39). In a similar vein, Serge Guilbaut in *How New York Stole the Idea of Modern Art* analyzes the “slow process of de-Marxization and later depoliticization” as the political context of the birth and the appraisal of postwar American formalist art, exemplified by Jackson Pollack. Also in this context, according to Guilbaut, it was understood that “abstract expressionism was for many the expression of freedom” (201).

From another viewpoint, what Schwartz and Guilbaut explain is the establishment of the ideology of modernism. In *A Singular Modernity*, Fredric Jameson proposes that “the affirmation of the autonomy of the aesthetic” as the ideology of modernism was “not contemporaneous with the modern movement itself,” but “a belated product, and essentially an invention and an innovation of the years following World War II” (164). Jameson here emphasizes that the ideology of modernism is “an American invention” in what should be called “late modernism” that is “a product of the Cold War, but in all kinds of complicated ways” (165). In short, the belief in the autonomy of the aesthetic and the depoliticization of art form the two sides of the same coin, situated within the late modernism of Cold-War America.

Yet, what is called depoliticization above, which in fact means the liquidation of the

naturalism and political realism of the thirties, does not make a world free from the political when we talk about sexual politics in the works of Faulkner or Pollock. A simple confusion in wording as this may seem, the confusion in fact concerns changes in the definition of what is political that sets the theoretical bottom line of this paper's argument. In the classic analysis of gender politics during the period, *Homeward Bound*, Elaine Tyler May coined the concept of "domestic containment," which criticizes the Cold-War idealization of the nuclear family as the "home" as being a reinforcement of the fixed gender roles: the male breadwinner and the female housewife. Following this insight, Suzanne Clark demonstrates that "Theodore Roosevelt's arena of strenuous manliness was rearticulated in the Cold War arena and underwrote the new international politics of East and West" when the Cold War, that is, the recognition that Americans were under virtual siege by the communists, made the intellectuals "cold warriors," or people who virtually engaged in the ideological war on the home front (5). On the other hand, K. A. Cuordileone reveals in a detailed analysis that the delineation of cold warriors was carried out through an exclusion of the "pinks" and the "lavenders" that associated such political "perverts" as communists and fellow travelers with sexual perverts.

The paradigm of conformism versus individualism is seen obviously in classical writings of the era, such as David Riesman's *The Lonely Crowd* and W. E. Whyte's *The Organization Man*, making a stark contrast to today's multiculturalist agenda of pluralist identities. Basically, the tension is understood to result from the Cold-War emphasis on masculinity, which celebrated the individualist code of conduct, and the spread of Fordism and industrial modernization in the American fifties, which seemed to increase tacit control of life in general. In a way similar to that in which the post-war formalism of American art was associated with the expression of freedom, the Cold-War commitment to individualism also is supported in terms of freedom from suppression and alienation. In *Empire of Conspiracy*, Timothy Melley depicts the way that what he aptly calls "agency panic," where through the fear of conspiracy what one believes one does as an autonomous individual becomes indistinguishable from the effect of ulterior control, derives from the Cold-War obsession with individualist freedom, which historically leads to a more explicit treatment of the anxiety about conspiracy theories in postmodern fiction. While Melley situates, as the prehistory of postmodernism, the value of individualism in both fiction of the fifties and the cultural analyses in such writers as Riesman and Whyte, Andrew Hoberek's *The Twilight of the Middle Class* finds the genealogy of the individualist commitment in the economic and social transformation of the definition of the middle class: it is in this era that the traditional definition of the American middle class as the group of individual entrepreneurs (of small mills and large shops) gave place to the new one of salaried workers, where loss of individual freedom emerged as the decline of the common American value.

Adopting the three axes of depoliticization, masculine sexual politics, and commitment to individualism as the main characteristics of the American fifties, I read Richard Wright's *The Outsider* as a most insightful analysis and criticism of the liberal culture of Cold-War America. The novel, which follows the author's renowned *Native Son* and *Black Boy*, was written and published while he lived in Paris with his family in a self-imposed exile. My reading might not seem very plausible at first glance since, from the first, the novel was criticized for its detachment from the USA: it was considered to be irrelevant to, rather than critical of, America in spite of the fact that the novel's hero is a contemporary African-American. One of the first reviews of the novel concludes: "While Wright sits out the threat of totalitarianism in Paris, an

abler U.S. Negro novelist sees the problem of his race differently. Says Ralph (*Invisible Man*) Ellison: 'After all, my people have been here for a long time. . . . It is a big, wonderful country. . . .'<sup>1</sup> In this sense, it was placed in a strange context: while the novel and its protagonist look into the value of "outsiderness" as an inherent and healthy critique in and of liberal, or non-totalitarian, culture, the novel was itself seen as an outsider. According to Michel Fabre's biography of the author, Wright himself "felt that the European intellectual, with his richer cultural background, would be more likely to appreciate [the novel] than the average American reader with no training in philosophy, yet it was to this reader that he addressed his novel of ideas, disguised as a melodrama" (367).

Naturally enough, the reception of such a novel, of an outsider written by an exile, involves problems of nationalism. The structure of American nationalism of this period basically stands on the identification of the American way of life with the universal value of liberalism and freedom against the background of the tensions of the Cold War. Although Paul Gilroy in *The Black Atlantic* mentions little of the context of the Cold War, his re-evaluation of the novel in terms of the notion of diaspora provides an important viewpoint from which to appreciate the novel's critical value.

In the book, Gilroy argues that, while Wright's early works, such as *Uncle Tom's Children*, *Native Son* and *Black Boy*, were evaluated through "what was perceived to be the unchallengeable racial authenticity of their Mississippian author" (152), the "range and diversity of Wright's works are overshadowed by the fortifications which critics have placed between the work he produced in America and the supposedly inferior products of his European exile" (155). Gilroy especially focuses on Wright's later works including his non-fiction *Pagan Spain*, *Black Power* and *White Man Listen!*, while the essence of the project by Wright as an exile is epitomized in *The Outsider*, because his life constitutes "another fragmentary part of the history of the international social and political movement known hazily and inadequately by the label Pan-Africanism," which "challenges our understanding of modern politics precisely because it overflows from the confining structures of the nation state" (151). In *The Outsider*, Gilroy finds, rightly as I believe, the "enduring value of his radical view of modernity" which works through the desire to "escape the ideological and cultural legacies of Americanism" and to "seek complex answers to the questions which racial and national identities could only obscure" (173). It is in this sense that, as Gilroy, reviewing the history of the novel's evaluation, contends, critics abhorred "Wright's desire to criticize and experiment with European philosophy" since it is read as "a modernist violation of the literary codes and expectations surrounding Negro literature" (172-173) and that they unwittingly wanted Wright to be a "protest writer" since it was believed that "he should have been content to remain confined within the intellectual ghetto to which Negro literary expression is still too frequently consigned" (173).

Gilroy thus suggests that a re-evaluation of the novel requires putting it in an international context, liberating it from a narrow nationalist understanding. My starting point, however, is that the novel, strongly insisting on the value of liberalism, is obviously a good, if not typical, example of the American novel of the early fifties. The racism that works tacitly in readings of the novel, which Gilroy clearly articulates, is probably the main reason it is *segregated* from contemporary novels, making what they share invisible. And, if the novel shares many

<sup>1</sup> *Unfinished* 369. For the general reception of the novel at the time of publication, see *Unfinished* 365-374.

characteristics with such novels as *The Adventures of Augie March*, *The Catcher in the Rye*, *On the Road*, and so on, what distinguishes it is that what the text suppresses, or, to follow Jameson, the political unconscious of the novel, clearly suggests the limits of the Cold-War liberal culture, which becomes apparent when it is put in an appropriate international context.

Written after Wright's break with the communist party, the novel strongly emphasizes freedom from any kind of ideology through the voice of its protagonist Cross Damon, although, as Gilroy points out, it is seldom thought to be following the late modernist creed of the autonomy of the aesthetic. Damon is a figure of Cold-War individualism whose basic ingredient is disbelief in the ideological. The novel clearly demonstrates that the appeal to the value of "life," in relation to such a concept as the American way of life, produces the bottom line on which every kind of social and cultural structure is to be conceived. As I argue below, this is the shift from the political to the biopolitical of the realm where the problems of power are to be analyzed, which is what makes possible the conception of liberal culture as a space free of anything ideological. I believe we can trace this crucial shift in Lionel Trilling's tremendously influential *The Liberal Imagination* as well as in Wright's novel.

One of the primary reasons why the novel was problematic from the start is that Damon insists throughout that none of his acts have anything to do with the color of his skin. Gilroy's argument shows that how to understand the location of blackness in the novel is one of the crucial points for every reader. Starting as the author of a "protest novel" with a Marxist background, Wright's trajectory in the fifties, I believe, reflects the way the idea of "race" was transformed along with the radical changes in the cultural and political climate after World War II. It is not only that the communist Soviet Union suddenly turned from being an ally into a mortal enemy, but also that, with the symbolic publication of Gunnar Myrdal's *An American Dilemma* in 1944, segregation in the South started to be seen by liberal intellectuals as a shameful situation that should be immediately remedied.<sup>2</sup>

How to regard the fifties could be compared to the cliché about a cup half-empty or half-full: the decade was an era when the official racist structure started to be abolished as well as still being dominant. My interest concerns how the idea of "race" changed its meaning in the era rather than to what degree the decade was progressive or politically correct. In fact, one of the main points in my analysis of Cold-War culture is an emphasis on the comparative insignificance of the idea in the era's predominant paradigm of individualism versus conformism: an individualist, especially a Cold-War one, tends not to affiliate with any group as far as he is a true individualist (and we might add here that all the typical Cold-War individualists were male). If the cup of the Cold War is seen as half-empty, we will see there a regrettable lack of commitment to identity; if it is seen as half-full, we will in fact see there an alternative conception of solidarity influenced by Marxist thinking of the thirties, which more or less resembles what Gilroy advocates under the name of diaspora.

Wright's criticism of the rhetoric of race is salient not only in *The Outsider*: basically throughout his life he repeatedly insisted that he did not believe in what we now call racial identity. A phrase from *Pagan Spain*, which Gilroy also uses as an epigram in his chapter on Wright, makes clear how Wright articulates his understanding of "race": "I have no religion in the formal sense of the word, . . . I have no race except that which is forced upon me. I have no country except that to which I am obliged to belong. I have no traditions. I'm free. I have

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<sup>2</sup> As for the international context of desegregation, in addition to it as a moral imperative, see Dudziak.

only the future” (21). It is of course no easy task to define and evaluate what “race” means to Wright. I at least would like to show that in what we today may call an anti-essentialist or constructionist view of “race,” what Wright shows in a distinctive way is his keen sense of history and of the idea’s historicity, his relentless contextualization in history of what is called “race,” whenever he tries to think in terms of racial discourse. And in the context of the Cold-War culture, what is suppressed in terms of history is the past ideal of internationalist Marxism, which had been constantly problematic for the author himself. In the introduction to *Black Power*, called “Apropos Prepossessions,” Wright explains the value of Marxist thinking to him thus: “In presenting this picture of a part of Africa, I openly use, to a limited degree, Marxist analysis of historic events to explain what has happened in this world for the past five hundred years or more. If anyone should object to my employment of Marxist methods . . . , I have to say that I’ll willingly accept any other method of interpreting the facts; but I insist that any other method *must not exclude the facts!*” (xiii; original emphasis). Wright certainly hates the ideologist of Communism, but, to see this the other way around, Marxism still means for him the realist, factual and even true way to understand history even when he rejects the existent communisms. And this is where Wright was able to signal the critique of the Cold-War liberal culture that was predominant not only in the USA but also in the region called the East in this period.

Needless to say, it was Michel Foucault who initiated the cultural leftist analysis of hegemony in terms of biopower and biopolitics, where his argument virtually starts with the presupposition of Marxism’s invalidity as a political alternative. When *The Outsider* is explicated as a critique of Cold-War liberalism, it ultimately demonstrates that a liberal regime is a biopolitical one and that the final critique of the regime should imagine the *outside* of the biopolitical. In this sense, as I will argue, it is possible to interpret the novel as presenting a viewpoint that criticizes the limit of the Foucauldian framework of biopower and biopolitics. If Foucault’s genealogy of biopolitics derives, be it partly, from observation of Cold-War Europe, Wright’s analysis of Cold-War America written in France, which to some degree anticipates Foucault’s thinking, shows traces of the author’s experience in the thirties and forties of the Marxist solidarity which was in principle structured not in terms of race and identity, but of oppression and poverty.

## II. *Literature of Freedom*

The fundamental text in the analysis of Cold-War culture, George Kennan’s “Long Telegram,” starts in this way: “The political personality of Soviet power as we know it today is the product of ideology and circumstances” (566). Kennan virtually criticizes the ideology of the Soviets, but, in order to do so, what he actually deals with is not the ideology itself, but the “political personality” as its embodiment. He psychologizes the problem of Soviet power where the political transforms into a “human” matter. This is the reason he is able to find the cause of the Soviet revolution in “a highly convenient rationalization for their own instinctive desires” (567) that happened to be found in Marxist theory. The revolution is not political, either; it is a gratification of desire. Kennan’s argument uses the rhetoric of psychologization, which insists that what matters is not the political, but the psychological.

The rhetoric of psychologization prevails in the political discourse of the era. When

President Truman expounded what was later called the Truman Doctrine in “Special Message to the Congress on Greece and Turkey,” he asserted that Greece had to be helped in order for the nation to “become a self-supporting and self-respecting democracy,” or that there should be built there “an economy in which a healthy democracy can flourish.” The amazing thing here is that in the address there is no specific, factual or practical description about the political, cultural or social structure of the country. “One of the primary objectives of the foreign policy of the United States,” according to Truman, “is the creation of the conditions in which we and other nations will be able to work out a way of life free from coercion.” Similarly, he also defines the purpose of the United Nations as making possible “lasting freedom and independence for all its members.” The Cold War, which is supposed to be fundamentally an opposition of two ideologies, did not engender apparently political discourse, where the ideal of international relations is articulated in terms of “freedom” and “independence.” In this situation, the shape of a democratic nation is describable only in the rhetoric of manhood: healthy, self-supporting and self-respecting.

Behind the psychologization and genderization lies the translation of the Cold-War opposition of ideologies: communism versus capitalism. Even in Hannah Arendt’s renowned *The Origins of Totalitarianism* (1951), the U.S.-Soviet confrontation is staged as one of totalitarianism and liberalism, where the evil of the Soviet Union is to be associated with that of Nazi Germany: she finds “Nazi Germany and Soviet Russia,” if correctly, “two essentially identical systems which were clearly growing constantly more alike in exterior forms of rule,” where “the leaders of the two countries were quite aware of their similarity and regarded each other with a sympathy and respect which they did not harbor for any nontotalitarian country” (429). The problem with communists is not that they forcibly carry out redistribution of national wealth, but that a communist regime always falls into a totalitarian regime. It is in this Cold-War dichotomy between liberalism and communist totalitarianism that the essence of liberalism is defined as the primacy of freedom and, furthermore, that liberalism is regarded not as a form of ideology or even an idea that informs how to govern a society, but as simply lacking in such matters. In the Cold-War criticism of the communist regime, liberalism does not look like a type of political idea, but rather freedom from political ideas: whatever political idea a nation may choose, a nation-state that is governed thoroughly by one political ideal is going to be totalitarian. In concluding one of the best-known definitions of Cold-War liberalism, *The Vital Center: The Politics of Freedom* (1949), Arthur Schlesinger, Jr. claims:

The new radicalism, drawing strength from a realistic conception of men, dedicates itself to problems as they come, attacking them in terms of which best advance the humane and libertarian values, which best secure the freedom and fulfillment of the individual. (256)

Here again, the political goal of Schlesinger’s “radicalism” is actually void of anything that might sound political: the rhetoric focuses on such words as “humane and libertarian values” and “freedom and fulfillment of the individual.” In order to realize freedom, then, any political program must cease to be a program or plan: we must deal with problems “as they come” since political planning is hardly distinguishable from communism in the Cold-War imagination.

The abhorrence of anything political prepares for the shift from the political to the biopolitical: the Cold-War America that commits to Cold-War liberalism aspires to the biopolitical regime where the nation is not governed by anything political, except that every



citizen's free will is to be controlled, say, by the hegemony of gender. An epitome of the biopolitical regime of the era can be found the famous "kitchen debate" between Vice President Nixon and the Soviet Premier Khrushchev in 1955, where household appliances were made into a symbol of the triumph of liberalism. Neither Nixon nor Khrushchev wanted to talk about politics per se; what mattered there was the way of life.<sup>3</sup>

In such circumstances, the task of Cold-War intellectuals came to be to observe whether the American promise of freedom was really being kept. Such figures as David Riesman and William Whyte therefore warned of the prevalence of conformism. As Hoberek argues, they virtually asked if the traditional individualism of America was still alive and well when they looked for those who were able to do what they wanted to do regardless of the social norm.<sup>4</sup>

Yet the Cold-War commitment to individualism was, in a sense, destined to reach an impasse from the start. In 1952, for example, *Partisan Review* ran a now famous symposium "Our Country and Our Culture," where its "Editorial Statement" reads:

For better or worse, most writers no longer accept alienation as the artist's fate in America: on the contrary they want very much to be a part of American life. More and more writers have ceased to think of themselves as rebels and exiles. They now believe that their values, if they are to be realized at all, must be realized in America and in relation to the actuality of American life. (284)

One of the reasons why the journal, which had been celebrated as a left-wing forum, showed this straightforward patriotism must have been the tension of the Cold War or McCarthyism as its epitome. While it may sound prescriptive rather than descriptive when the quote says that "more writers have ceased to think of themselves as rebels and exiles," to criticize or even to be alienated from America was not encouraged when the communist threat was a serious national concern. You should want to be an individualist in that free country called America; yet your individualism is valuable only in so far as it reflects American values. If you start criticizing America, you are going one step too far; but then again, if you do not try to take one step further, are you not a conformist?

It is in this antinomy of individualism and conformism that the kind of novel in which an individualist hero knocks around America flourishes. This kind of novel focuses on the lone hero's possible relation with society or how to reach the outside of the existing society, where the hero's journey itself is interpreted as an attempt to express freedom, to celebrate the value of freedom. In keeping with Morris Dickstein calling *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* "one of the *ur*-texts of postwar fiction" (90), this kind of novel, which might be called the Cold-War literature of freedom, almost uniformly follows the pattern of Twain's classic novel on freedom (though it also concerns the social and political structure that negates freedom).<sup>5</sup> This is why Augie March's narrative (1953) has the title it has, why *The Catcher in the Rye* (1951)

<sup>3</sup> In this vein, Daniel Bell published the well-known *The End of Ideology* in 1960, where he asserts: "The normative consensus emerging in the postwar years in the West held that civil politics could replace ideological politics" (419).

<sup>4</sup> Of course it is wrong to reduce *The Lonely Crowd* to a critique of the book's famous coinage, "other-direction": as Riesman himself claims in his "1969 Preface," it tries to be descriptive rather than critical about the social types it depicts, and the critiques of "other-direction," when they occur, are intellectually nuanced. Yet I believe that it is correct to say that the book's main thesis is a critique of conformism. For more about this, see Dennis Wrong and Hoberek's "Introduction."

<sup>5</sup> About the canonization of the novel in the era, see Arac.

resembles *Huckleberry Finn* in some crucial ways, and why Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952) is seen as a significant response, being an African-American narrative. Although Jack Kerouac, categorized as one of the Beats, is usually put in a different context from the above novels, *On the Road* (1957, written in 1951) still neatly fits the pattern. If we accept *On the Road* in this way then, even in William Burroughs' early two novels, *Junkie* and *Queer* (completed in 1953), the protagonist's senseless roaming is literarily meaningful since it is the manifestation of the commitment to freedom.

It is impossible to consider coincidence the fact that so many works of a shared structure were written in so short a period; the commitment to freedom under Cold-War liberalism certainly defines the shape of the contemporary novels in such a strong way. Apparently, the authors of the literature of freedom believed that the propaganda of freedom cannot be a propaganda. Here, wandering is the sign of freedom in these novels. In other words, when these novels express the value of freedom, "freedom" here takes the form of an individualist commitment that tries to realize a literary and alternative space where the hero is not oppressed or alienated. If Huck's adventures are meaningful in that they signify his enjoyment of the space outside of the exiting society as well as his critique of the existing society and politics of America, the novels of the Cold-War literature of freedom rather miss the latter point of political critique. Put more simply, the heroes of the fifties want to be an antisocial rather than an intellectual critique of society, and to be the former is regarded as more or less displacing the latter. Certainly, this logic is replayed when Norman Mailer offers a theorization of the individualist novel of freedom in "White Negro," which declares the aesthetic significance of the antisocial "hipster" as "the American Existentialist" (339) whose qualification is not only racial transgression, or white men following the black hipster's lifestyle, but also every kind of social outsider Mailer can think of: the "White Negro" is "a ménage-à-trois" of "the bohemian," "the juvenile delinquent" and "the Negro" (340); "the psychopath," the another name for the "White Negro," explores "along the road of the homosexual, the orgiast, the drug-addict, the rapist, the robber and the murderer to find those violent parallels to the violent and often hopeless contradictions he knew as an infant and as a child" (346). As Mailer explains in *Advertisements for Myself*, what became "White Negro" was, in its original conception, a provocative essay on the cultural and social taboo about the miscegenation of Cold-War America, which was eventually *refined* into a literary paeon for every kind of outsider. Here again, the political turns into the antisocial.

Richard Wright's *The Outsider* (1953), a narrative of a Chicago postal worker who, placed in the predicament of having an estranged wife and a young mistress, is misidentified as dead in an accident on the L train and escapes to New York incognito, is a distinguished member of the novels of freedom in the fifties.<sup>6</sup> The homage to *Huck Finn* is rather clear in the comic scene where the protagonist Damon watches how the people who believe that he is dead react at "his" funeral. Yet, on his way to New York, Damon meets a white district attorney from New York with a handicap ("hunchback"), Ely Houston, who, being an outsider like Damon, instantly recognizes that they have something in common. Again, in New York, a Communist activist Gil Blount and later another party-member Jack Hilton try to use Damon, identifying him as a black victim, for a political purpose, while Damon, hiding his intelligence, plots

<sup>6</sup> There are actually two versions of the novel: the Harper edition published in 1953 and the restored edition by Arnold Rampersad in the Library of America of 1991. About the difference between the two, see Hakutani 134-140.



recrimination. When Blount plans to use Damon as a device for the confrontation with the fascist white supremacist Langley Herndon, Damon eventually kills both Blount and Herndon, and falls in love with Gil's white wife Eva. Although the murder case is at first officially understood as Blount and Herndon having killed each other, the truth about the crime is perceived by Hilton, who, before this, is already shown as a figure of the cruel political machine, sentencing to deportation Bob Hunter, another party member and an immigrant from Trinidad whom Damon befriended on his way to New York. The episode of Hunter and Hilton describes how cruel the communist party is, its essence being not utopian aspiration but the will to power. In addition to Gil Blount, Herndon and Hilton, Damon kills a black friend of his in the early scene in Chicago just in order to keep the secret that he is not dead. Each of Damon's four murders is not impulsive but rather calculated and committed rather calmly without much sense of conscience. After falling in love with Damon, Eva Blount also commits suicide when she learns the truth of Damon's crimes. Being a political (communist) refugee from his homeland, Hunter's deportation is claimed to mean his death although he only disappears from the text. In the end, after Houston's discovery of Damon's crimes, the hero is shot dead fairly abruptly by an anonymous member of the communist party. As in the case of Wright's other fiction, the novel is replete with death.

In the same way as "White Negro," in putting every kind of minority into a universal category of "outsider," seems to be blind to what we now call the pride of black identity,<sup>7</sup> *The Outsider* takes an utterly "constructed" approach to blackness when it reasons that the handicapped and the African-American share basically the same social position as the outsider: "Houston was declaring himself to be an outsider like Cross and Cross was interested" (499), and when the hero repeatedly claims that his actions do not result from the color of his skin, but from his social position as the oppressed: "There was no racial tone to his reactions" (455); "His consciousness of the color of his skin played no role in it" (525); "It was not because he was a Negro that he found his obligations intolerable" (774), and so on. In other words, what is paradigmatic in the novel's epistemology is not the multiculturalist logic of identities, but the Cold-War logic of individualism whose aspiration is to reach the universal outside of the particular local. This is because, as Gilroy observes, Wright's project has as its fundamental purpose the description of black experience as something indispensable and necessary, though painful and ominous, in understanding the development of Western modernity, where, ultimately, the experience is to be comprehended as universal to the structure of modernity, not as something necessarily particular to a race.<sup>8</sup> In other words, in Wright's perspective, the utopian is not envisioned as racially multicultural but as universal in individualist diversity. Wright's letter to Pandit Nehru in 1950 reads:

The changing physical structure of the world as well as the historical development of modern society demand that the peoples of the world become aware of their *common*

<sup>7</sup> In "White Negro," Mailer observes that "it is no accident that the source of hip is the Negro for he has been living on the margin between totalitarianism and democracy for two centuries" (340). There has of course been long history of criticism on Mailer's stereotyping and appropriating blackness. About this, see chapter three of Ross, Levine, Shoemaker and Whiting.

<sup>8</sup> As for the dialectic of the universal and the particular that works in relation to racial experience, Eversley offers a penetrating analysis in reference to the Lafargue Psychiatric Clinic that Wright and Ellison helped to establish in Harlem in 1946.

identity and interests. This situation of oppressed people the world over is universally the same and their solidarity is essential, not only in opposing oppression but also in fighting for human progress.<sup>9</sup>

The literature of freedom in the fifties in general does not follow the multiculturalist logic of racial identity, either: Augie March is “American, Chicago born,” Holden Caulfield is “Irish,” which does not mean much to him anyway, the narrator-protagonist of Ellison’s novel is made “invisible” where, at least in the early reviews, it was appraised as “transcending” racial logic into the American ideals as the above quoted review testifies. Put most simply, this is because the novels of freedom gain their literary value in their individualist quest for the ultimate freedom, where the possibility of absolute freedom merges into its impossibility: not to mention the invisible man, Augie is an expatriate cosmopolitan in the present of the narrative, Holden is in a kind of asylum, Sal Paradise fails to catch up with Dean Moriarty, and, in *Boroughs’* case, the junkie is a junkie from the start and keeps on more or less trying to be cured. In this sense, the novels are speculation to depict the shape of utter freedom, where there is no room for solidarity in terms of identity: the first murder Damon commits is of a black friend of his in order to protect his new freedom. And the modernist, or avant-garde, value of such aesthetic projects is obvious when we compare them with the popular novels of the same era whose paradigmatic problem is also the antinomy of individualism and freedom: in such novels as *The Man in the Gray Flannel Suit* (published in 1955, whose ending shows that the hero’s commitment to individualism luckily coincides with his economic and social success), *Marjorie Morningstar* (published in 1955, where the heroine’s individualism eventually finds its goal in a happy marriage), and *Revolutionary Road* (published in 1961, where, although the complicated pressures in the society clashes the hero’s and his wife’s commitment to individualism, the hero finally survives in his mundane and economically secure life) that depict social success, if ironically, it is demonstrated that there can be a certain point of balance where the apparent antinomy of individualism and conformism is reconciled.

From the present viewpoint, the literature of freedom does not seem to have much of political value, or may even seem to be conservative, in spite of its distinction from the “conformist” popular novels I have just illustrated. Yet, the comparison between the late modernist commitment to ulterior freedom, where the ultimate freedom appears as a dangerous impossibility, and the “realist” negotiation of possible freedom in the existing society in the popular novels shows the intellectual and modernist dimension of the novels of freedom, where their tragic endings touch the limits of freedom inherent in the Cold-War liberalism of America. The novels of freedom demonstrate the modernist imagination in the Cold War that searches out the imaginary, or even transcendental, completion of liberalism, criticizing the existent form of liberalism. This does not mean that “popular” novels are politically less valuable than the modernist attempts, but that the latter are more useful when trying to analyze the culture of liberalism during the era. The search for ultimate freedom by the innocent, individualist hero is a recurring theme not only in the novels of freedom, but also in popular Western movies of the era and intellectual writings that look for a definition of Americanism, such as R. W. B. Lewis’ *The American Adam*, Henry Nash Smith’s *Virgin Land*, Schlesinger’s *The Vital Center*, and so on.

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<sup>9</sup> Fabre 387. Quoted in Gilroy 148. My emphasis.

*The Outsider* as a variation of the Cold-War novels of freedom clearly belongs to the paradigm of American literature of the era, wherever it may have been written. It is an American novel although, or even especially because, it criticizes the limit of the existing liberalism of the USA, looking for a better form of truer liberalism. Yet, the truer liberalism Wright imagines suggests the return of the political when the novel that rejects the rhetoric of race does not look for identitarian solidarity, while the novels of freedom in general imagine “freedom” rather as freedom from the political, thus showing the liberal, biopolitical shift of the era. The literature of freedom makes it clear that the late modernist depoliticization of art, or the claim of aesthetic autonomy, in fact goes hand in hand with the Cold-War definition of American liberalism as an apolitical regime: it is because the ideal form of American society is a liberal one without any political control that could make the society become totalitarian that the aesthetic space of art, utterly free from anything political, could be conceived as utopian and ideal. The biopolitical shift that sees an ideal liberal society as free from the political is enacted in the negation of naturalism and political realism in the thirties and forties that, under the influence of Marxist thinking, believed that good art should reflect or refer to social and political problems of our society. Wright’s rejection of the rhetoric of race, which probably derived from the influence of Marxist thinking, is not to be seen as his inability to embrace the value of racial identities, but as a sign of his discomfort with the developing biopolitical regime of the era which eventually came to completion in the rhetoric of identity.

### III. *Rhetoric of Life in The Liberal Imagination*

Wright was “passionately interested” in French existentialists even before his first visit to Paris in 1946, according to Fabre (320). This biographical fact encourages the tendency to regard *The Outsider* as a didactic novel with salient influence from French existentialism. Indeed, Damon is characterized as an intellectual with a deep knowledge of philosophy, and he actually makes, toward the end of the novel, a series of tirades on the contemporary situation of the Western world, the problems of modernization, and the human condition in the twentieth century. Yet, to regard a novel as didactic is one thing; to see it as intellectual is another. If the novel’s intellectual aspect is to be understood as necessary to enable it to reach the outside of its paradigm of Cold-War liberalism, it can be seen as critical rather than didactic.

Actually, Gilroy observes that a certain kind of racism is involved in the understanding that finds didacticism in the novel. Quoting C. R. L. James’ memoir in which Wright claims that “Everything that [Kierkegaard] writes in these books I knew before I had them” and James explains “What [Dick] was telling me was that he was a black man in the United States and that gave him an insight into what today is the universal opinion and attitude of the *modern* personality” (Gilroy’s emphasis), Gilroy concludes: “In Wright’s mature position, the Negro is no longer just America’s metaphor but rather a central symbol of the psychological, cultural, and political system of the West as a whole” (159).<sup>10</sup> To put it rather crudely, the “existential” hero of the novel is the outsider who, as Houston says, is “both *inside* and *outside* of our

<sup>10</sup> Walker also says that “It is very important to remember when reading the later Richard Wright in a book like *The Outsider*, written after his association with Sartre, that way back there in the thirties, Wright was intensely interested in Nietzsche, Schopenhauer, and above all, the novelist Dostoevski” (75).

culture at the same time" (500), where existential philosophy is to be understood as a certain theorization of black experience.<sup>11</sup> Houston further observes that Negroes "will not only be Americans or Negroes; they will become centers of *knowing*, so to speak" (original emphasis). Yet, we must note, it is exactly the historical situation of black people, and not anything biologically or culturally inherent in "blackness," that places them in the privileged position of having a penetrating insight into the modern condition.

Gilroy also mentions the well-known fact that, as Wright explains in "How Bigger Was Born," the project of *Native Son* starts partly with "the desire to find an answer to the pernicious effects of the portrait of blacks as victims which had emerged unwittingly from his first published volume, *Uncle Tom's Children*" (154). James Baldwin's criticism of *Native Son* is also well-known, where he manifests his modernist belief that the protest novel, which structurally stands on stereotyping, virtually works for the stabilization of the society the novel claims to criticize: "The failure of the protest novel lies in its rejection of life, the human being, the denial of his beauty, dread, power, in its insistence that it is his categorization alone which is real and which cannot be transcended" (18). Thinking along these lines, it seems plausible to consider that the project of *The Outsider* started partly with the "pernicious" criticism of *Native Son* exemplified by Baldwin's famous attack: it is in the author's serious attempt to transcend the limit of the "protest novel" which Baldwin fiercely criticizes, and which in a sense does present a stereotype of an African-American of the era albeit in a strategic way, that *The Outsider* rejects the rhetoric of race as well as the characterization of the hero as a representative black. And certainly the novel is about "life, the human being" and "his beauty, dread, power."

Baldwin's "Everybody's Protest Novel," written in 1949, clearly follows the late modernist understanding of literature when it is separated from the interpretation that sees the author's motive as his complicated psychological relation with Wright his mentor: it is a death sentence for the genre of the protest novel in general, although every reader would find its main target to be nothing other than *Native Son*. The historical context in which Baldwin's essay was written is the Cold-War one that Schwartz and Guillbaut criticize. It was the intellectual and literary climate where the post-war re-evaluation of the modernists of the twenties, Fitzgerald, Hemingway and Faulkner, was enacted and where naturalism gave way to late modernism. A critique of didacticism, then, is the fashion in such a climate.

If there is one book that decided the literary climate, it has to be Lionel Trilling's *The Liberal Imagination* (1950). Thomas Bender observes:

Beginning in the 1930s, but especially with the publication of *The Liberal Imagination* in 1950, Lionel Trilling advanced a remarkably compelling alternative to the way of talking about politics, literature, and society that had been orthodox among intellectuals and critics on the American left. The essays included in *The Liberal Imagination* all had been published previously, many in the *Partisan Review*, and they reflected that magazine's programmatic ambition to displace Stalinist modes of literary and

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<sup>11</sup> In fact, there are now various studies along these lines. For example, Cedric J. Robinson, referring to Wright's *The Outsider*, argues in his monumental and ambitious work about the problems of traditional Marxist thinking that negates the crucial role of black slavery as the "proletariat" of the global capitalist system, and Lewis R. Gordon examines the relation between European existentialism and the various theories of black resistance. For the specific argument on Wright's treatment in the novel of existentialism as black radical thinking, see Coles.

political judgment. Yet with *The Liberal Imagination*, Trilling reached for a wider and more mainstream audience than the literary and political coterie associated with the *Partisan Review*. He succeeded; the book sold 100,000 copies as one of the first serious paperbacks. Trilling became a public figure, one of the most influential intellectuals of his generation. (324)<sup>12</sup>

Put most simply, the book is well known for its reinterpretation of American literary history in its opening essay “Reality in America,” where, with his critique of V. L. Parrington’s *Main Currents in American Tragedy*, Trilling symbolically chooses Henry James over Theodore Dreiser.<sup>13</sup> Thomas H. Schaub explains the meaning of this reinterpretation in terms of the conception of the psychologized, that is, not materialist, reality in the discourses of “new liberals” of the era: “Trilling helped initiate the dematerialization of literary thinking and production by associating ‘realism’ not with external facts but with the dialectic form of literary ideas produced by conflicting emotions. This was moral realism, in which literature became politics recollected in anguish” (36-37).

The political unconscious of Trilling’s reinterpretation of Americanness is submitted to the fierce and penetrating criticism by New Americanists, primarily starting with Russell J. Reising’s *The Unusable Past*. My point here is that, in addition to Trilling’s essentially conservative cultural politics that work in relation to the Cold-War discourse in general, there are new definitions of “culture” and “politics,” which makes Trilling’s cultural conservatism possible at all, and the subsequent dependence on the rhetoric of life, which characterizes his liberalism, in Trilling’s “alternative” way.

The basic framework of Trilling’s project is clearly articulated in the title of the book: *The Liberal Imagination*, a combination of a political concept and a seemingly non-political source of creativity. In the book’s preface, he declares:

[I]f between sentiments and ideas there is a natural connection so close as to amount to a kind of identity, then the connection between literature and politics will be seen as a very immediate one. And this will seem especially true if we do not intend the narrow but the wide sense of the word politics. It is the wide sense of the word that is nowadays forced upon us, for clearly it is no longer possible to think of politics except as the politics of culture, the organization of human life toward some end or other, toward the modification of sentiments, which is to say the quality of human life. (xvii)

Trilling can display a strong vision about how American culture should be because, going against the grain, he defines liberalism not as a lack of ideology, but as a form of politics. At the same time, however, since liberalism as the regime of freedom cannot be a regime of any kind of strong governmental control, the realm of politics should be relocated from politics per se to somewhere else: the realm of culture. Trilling clearly articulates that the liberal state

<sup>12</sup> In the essay, Bender goes on to say that “In an era of perceived (and real) economic prosperity that expanded the middle class and increased the level of its education, Trilling’s issue — ‘quality of human life’ rather than redistribution — were middle-class issues” (341), which exemplifies the popular rhetoric in criticizing Marxism in the era. Bender’s point is that Trilling’s relation to the middle class is “dialectic,” or that he is at the same time its “guardian and critic” as Delmore Schwartz aptly puts it in his review of *The Liberal Imagination*, which produced Trilling’s own version of the conflict between individualism and conformism toward his society, as Hoberek observes (33-34).

<sup>13</sup> See also Murphy and Pease.

consists in political organization of its culture: liberalism is the regime of cultural control.

As Louis Menard sums up in the new introduction to the book, “Trilling’s point” is that “it’s the unexamined attitudes and assumptions — the things people take to be merely matters of manners or tastes, and nothing so consequential as political positions — that require and repay critical analysis” (ix). Trilling’s argument is thus in essence a demonstration of the slogan that later becomes so popular: “the personal is political.” Of course, the political implication of Trilling’s argument and the feminist claim of Carol Hanisch’s 1969 essay are different or even contrary to each other. Yet, the political agenda of Second-wave feminism, symbolized by the title of Hanisch’s essay, is tacitly prepared for by, or is invented as a counter attack to, Trilling’s conception of liberal “politics.”

Yet, in other words, the whole point in Trilling’s conception of “liberal imagination” is its being apolitical in a certain sense (just as the whole point of the feminist slogan lies in the assumption that the personal does not seem to be political to the naïve eye): liberalism is not totalitarian since it is not ideological. Trilling offers “the politics of culture” as something affirmative in instantly renaming it as “the organization of human life” toward a better “quality of human life”: “the politics of culture” is presented as something fundamentally different from coercive control of culture for a political purpose because it is an attempt to organize “human life” in order to enhance its “quality.” It is in this rhetoric that appeals to the value of life that “liberal imagination” is sanctioned as a non-ideological proposal of Cold-War cultural politics.

Trilling’s conception of the “liberal imagination” stands on what can be called a biopolitical shift, both in that it involves the shift of the political to the supposedly non-ideological realm of culture and in that the shift is approved through the rhetoric of life. This biopolitical shift in Trilling is further refined in the last essay in the book, “The Meaning of a Literary Idea,” where the insistence on the essential importance of “idea” in literature turns into criticism of didactic literature. Critique of didacticism in literature plays a crucial part in the definition of the liberal imagination.

Primarily, the essay is famous as Trilling’s manifestation of commitment to “negative capability,” or “willingness to remain in uncertainties, mysteries, and doubts,” which he explains is not “an abdication of intellectual activity,” but “an aspect of their intelligence, of their seeing the full force and complexity of their subject matter” (299). Commitment to negative capability simply proposes the value of complexity, or the denial of binary thinking, as the achievement of literary and intellectual thinking against the background of the binary tension of the Cold War.

The essay can read as a detailed explanation of how negative capability is to be realized in terms of “a literary idea.” Lamenting on the weak “passivity” of modern American literature in its relation to ideas (where the examples are O’Neill, Dos Passos, and Wolfe), as compared to the positivity of European literature of the “last thirty or forty years” (such as Proust, Joyce, Lawrence, Kafka, Yeats and Eliot), Trilling observes that the failure of American authors lies in “their having been violated by ideas,” where “it was an excess of intellectual passivity that invited the violence” (299). Yet there are exceptions among American authors whose works demonstrate good examples of novels with ideas, such as Hemingway and Faulkner:

We feel that Hemingway and Faulkner are intensely at work upon the recalcitrant stuff of life. . . . [W]e say that the matter they present, together with the degree of difficulty which they assume it to have, seems to be very cogent. This, we say, is to the point; this really



has something to do with life as we live it; we cannot ignore it. (297)

The value of Hemingway's and Faulkner's works are decided in their relation to "life": that is to say, if the post-war new liberals including Trilling insist on the validity of the "psychologized" reality as the alternative to the materialist one, the "psychologized" reality is here validated in its relevance to "life as we live it."

It is within this schema that the problems of didacticism are argued in Trilling. Yet he does not use the word itself: instead, the problem is of course argued in terms of ideology. He argues that, regrettably, the "kind of literature we have" comes from our conception of "ideas to be pellets of intellection or crystallizations of thought, precise and completed, defined by their coherence and their procedural recommendations" (302). We have this wrong conception of ideas, as Trilling says, since we are in fact "rather the people of ideology" (286). Trilling's alternative is to "think of ideas as living things, inescapably connected with our wills and desires, as susceptible of growth and development by their very nature, as showing their life by their tendency to change, as being liable, by this very tendency, to deteriorate and become corrupt and to work harm." As he concludes, only when we conceive ideas to be "living things," "then we shall stand in a relation to ideas which makes an active literature possible" (303). It can be said that he psychologizes the notion of "idea" when he describes its "growth" and "deterioration," depending on the rhetoric of development, and it is also possible to observe that he is very strict in scrutinizing possibilities of ideas, deploying the rhetoric, as he actually says elsewhere: "Ideas may also be said to be generated in the opposition of ideals, and in the felt awareness of the impact of new circumstances upon old forms of feeling and estimation, in the response to the conflict between new exigencies and old pieties" (298). "Ideas as living things" may deteriorate, but still they are better than ideals. This is why he warningly defines Americans in the fifties as "people of ideology," virtually identifying "ideal" with "ideology": "Ideology is not the product of thought; it is the habit or the ritual of showing respect for certain formulas" (286), while, as the notion of negative capability implies, "[w]hat comes into being when two contradictory emotions are made to confront each other and are required to have a relationship with each other is . . . quite properly called an idea" (298). Daniel Bell later observes "the exhaustion of political ideas in the fifties" in *The End of Ideology*. Yet, "ideas" were not in fact exhausted in that decade; they were pushed to a rock and a hard place and then squeezed to death.

Trilling's subtle argument shows that under the Cold-War tension, a novel with ideas would suffer the problem of differentiation from a novel of ideology or, more simply, a propaganda novel. And Trilling's use of the rhetoric of life shows that the liberal imagination he advocates, or Cold-War liberalism, appears as something free from ideology through a biopolitical move that makes the political invisible by making it belong to the realm of "life." It is surely important to understand that, obviously, Trilling's commitment to negative capability functions as direct critique of the binarism that consists the part and parcel of the Cold-War rhetoric of the East and the West. For Trilling, the supreme value of literary and artistic activities lie in its transcendence of the binarism with the power of negative capability. If, for Trilling, negative capability defines the essence of literariness to be found in liberal novels, the essence is first depicted by psychologizing the binary tension of "two contradictory emotions" and then legitimized in the rhetoric of life, or ideas as "living things." "Life" here works as the key concept that guards the richness of the literary against any kind of interpretive

reductionism. Trilling defines and advocates the liberal literature as non-ideological achievement by completing the rhetoric of biopower. This is where he virtually follows the rhetoric of the “kitchen debate”: liberalism’s transcendence over communism is the biopolitical one. *The Liberal Imagination* demonstrates that his criticism of the Cold-War rhetoric is another attempt to further the liberal regime, as this may sound a truism.

It is in this politically loaded context of Cold-War liberalism that Wright wrote the novel that is often looked upon as “didactic.” My point here does not concern whether or not *The Outsider* is truly didactic (about which it would be enough to mention the fact that, as Gilroy notes, even Fabre, who is usually sympathetic to Wright, describes it as such [372]; in other words, it is true that the novel is full of intellectual tirades), but that the novel’s complexity and its radical capacity for the critique of liberalism lie in the fact that, while Trilling advocates for the completion of biopolitics, Wright tries to stand outside of this kind of biopolitics, at the same time depicting the liberal world that appears as commitment to life. In other words, the novel is valuable, especially from the present point of view, in its standing both inside and outside of biopolitics. As Wright’s fiction is always replete with death and murder, the novel in fact consists of the rhetoric of life in a similar way to Trilling’s advocacy of liberalism. I would argue, however, that Wright’s “didactic” novel intentionally rejects the completion of the rhetoric of life, as Trilling suggests, where it is indicated that the biopolitical rhetoric is nothing but another form of politics. While Trilling, in associating “ideas as living things” with negative capability, implies that the “positive” kind of novel with ideas should be free of ideology, Wright wrote an outsider novel that criticizes Cold-War liberalism, showing the limits of the rhetoric of biopolitics. The novel’s alleged didacticism is just another name to criticize its rejection of the era’s predominant political climate of liberalism. It reads “didactic” only to those who advocate the Cold-War conception of liberalism as apolitical.

#### IV. *Biopolitics in The Outsider*

For Trilling, literature that demonstrates the complexity of psychological reality is the tool for biopoliticalization, where every idea turns into a living thing. Since biopoliticalization is erasure of the ideological from the surface, it coordinates with the claim of the aesthetic autonomy of art in general as well as with the definition of liberalism as non-ideological. What lies beneath the surface of post-war liberalism’s depoliticization is the Cold-War biopoliticalization. The Cold-War biopoliticalization that appeals to life, however, is crucially different from its post-Cold War equivalent, which appeals to culture, in its commitment to late modernism, as Jameson explains:

[A]ll the great theoreticians and ideologists of the autonomy of art, the ideologies of modernism (as opposed to its genuine practitioners), from Greenberg to Adorno, and passing through the American New Criticism, are in agreement that the concept of culture is the true enemy of art as such; and that if one opens the door to “culture,” everything currently reviled under the term of cultural studies pours in and leaves pure art and pure literature irredeemably tainted. (177)

This is an explanation of the elitist aspect of the late modernist aesthetic (although, as is mentioned even in this quote, it is not high modernism as such, but post-war American late

modernism that establishes the ideology of modernism according to Jameson), where high art is deliberately separated from popular art both by left-wing critics such as Adorno and by right-wing movements such as New Criticism.<sup>14</sup> As is stated in the “Editorial Statement” of “Our Country and Our Culture,” making “the intellectual” the paradigmatic example of the “minority,” mass culture’s “increasing power is one of the chief causes of the spiritual and economic insecurity of the intellectual minority” (285), so what matters here is ultimately the confrontation between the intellectual and the masses. Trilling also follows this dichotomy when he defines the commitment to “ideas as living things” as the transcendence from “us” of “the people of ideology.” In this context, the outsider becomes both a politically and aesthetically significant figure: as Cold-War liberalism commits to individualist values as resistance to totalitarian tendencies, so late modernist aesthetics locates the artist on the outside of mass culture.

Such a notion of the outsider in principle does not agree with the rhetoric of identity: the outsider is not able to imagine solidarity in terms of identity as far as he is an individualist. Cross Damon is clearly defined as an individualist:

[H]is was not the itch to right wrongs done to others, though those wrongs did at times agitate him. And, above all, he possessed no notion of personal or social wrongs having been done to him; if any such wrongs had existed, he felt fully capable of righting them by his own lonely strength and effort. (573)

This is the reason why he is “too concerned with himself to cast his lot wholeheartedly with Negroes in terms of racial struggle”: “Practically he was with them, but emotionally he was not of them” (525). This logic makes him a perfect Cold-War individualist who “all his life” had been “hankering after his personal freedom,” for “his decisive life struggle was a personal fight for self-realization of himself” (454).

Being an extreme individualist, he is certainly selfish in a sense. Yet, as the text says, he rejects the logic of racial solidarity since he is faithful to the logic of the outsider of an intellectual. Damon wonders:

Were there not somewhere in this world rebels with whom he could feel at home, men who were not because they had been born black and poor, but because they had thought their way through the many veils of illusions? (396)

For one thing, this quote makes it clear that the outsider is an intellectual agency: the outsiders are those who are able to penetrate “many veils of illusions.” And, more importantly, the implication of the quote is that the belief in the value of outsidership presupposes resemblance between truth and taboo. The truth here is not what visits one or embraces one; it is something hidden, suppressed and tabooed that only the outsider can reach with a struggle, and furthermore, one who knows the truth can only be an outsider of society. Truth here is even defined as a hideous secret or vicious shame. It is possible to say that this is the meaning of truth under the Cold-War tension exemplified by McCarthyism. Another way to understand this kind of definition of truth is to see it as a psychologized version, for, in psychoanalysis, truth is generally located in the realm of the avoided, the suppressed, and the unconscious. Abdul R.

<sup>14</sup> In other words, Jameson uses the word “culture” in a different sense, or in a way it is used in post-Cold War fashion, while, in the fifties, “culture” is basically used to designate the high “culture.”

JanMohamed argues that Wright's heroes are to be analyzed in essence as "the death-bound-subject," who suffers from the historical memory of black experience, especially of lynching, and for whom the ultimate truth consists in (the threat of) death. Interesting as his insight is as far as it clearly explains the psychologized locus of the truth in the novel, Damon does not carry the collective memory of black experience as far as the surface of the novel reads. The novel's hero is not an outsider because he is black; it is rather that he, black as he is, is interested in black experience since he is an intellectual outsider.

Indeed, it is the white, and even cruel, Communist Hilton who has the most penetrating view on American racism. He explains to Damon:

“. . . You are a Negro and you've an instinct for this kind of thing. I don't mean a racial instinct; it's a socially conditioned instinct for dissimulation which white Americans have bred in you, and you've had to practice it in order to survive. . . . Look, every day in this land some white man is cussing out some defenseless Negro. But that white bastard is too stupid in intelligence and deficient in imagination to realize that his actions are being duplicated a million times in a million other spots by other whites who feel hatred for Negroes just like he does. . . . [Negroes] have to live, eat, have a roof over their heads . . . So they collaborate with people who they feel are their sworn enemies . . . White America has built up something in you that can help the Party now.” (635; the fourth and fifth ellipses are in the original)

Hearing this speech, Damon finds Hilton “astute,” wondering if “the average white American” can even imagine that someone like Hilton does exist in America, and then concludes: “He was a man who . . . was an outsider and was free in what he apprehended” (635).

Yet Damon does not believe in the politics of the communist party. As he kills both the white supremacist Herndon and the communist Gil Blount who tries to use him as an instrument of the party, he looks for a third way, which is represented by “a group of wonderful people, unhappily now extinct, called liberals”: “Full of the juices of human kindness, these people decided that they were going to be good, honest Christians without believing in Christianity which their logical minds found offensive. Let reason prevail, they declared” (756). To this degree, the novel commits to liberalism; in the manner of the literature of freedom, it demonstrates criticism of America as it is now with a logic that aspires to a more perfected liberalism.

When Houston, referring implicitly to Damon, says, “He is the Twentieth Century writ small” (673), it is made clear that Damon as the outsider is a historical product. In the historical view that Damon himself professes, which more or less reads as materialist, the Cold-War ideological conflict appears as just superficial: “what happened in Russia, just as with what happened in America, could have happened under a dozen different ideological banners,” because what matters at the heart of modernity is not ideas but industrialization: “From my point of view, this industrial program could have been accomplished under any dozen different ideological banners. The ideas were not as important as people thought they were; the important thing was the fact of industrialization” (751).

Then, when Damon observes that “industrialization was a kind of war against mankind” (755), he finds himself, in regard to his murders, to be in “the dilemma of the ethical criminals” or “the millions of men who lived in the tiny crevices of industrial society completely cut off from humanity, the teeming multitudes of little gods who ruled their own private worlds and

acknowledged no outside authority” (743). In other words, the ethical criminal is “one for whom all ethical laws are suspended” who “acts like a god” (674). Damon’s “dilemma” is thus explained as that of the outsider who commits to absolute freedom in a Nietzschean way, where one can act like a god by creating his own ethical laws. In the Cold-War imagination, such absolute freedom does not spell an epicurean paradise, but a hell of trials and tribulations, as Houston observes that the outsider “must be something of an inferno” or “[s]omething like the original chaos out of which life and order is supposed to come from” (674).

As the outsider who should confront the truth of ethics, Damon finds through the words of Gil Blount that what lies at the very core of communist politics is the will to power: “Gil’s words made Cross at last understand what had been bothering him all along. . . . *Power!* This was power what he saw in action” (583; original italics). Elsewhere, Damon is more articulate in explaining this to Houston: “. . . real communist leaders do not believe in its ideology as an article of faith. . . . The real heart of Communism . . . is the will to power” (783). Yet, what Damon first finds in Blount is more important than the discovery that communists do not pursue a better world but power, for it is “something more recondite than mere political strategy”:

[I]t was a *life* strategy using political methods as its tools . . . Its essence was a voluptuousness, a deep-going sensuality that took cognizance of fundamental human needs and the answers to those needs. It related man to man in a fearfully organic way. To hold absolute power over others, to define what they should love or fear, to decide if they were to live or die and thereby to ravage the whole of their beings — that was a sensuality that made sexual passion look pale by comparison. (583; original italics and original ellipsis)

In the conception of “life strategy,” the essence of communism is separated from its ideology; it is the mechanism of ruling and governing people that matters here. Subsequently, what matters here does not belong to the proper realm of politics, but to that of everyday life, or, simply, life. Naturally, then, Damon finds the same structure even in the liberal world where ruling and governing matters in the same way:

This systematization of the sensuality of power prevailed, though in a different form, in the so-called capitalistic bourgeois world; it was everywhere, in religion as well as in government, and in all art that was worthy of the name. And bourgeois rulers, along with the men of the church, had forged through time and tradition methods of concealing these systems of sensual power under thick layers of legal, institutionalized, ritualized, ideological, and religious trappings. (585-86)

At least to some degree anticipating Foucault’s argument on power or Althusser’s analysis of ideology, Damon, who defines “the will to power” and “life strategy” as something “pre-political” (761), here explains what I called a biopolitical shift. In other words, it is only with the recognition in the quotes above that the significance of the depiction of the hero as the outsider is finally understood: only the outsider can see deeper ethical problems since everybody else is caught in the ubiquitous “legal, institutionalized, ritualized, ideological, and religious trappings.”

This is the reason why Damon says: “The essence of life today is psychological; men may take power with arms, but their keeping of it is by other means” (760).<sup>15</sup> The author’s focus is set not on the surface of ideology but on how to rule and control, which makes possible the

novel's critique both of communism and the existing liberalism of the USA. The focus finds as its final field of analysis the realm of "life strategy" which controls people psychologically through various forms of what Althusser calls "ideology apparatus." The "life strategy" works in a realm that does not look political; it works in a locus that transcends ideological differences, that is, the realm of "life." When Foucault first introduces the notion of biopower in *History of Sexuality*, he for example says:

For the first time in history, no doubt, biological existence was reflected in political existence; the fact of living was no longer an inaccessible substrate that only emerged from time to time, amid the randomness of death and its fatality; part of it passed into knowledge's field of control and power's sphere of intervention. Power would no longer be dealing with legal subjects over whom the ultimate dominion was death, but with living beings, and the mastery it would be able to exercise over them would have to be applied at the level of life itself; it was the taking charge of life, more than the threat of death, that gave power its access even to the body. If one can apply the term *bio-history* to the pressures through which the movements of life and the process of history interfere with one another, one would have to speak of *bio-power* to designate what brought life and its mechanisms into the realm of explicit calculations and made knowledge-power an agent of transformation of human life. . . . [W]hat might be called a society's "threshold of modernity" has been reached when the life of the species is wagered on its own political strategies. For millennia, man remained what he was for Aristotle: a living animal with the additional capacity for a political existence; modern man is an animal whose politics places his existence as a living being in question. (142-43; original italics)

While Foucault mainly has in mind the scientific discourses in the argument of the book, what Wright demonstrates is something more general and vague. Yet, under the Cold-War shift from ideology to non-ideological liberalism, Wright's critique of liberalism is only possible with his conception (and critique) of biopower in "life strategy." And it is only with the recognition of the biopolitical shift that sees the essence of humanity as "his existence as a living being in question" that what does matter in the novel's plot, as well as Wright's other novels, is murder; in other words, the only crime that achieves a serious ethical insight into the biopolitical world without ideology is homicide. As JanMohamed implies with the conception of "the death-bound-subject," the repetitive murders imagined by Wright evidences the author's attempt to reach and criticize the regime of biopolitics where power works to let people live, where oppression takes the form of the control of our lives.<sup>16</sup>

It is part of the biopolitical shift that when communist Blunt and racist Herndon supposedly kill each other, the reasons are called "*natural life* motives." Houston then says: "Oh, I know that there is no such thing in law as that. But there will be one day . . . I'm sure of it" (657; original ellipsis). Ideological differences are here translated into the rhetoric of life.

<sup>15</sup> For the psychologism of the novel, see Henderson.

<sup>16</sup> In a precise and wide-ranged analysis of biopolitics in the novels written under the influence of the New Deal, Michael Szalay correctly explains that the "crucial point" of the novel, among other New Deal novels, is that "death, real or imagined, is not a subject of pathos so much as it is an opportunity for a transcendent political experience" (165). I agree in general with Szalay's analysis of the novel, but I believe that it is more important to focus on the gap between the Dew Deal regime and the more or less Marxist vision of political justice in Wright who eventually became a self-imposed exile. As for the interrelation between the regime of welfare state and biopolitics, see Chapter 3.



On the other hand, it is in this context that Damon's murders, that is, the expression of his commitment to ultimate freedom, are seen as killing "for no motives defined or known in the realms of law" (643). The ethical problem that Damon's murders signify transcends the "*natural life motives*" and thus appears as something incomprehensible. Yet, toward the end of the novel, Damon explicitly observes that "A man today who believes that he cannot live by the articles of faith of his society is a criminal" (785), where the novel's focus on the meaning of freedom is clear. Just as being black is for Damon translated into something more than racial identity, that is, being an outsider who, reaching the outside of society's control, will confront the truth of liberal ethics, so the Cold-War situation of McCarthyism is as well translated into the universal problem of the dialectic between individualism and conformism. This is the reason Gilroy defines the novel as a modernist attempt: it commits to a universalist dimension, where beneath the reality that the novel depicts lies an allegorical level that theoretically tries to understand the problem of modernity itself.<sup>17</sup> And this is the reason why the novel needs philosophical arguments in it, allegedly appearing as didactic.

### V. *The Political Unconscious of The Outsider*

Yet, all in all, the novel is to be seen as a tragedy where Damon in the end dies a sudden and meaningless death. He even expresses repentance in his last conversation with Houston. After summing up his life, and "[a]ll of it" was "horrible," he explains the reason in this way: "Because in my heart . . . I'm . . . I felt . . . I'm *innocent* . . . That's what made the horror . . ." (840-41; original italics and original ellipses). These last words are to be read as a critique of the novel's biopolitical liberalism, or the individualist commitment that is validated in the rhetoric of life, since, just before his last words, he indicates that the fact that he "loved life too . . . much" is the reason why he chose to live as the outsider (839; original ellipsis). At the same time, he also says in an impressive phrase, "Man is a promise that he must never break" (839), which means "I wish I had some way to give the meaning of my life to others . . . To make a bridge from man to man . . . Starting from scratch every time is . . . is no good. Tell them not to come down this road" (840; original ellipses). Clearly, on his deathbed, he finally criticizes the individualism that is crucially associated with the value of liberalism in the Cold-War imagination. The tragic ending of the novel is where the possibility of criticizing Cold-War liberalism, to which the entirety of Damon's life has obviously been committed, is enacted.

The ending is also significant in implying that the notion of "innocence" plays an essential role in Cold-War liberalism. When Damon becomes the outsider, evading his identity after the accident on the L train, he thinks thus about what "innocence" means for him: "There was a kind of innocence that made him want to shape for himself the kind of life he wanted, but he knew that that innocence was deeply forbidden" (456). Although this is important, the notion of "innocence" he refers to on his deathbed should be understood in a wider context as far as the novel, in a late modernist attempt to transcend the immediate context, tries to depict the theoretical framework of Cold-War liberalism in general, not a form of liberalism that a black outsider happens to think of. In other words, the "innocence" he identifies as the reason for the horror of his life is to be defined not as his own particular "innocence," but as something that

<sup>17</sup> For another attempt to read the novel in terms of modernism, see Relyea.

can be called “American innocence” lying at the heart of the conception of Cold-War liberalism. For, in what I called the literature of freedom, such novels as *The Adventures of Augie March*, *The Catcher in the Rye*, and *On the Road*, as well as other manifestations of Cold-War liberalism, like the Western movies of the era and contemporary American studies including *American Adam* and *The Virgin Land*, “innocence” always plays an indispensable role in the appraisal of Cold-War liberalism.

Put simply, my reading of the novel’s ending concerns what is suppressed from the surface of the text under the Cold-War tension in which it was written: I regard Damon’s last words as his last attempt to articulate what had to be suppressed in the text. This ultimately means to relocate the novel in another historical context than the one in which it was written. For a start, we should ask a particular question in order to see the novel under a new light, following Damon’s suggestion: who is the *true* outsider in the novel? This question is meaningful since, as has been argued, Damon is qualified as the well-written figure of the outsider in the sense that he follows the depiction of the outsider that the literature of freedom in general represents. He is the outsider *in* the imagination of the Cold-War liberalism that commits to the value of the outsider, but he is not the outsider *of* the imagination.

This is the reason why the novel needs to include the character of Bob Hunter, a communist illegal alien who is deported by the Party’s cruel betrayal to his homeland of Trinidad to die, and so disappears from the text. He is the outsider of the novel. Yet, or because of his being the true outsider, he is not identified as such; Damon sees him rather as a loser. According to Damon, Hunter cannot be the outsider since he is not individualist enough: “They [the Party] didn’t *have* to treat Bob that way . . . Bob’ll follow *any* strong person . . . You can take his hand and lead’im . . .” (571; original italics and original ellipses). In fact, since the text says that Damon, just after this observation, “was slowly becoming himself again, but it was a different self,” he finds his true self as the outsider by denying what Hunter symbolizes: that is, the hero becomes the outsider by making Hunter his outsider. Yet, at the same time, Hunter haunts Damon’s imagination as a failure he must not repeat: “He recalled Bob’s squirming on the floor, begging for a mercy that the Party would not grant. No; no, he would not swallow that happening to him” (637). Bob here is a warning of the Party’s cruelty whose victim Damon must not become. It is also possible to understand that what separates Damon from Bob is the dichotomy of the intellectual and the masses: Bob and his wife Sarah fail to identify Damon’s true nature since “Sarah and Bob never expected to see a black intellectual and did not know one when they saw one” (557). Damon is the intellectual, individualist outsider who symbolizes the value of the true liberalism of the fifties; Bob is a helpless victim of the Party as well as what it symbolizes, the cruel machine that works toward its will to power.

All in all, what separates Damon from Bob is the rhetoric of masculinity. Damon, whose death is represented as something tragic, can be a hero of Cold-War liberalism since he is a variation of the Cold Warrior, a masculine soldier who can make his way through the Cold-War battlefield of liberalism against ideology. Bob, who tragically disappears from the text even without the text’s articulating the tragedy of his disappearance, is the ultimate victim in the text and of the structure of the Cold-War imagination that the text depicts. What makes Bob the constitutive outsider of the text is the Cold-War commitment to the value of the intellectual against the fear of the masses and to the value of masculinity under the Cold-War tension. And the commitment to masculinity that the depiction of Damon as the outsider shows, which

excludes what Hunter symbolizes, is in a certain sense a demonstration of liberal and biopolitical amendment to the Cold-War reality, which the novel finally defines as a tragedy. If we try to reach outside of the biopolitical rhetoric, we will find the simple and hard fact of politics, which tells us that the true victim, the true outsider of the novel, is none other than Hunter; the perspective that sees Hunter as the outsider leads to an attempt to imagine the outside of the Cold-War imagination.

This is the reason why Damon appeals to the value of solidarity, “to make a bridge from man to man,” on his deathbed (although the rhetoric is still fundamentally masculine). In *Race against Empire*, Penny M. Von Eschen looks into the history of American black diaspora politics from the 1930s to the 1950s, where she points out a drastic re-conception of “race” at the beginning of the Cold War:

In the 1940s, racism had been widely portrayed not only by African American intellectuals but also in popular discourse as located in the history of slavery, colonialism, and imperialism. In the 1950s, the equation was reversed: rather than the result of slavery and colonialism, “race” and “color” were now offered as explanations for them. Marjorie McKenzie argued, for example, that “color” was the “sufficiently blinding” barrier that prevented the West from knowing what to do about colonialism. In the retreat from explanations grounded in political economy, some of the dominant metaphors are easily identifiable. Racism was portrayed as a “disease,” and as a psychological or spiritual problem, or as a characteristic of backward peoples which could be eradicated by “modernization” or, in more psychological language, “maturity.” (155)

To make racism a psychological problem by erasing the dimension of political economy, or a critique of slavery, colonialism and imperialism: this is biopoliticalization of racism, where, as Eschen argues, “race” ceases to be seen as the effect of, say, imperialism, becoming instead its origin.<sup>18</sup> The biopoliticalization of racism involves a further effect, as Eschen argues citing Walter A. Jackson’s argument, that can be called the domestication of racism, which is symbolized by the publication of Gunnar Myrdal’s *American Dilemma*, which of course argues racism as going against the American Creed, while at the same time causing the “marginalization of Du Bois and [Paul] Robeson as critics of America’s place in the postwar world” (155). When we consider the domestication of racism, biopoliticalization cannot be seen only as a shift in discourse, academic or popular. As Eschen observes concerning Du Bois:

A rift between W. E. B. Du Bois and Walter White over foreign policy contributed to Du Bois’s dismissal from the NAACP in 1948. Their differences were evident in their conflict over the organization’s 1947 petition to the United Nations, which exemplified the NAACP’s new exclusive focus on domestic discrimination and its silence on foreign policy issues. (116)

As for Robeson, she sums up:

Unable to silence Robeson through fear and intimidation as it had silenced other critics, in 1950 the federal government revoked his passport. The rejection of Robeson’s subsequent

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<sup>18</sup> Another salient example of the psychologization of race is *The Authoritarian Personality* by Adorno et al (1950). For a critical explanation of psychological racism, see Kovel.

appeal plainly revealed that the government regarded anticolonialism and civil rights activism as interlocking issues that threatened national security. . . . Clearly the U.S. government would not tolerate criticism of its foreign policy by civil rights leaders. (124)

As Eschen observes, Walter White's "support of Truman's foreign policy, then, was strategic," but such highly political decisions cannot be explicated in the argument of this paper. To put it simply and thus crudely, however, the domestication of racism, or drawing up an agenda to solve American segregation as a domestic matter having nothing to do with other forms of racism in other nations, was the price to be paid in order to make the Civil Rights Movement in the fifties successful. And this could happen only by embracing the biopolitical, liberal and anti-communist line led by the federal government:

The acceptance by White and other key African-American leaders of the proposition that the United States, as the legitimate leader of the free world, was engaged in a fundamental struggle with the Soviet Union had a profound impact on civil rights politics. As early as 1946, with the formation of Truman's Committee on Civil Rights, White and others began to craft the dominant argument of the anti-Communist civil rights liberals. The new argument seized on international criticism of American racism to argue that antidiscrimination measures were necessary for the United States in its struggle against Communism. The dominant liberal argument against racism, using anti-Communism to justify the fight against domestic discrimination and for civil rights, conceded the high ground to anti-Communism. The liberals continued to link foreign and domestic policies but adopted a strategy that embraced American foreign policy while pushing domestic rights. (109-10)

If the biopoliticalization of racism is erasure of the political per se, what is suppressed there is the perspective that sees racism, not as a psychological matter, but as a function of international imperialism and colonialism, where "race" is to be seen not as a source of identitarian pride but as a concrete effect of the past hideous history. Under the Cold War, this perspective needed to be suppressed since it was a legacy of the Marxist viewpoint of the Left in the thirties. In the perspective Eschen tries to revive, the solution to racism means not the establishment of black identity or black pride, as the rhetoric of identity goes, but the overturning of international imperialism where every kind of racism matters, whatever the victims' skin color might be, and where economic inequality matters as well as racism.

This is what Damon's last cry tries to appeal to in his repentance as a Cold-War liberal. For the episode of Bob Hunter, if not intentionally, functions as a clear criticism of the black leaders' domestic shift where what really matters immediately are the civil rights of U.S. citizens. The episode is a distant cry for international solidarity against imperialism. And it is rather tempting to think that the author, even if subconsciously, regarded the presence of this episode as necessary to the formation of the novel, considering his self-imposed exile in Paris and his later works such as *Black Power*, *Color Curtain* and *White Man, Listen!*<sup>19</sup> Of course, Wright was clearly against the Communist Party as a totalitarian organization, which is, as argued, explicitly dictated in the novel; yet, he still believed in the Marxist perspective that sees

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<sup>19</sup> For Wright's relation to Pan-Africanism and Black Radicalism in general, see, for example, Campbell, Feuser, Gaines, and a chapter "Richard Wright and Modern Africa" in Diawara, in addition to the biographical explanation in Fabre.

racism as the structural factor in global modernity.

If, then, Damon's last words are seen as a critique of the commitment to the American "innocence" that figures so heavily in Cold-War liberal discourse, the "innocence" here spells the suppression of history, historicity, and historical perspectives. It is "innocence" that makes possible the conception of the liberal man who is free to realize himself, regardless of his historical responsibility to the world. It is "innocence" that makes Damon free to acquire his new self in abandoning his responsibility to his family, social relations, and cultural responsibility. It is the "innocence" of America that makes her believe, as the leader of the free world, that the Truman doctrine is not a form of imperialism. The ultimate meaning of innocence here is the suppression of history, where the idea that Cold-War America is a free country means that she can do whatever she believes is right, as liberalism goes, regardless of the actual international context: free here means the liberal freedom of "do what you want to do." This is the meaning of the "innocence" of Cold-War America. The rhetoric of gender in Truman's address, as I argued at the beginning of this paper, endorses this freedom by suppressing the international, historical, and political context in which America's liberalism should be located.

Read as a serious depiction of a Cold-War tragedy, Richard Wright's *The Outsider* thus signals what else America threw out with the bath water of Communist totalitarianism: materialist analysis in the global or international context reveals the hard facts of the international regime. In other words, the novel is truly valuable today in its critique of biopolitics or in its perspective that finally reaches an imagination that touches the outside of the biopolitical. In the sense that the critique calls for an analysis of the hard facts of imperialism, the novel could be seen even as a critique of Foucault's argument about biopolitics claiming, rather emphatically and in a liberal way, the invalidity of a social revolution as opposed to a cultural one.<sup>20</sup> The well-known passage from *History of Sexuality* reads, for example:

Where there is power, there is resistance, and yet, or rather consequently, this resistance is never in a position of exteriority in relation to power. . . . These points of resistance are present everywhere in the power network. Hence there is no single locus of great Refusal, no soul of revolt, source of all rebellions, or pure law of the revolutionary. (95-96)

The biopolitical conception of power, Foucault argues here, means that every resistance takes the form of everyday resistance with a small "r" and that it is meaningless to imagine a social Revolution that takes place through social planning, revolutionary theory or one ideal with which everyone agrees. In the sense that commitment to the value of freedom negates social intervention or any political (as opposed to biopolitical) intervention, Foucault's "ideology" here is clearly liberal. As the presupposition of this argument, Foucault negates the possibility of "a position of exteriority in relation to power"; in his desperate search for exteriority, however, Wright finds it in what is suppressed in the blind spot of historiography. As the novel implies, what is rather meaningless is the attempt to find universal exteriority in theoretical thinking; it is the existence of the "outside" that the history of the present tries to negate. And in the

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<sup>20</sup> Atteberry sees one element in Damon's Tragedy in breaking his "promise" in assuming his death and thus isolating himself from the network of social relations,"(890), but he does not see the dimension in the novel's tragedy to be understood as a critique of the biopolitical and thus the Foucauldian conception of resistance.

history of American liberalism after the end of World War II, the “outside” always concerns the Cold-War shift to biopolitics where the legacy of Marxist thinking is negated.

In the combination of Foucault’s argument and Wright’s tacit commitment to international politics that criticizes American and European imperialism, one may find Foucault’s Eurocentricism which does not consider geopolitical differences in the conception of biopolitics and its critique. Actually, however, to sum up what I have argued in this paper, my reading of *The Outsider* suggests that the commitment to identity, which sees race as a substantial factor in the talk of (bio-) politics, virtually displaces the Marxist thinking that offers an ultimately constructionist view that sees “race” as the effect of imperialism and colonialism. Damon’s last cry is truly a distant cry for international solidarity, but I would hesitate to call it a cry for a black diaspora, whatever “black” might mean. I do not deny the fact that there is a rich and diverse legacy from the valuable traditions of diasporas in the black Atlantic; however, what Wright had in mind, it seems to me, might be a cry for the solidarity of diasporas, but diasporas without color. It probably is not even a cry for diasporas; it seems to me more probable that what Wright wanted was a universal solidarity that would not exclude anyone. In fact, Bob Hunter is cast out because, when he wants to organize his own “union,” the Party decides that he “must not proceed any further in [his] attempt to organize any cells in the Dining Car Waiters’ Union” (566). In contrast to the Party’s *realpolitik*, Hunter shows his idealism for Marxism and organizing workers. And “union” should mean social, not cultural, collectivity that does not work in terms of racial identities.

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