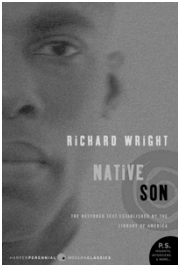



Chicago

Richard Wright (1908-1960)

- Dr. Theresa Thompson
- English 2130
- Fall 2008




Native Son, 1940



Black Boy, 1945

"He started down the road toward the tracks" (Wright 2526).

- 1856 to 1883: Race and U.S. Law
- 1892: Plessy v. Ferguson, "Separate but Equal"
- Jim Crow: by 1914 every Southern state had passed laws that created two separate societies—one black, the other white.
- 1954: U.S. Supreme Court, Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas Case
- 1964: Malcolm X, "The Ballot or the Bullet"
- 2008: "Change has come to America"



Enforcing Jim Crow

"The Man Who Was Almost a Man" (1941)

- The "problem" for Black manhood in America
 - Black womanhood (2518, 2520)
 - White patriarchal patronization (2519, 2525)
 - Manhood linked to race, sexuality, and violence (2521, 2522, 2526)
 - Buried masculinity (2524)
- Abjection: transgressing boundaries (2523)
- Great Migration (2527)
 - Mahmoud: "...the train references the related tropes of mobility and entrapment, two of the most recurrent themes in African American cultural production in the twentieth century...."

Hazel Carby: Reconstructing Womanhood (1987)

- "True Womanhood [...] could be divided into four cardinal virtues—piety, purity, submissiveness and domesticity [...] With them she was promised happiness and power."
- "Within the economic, political, and social system of slavery, women were at the nexus of its reproduction."
 - "True" (white) women produce (white) heirs.
 - Black women produce (white-owned) property.
- Women, as the source of capital reproduction and reproducers of the dominant caste, consolidate the power of the white male patriarchy of the antebellum South.
 - No role for black male power.

*W. J. Cash, The Mind of
the South (1941)*

- "[The South] could not and must not admit it, of course. It must prettify the institution [of slavery] and its own reactions, must begin to boast of its own Great Heart. . . ."
- "But there was another factor which was perhaps even more important. . . : the influence of the presence of the [African American] in increasing the value attaching to Southern [white] women."
- "Nor...must we overlook the specific role played by the [African American] woman. Torn from her tribal restraints and taught an easy complaisance for commercial reasons, she was to be had for the taking...."

*bell hooks, "Reflections on Race
and Sex"*

- "Clearly both [whites and blacks] have equated freedom with manhood, and manhood with the right of men to have indiscriminate access to the bodies of women."
- "It is this merging of sexuality with male domination within patriarchy that informs the construction of masculinity for men of all races and classes...."
- "Racism and sexism are interlocking systems of domination which uphold and sustain one another."

*Kristeva, The Power of
Horror*

- The Abject: "the wretched without resources."
 - Dictionary: most unfortunate, miserable
 - **Example: Borowski's images from Auschwitz**
- Abjection forces recognition of self's relationship to other & creates a space for transgression.
 - Our reaction (horror, vomit) to a threatened breakdown in meaning caused by the loss of the distinction between subject and object or between self and other.