

I just want to recap what I talked about last time very briefly. I made the point in the first lecture that American literature in the middle of 20th century is particularly preoccupied with the relationship between the writer and the reader, between imagination and lived experience, between fiction and truth, between the reader and the text, that these are very vexed and contested interfaces at this period. I also made the argument that at this moment, literary art is struggling with what to do with the legacy of modernism in the early century. But there's another strain from the earlier century that matters, and matters particularly to Richard Wright, and that is the American strain of naturalism. Writers like Theodore Dreiser write as very much in the vein of those writers. So even though he's very closely connected to the legacy of Avogard modernism, he's also connected to a social realist strain, the naturalist strain. Those are two slightly different strains, which I won't go into right now. He's connected to both those strains as well as the modernist strain. So, what I want to do today is look closely first at the selections from *Black Boy* that I asked you all to read, and to look at those as a text and to ask ourselves what we can learn about what kind of story it is. And I said about that problem, is it an autobiography? Is it fiction? What's it trying to do? What kind of reader does it want? I suggested that there was a critical response to those issues that was somewhat negative. And I want to sort of remind you of that just by reading you a little bit from W. E. B. Dubois' review of *Black Boy* when it came out. I think this sums up nicely what I was trying to communicate last time, he says, "This book tells a harsh a permitting story. It makes one wonder just exactly what its relation to truth is. The title a record of childhood and youth [that was the subtitle] makes one first think that the story is autobiographical, it probably is at least in part, but mainly it is probably intended to be fiction or fictionalized biography. At any rate, the reader must regard it as creative writing rather than simply a record of life." So that's W. E. B. Dubois' and I'm going to take his advice and now begin to read this book with you as creative writing. So let's see what it says to us when we look at it that way. I want to start, I'm going to read passages quite a bit today since some of you may not have been able to get the RAS packet in time, it being shopping period. So, I'm going to read passages and I hope you'll jump around with me if you have the text in your hand. In general, you should always bring the book to class. This is on page 267, this is from that second half of the book that was not published originally, but I want to point to it first of all in raising the question what did we lose in understanding this as a literary object when the second half of the book, you can come in and sit down if you want, there some space down here. What did we lose in our understanding this as a literary object when the second half of the book was not published? There are some seats here too. On 267, this is in one of these parenthetical passages where the narrator is commenting on what he's just given account of in his experience. "Slowly I began to forge in the depths of my mind," this is the very top of the page, "a mechanism that repressed all the dreams and desires that the Chicago streets, the newspapers, the movies were evoking in me. I was going through a second childhood, a new sense of the limit of the possible was being born in me." What Wright gives us here is an account of the two parts of this story that says, "This is an account of not one childhood but two." So one thing that readers lost when they lost the second half of this book, is the sense that maturing, the process of maturing, was more than the process of leaving the south. That has a typical building Roman structure. The structure of a story about a boy who goes out from his home and sort of becomes a man from his travels. If you just have the first half, you think that that development is accomplished when Richard decides to leave the South, but what he tells us very early in part two is that no, it takes two childhoods for a black man to make that journey. So, what is that journey then that required two childhoods to accomplish? A childhood in the South and then a childhood in the North. So now I want to turn to the beginning of the book. On page 7, I'm also going to

do some summarizing of these scenes for people who haven't read. Make yourselves as comfortable as you can. As I mentioned last time in the first time in this scene of this book, the child Richard burns down his family's house playing with matches underneath the curtains. He goes and hides under the house, afraid of the beating his mother will give him and indeed when his mother finally finds him, he is beaten unconscious and he is feverish and sick for a long time afterwards. What I want to read to you is this passage on page 7. "I was lost in a fog of fear. A doctor was called, I was afterwards told and he ordered that I be kept abed, that I be kept quiet, that my very life depended upon it. My body seemed on fire and I could not sleep. Packs of ice were put on my forehead to keep down the fever. Whenever I tried to sleep, I would see huge wobbly white bags like the full utters of cows suspended from the ceiling above me. Later as I grew worse, I could see the bags in the day time with my eyes were open and I was gripped by the fear that they going to fall and drench me with some horrible liquid. Day and night I begged my mother and father to take the bags away, pointing to them, shaking with terror because no one saw them but me. Exhaustion would make me drift towards sleep and then I would scream until I was wide awake again, I was afraid to sleep. Time finally bored me away from the bags and I got well, but for a long I was chacent whenever I remembered that my mother had come close to killing me." Why start with this scene? I said last time that part of the art of autobiography is choosing. What do you choose out of your life? Where do you begin? Where do you end? What do you put next to what? Why does Wright choose this scene? It's very dramatic, so it has that going for it, it's a hook. I would suggest that this little passage I just read to you tells us in part why. It's a moment when a child realizes that the person who gave him life can revoke it. His mother who gave him life, can take that life away from him. It's a profound sense of jeopardy, physical mortal jeopardy. And I want to point to those huge wobbly white bags, "like the full utters of cows." One of the wonderful things you can see in the binaquese of Richard Wright archives is the draft copies of *Black Boy*. Wright revised this image in those drafts. It was at one time white faces, not white bags, white faces. This to me, is a fascinating revision. First of it all it suggests of course, that he was giving language to something, making a specific image out of something that didn't quite have that specific content in his experience as a child. But that revision is also away from a sense that this jeopardy is represented by a racial face, the symbolic face of black oppression. The white face that is always cruelly set against the black boy of this account. He revises it away from that to the more generalized fundamental, but also very personal figure of the mother and the maternal. So the white bags, this is an image of the breasts, we have this fear of the horrible white liquid, as if milk were going to drown him. So the threat embodied by the mother who will beat her own son unconscious, is embodied in that fevered vision of the bags like the full utters of cows. So this novel, this autobiography, begins with the sense that this boy is in danger from practically the moment he comes into the world, the moment he come into consciousness. Then I want to note the transition that happens at the very bottom of this page. After he says, "I was chacent when I had to remember that my mother had come close to killing me." Then we move into something that I call a catalog. There are three of these in the first half. It's a list of sensations or perceptions that don't have a particular narrative structure exactly, they're just a sort of compilation of experience. "Each event spoke with a cryptic tone and the moments of living slowly revealed their coded meanings. There was the wonder I felt when I saw a brace of mountain-like spotted black and white horses clopping down a dusty road through clouds of powdered clay. There was the delight I caught in seeing long straight roads of green and red vegetables stretching away to the sun in the bright horizon. There was the faint, cool kiss of sensuality when dew came to my cheeks and shins as I ran down the wet, green garden paths in the early morning. There was the vague sense of the infinite as I looked down upon the yellow dreaming

waters of the Mississippi from the verdant bluffs of naches.” I’m going to stop there. There’s a lot you can say about these catalogs and when I used to teach the whole of this text over a course of two days, I would spend a lot of time and if you want to, it’s worth and it repays the time that you could spend rereading these and thinking about the exact language. For instance, here, at the very top of page 8, when he talks about, “the dreaming waters of the Mississippi river,” what you have there is a moment when the perception of the child becomes the perception of the world imbued with imagination. So the river is not dreaming, it’s Richard who’s dreaming. So this is in part a catalog that represents the awakening of sensuality, the awakening of the body to its environment, to his environment. But also, there is this sense of imagination and you get that in the dreaming waters. You get that in the sense of travel, or the image of the road that you can see in the green and red vegetables stretching away in the roads to the bright horizon. There’s that sense of space, of expansiveness, the possibility of travel. Why put this next to, right after that very dramatic scene? Why is this the moment to enter into that meditation? Well I think it’s because it’s embodying an osculation that will come back in this text between radical jeopardy and deprivation, and the compensation of sensuality, emotion, and imagination. These two osculate back and forth, so the moment of deprivation is often then balanced by a moment of imagination. So what I’m going to do is just now run through the next two or three scenes and talk about why they are set next to each other. So the next one we have, just on page 9, these come quite rapidly here, is the day his mother tells him that they’re going to Memphis on a boat called the Kate Adams. He says, “My eagerness thereafter made the days seem endless. Each night I went to bed hoping that the next morning would be the day of departure. ‘How big is the boat?’ I asked my mother. ‘As big as a mountain,’ she said. ‘Has it got a whistle?’ ‘Yes.’ ‘Does the whistle blow?’ ‘Yes.’ ‘When?’ ‘When the captain wants it to blow.’ ‘Why do they call it the Kate Adams?’ ‘Because that’s the boat’s name.’ ‘What color is the boat?’ ‘White.’ ‘How long will we be on the boat?’ ‘All day and all night.’ ‘Will we sleep on the boat?’ ‘Yes, when we get sleepy, we’ll sleep, now hush.’ For days I had dreamed about a huge white boat floating on a vast body of water, but when my mother took me down to the levvy on the day of leaving, I saw a tiny, dirty boat that was not at all like the boat I had imagined.” If in the catalog imagination is awakened, this is what it can then do for Richard. It can endow his daily experience with a kind of romance, but of course this is a poor, black child growing up in the south and his expectations, what his mind can imagine, is always going to be greater than what the world can deliver. So if the landscape invites him to grow as an imaginative person, the social world he lives in, this episode signals to us, immediately, will never live up to that imagination. There is a sense of powerlessness that arises from the repeated osculation that you start to see, even set up in these first three little vignettes. And the problem of powerlessness is first off located not centrally in that social world. I don’t think we’re meant to understand that the young Richard, when he discovers that the Kate Adams is a dirty little boat, and not this romantic vision of a ship he had hoped for. That the young Richard thinks to himself, “this is because I am a poor black boy growing up in the South.” It’s simply an experience of disappointment. The sense of powerlessness, the most profound sense of powerlessness suggested already by the first episode where his mother almost takes back the life she gave him, is rooted in the family, and we get such a dramatic vision of that in the next episode that follows, the episode of the kitten. So for those of you who haven’t read, Richard’s father works nights and sleeps during the day, and during the day the children therefore have to be very quiet. There is a cat outside the apartment building that starts to meow and the boys are interested in it. The father yells at the boys and says, “Make that cat shut up!” They can’t and he says, “Make it shut up, I don’t care, kill it if you have to! Kill that cat.” Richard at this point, already hates his father. His father will abandon the

family quite soon after this episode. For Richard he is mostly this kind of presence, a covailing, angry, abusive presence. His resentment of his powerlessness over his family seethes in this moment and he thinks of a way to get back at his father. "I'll take his words literally, I will kill the cat," he thinks. And so he does, he hangs the cat. Richards's mother finds out when his brother tells on him and the father cannot punish him. He has taken the father's words literally when they were not meant literally, but in doing so, in relying on his father's words in a sense to protect him, even as he subverts them, he escapes the punishment that would otherwise so naturally and habitually follow. So, Richard's first exertion of agency in this book, is through the agency of words. In this case in asserting in interpretation of the words at odds with their intended meaning. It's as if Richard takes those words and he makes him his own. He takes them from his father and gains a different kind of strength from them, a strength he can then use to get back at his father. This is the first instance in which Richard will do what he later describes "mencadoing," using words a weapons. His discovery of mencan, using words as weapons as a political sense, is a very powerful moment in his intellectual development. In this case, it's a much more visceral kind of development. It's the understanding that he can make things happen in the world, he can defend himself against his father's punishment through the use of words. But I want to note that his mother takes a different approach, if his father resigns himself to Richard's subterfuge, his mother does not. And this is page 12 he says, "I had had my first triumph over my father, I had made him believe that he had taken his words literally, he could not punish me now without risking his authority. I was happy because I had at last found a way to throw my criticism of him into his face. I had made him feel that if he whipped me for killing the kitten, I would never give serious ways to his words again. I had made him know that I felt he was cruel, and I had done it without his punishing me. But my mother, being more imaginative, retaliated with an assault upon my sensibilities that crushed me with the moral horror involved in taking a life." And I want to just flip over to 13 about the same place on the page, she's confronted him with having knowingly taken the father's words the wrong way, "'you stop that lying you knew what he meant.' 'I didn't!' I bawled. She shoved a tiny spade into my hands, 'Go out there, dig a hole, and bury that kitten.' I stumbled out into the black night sobbing, my legs wobbling from fear, though I knew that I had killed the kitten, my mother's words had made it live again in my mind. What would that kitten do to me when I touched it? Would it claw at my eyes? As I groped to the dead kitten, my mother lingered behind me in the dark, her disembodied voice egging me on. The mother has her own way of using words for power, and she does it by making the kitten live again in his imagination. It's as if she's writing fiction there in that scene. She's representing this kitten that he's killed, so that it comes back to haunt him. So once again, there's that immediate osculation, the moment Richard gains some power from the use of words, his mother takes it back by exerting that power herself, taking that power away from him. There's a kind of drumbeat of thematic material as these scenes pile up. The drumbeat is all about language. Yes, this is a book about the privations of growing up in the south poor and black, but it is very much consciously a book about the development of someone who attends to language. So in these early scenes it's all about power, but it's actually not even not quite so easy, or so simple as these early scenes that I've just discussed might make out. Language has powers that are incredibly unpredictable, that can't be harnesses in precisely that deliberate way by making a decision to take someone's words in the wrong way or by telling a story to make a moral point as the mother does. So think about the scene where Richard drinks in the saloon as a child. Patrons pay him and give him drinks to go up and keep their words between other members in the bar, usually this happened between men and women. So a man will give Richard a drink and pay him a few pennies to go to a woman in the bar and repeat certain things that he has trained Richard to

say. In doing this the patrons titter, everybody sort of has fun with this. Richard has no idea what he's saying, he's simply repeating the sounds of the words that are given to him. Through this process, he becomes addicted to alcohol at a very young age, but at the same time, he learns something about language. It has mysterious powers, it has capacities to make things happen in the world that he doesn't know how to control. When he finally emerges from this time of being a young drunkard, his mother sort of locks him up in the house, and makes sure he can't get out, and then takes him to work with her and so on, so that he loses that taste for alcohol. In the text what you have right next to that, is the beginning of his insatiable questions, he starts to torture his mother with a thousand questions about everything in the world. The addiction to alcohol is, in a sense, replaced by an addiction to knowledge. The experience of having language speak through him and do things that he doesn't understand, makes him want to acquire again that agency that he experienced when he took his father's words literally. This theme comes back in the scene where his grandmother is washing him, you remember this scene? His grandmother is washing him and his brother in the tub, and she's washing his butt and he says to her, "When you're finished kiss back there." And whoa, she's flying off the roof with anger, chasing him around the house trying to whip him with a wet towel, so on so forth. So it's a very dramatic scene again of powerlessness within the family, of being the victim of violence within the family, but in this case, it's a response produced in the negative register similar to the responses produced in the saloon. He says something and he doesn't really know where those words come from, he doesn't really know what made his granny so angry about those words. He doesn't understand the words that he's used, but boy do they produce a response. So there's this sense in which the story of a developing writer is the story of someone learning even before they learn how to control a language fully, that language has these capacities. Well, there's another element though to the kind of language that Richard is describing learning, and that is the racial element. He is learning a racialized language, and here I want to look at page, let's see, page 79. Actually, first on 47 just in passing quickly, you know what I'm looking at my watch we don't have time, we'll go straight to 79. On page 79 we get an account of a conversation between Richard and his friends and it's annotated with interpretive asides. So I'm going to start in the middle of this, "The crowd laughs long and loud, 'Man them white folks ought to catch you and send you to a zoo and keep you for the next war.' Throwing the subject into a wider field, 'then when the fighting starts they ought to feed you on buttermilk and black-eyed peas and let you break wind.' The subject was accepted and extended, 'you'd win the war with a new kind of poisoned gas.' A shout in climax, there's high laughter that simmers down slowly. 'Maybe poisoned gas is something good to have.' The subject of white folks is associatingly swept into the orbit of talk. 'Yeah, if they have a race riot around here I'm going to kill all the white folks with my poison,' bitter pride, gleeful laughter then silence, each waiting for the other to contribute something. 'Them white folks sure scared of us though,' sober statement of an old problem." What we see here is a doubled voice. This is a moment when the narrative voice begins to split in a very conscious way. So what you have is the account of Richard and his friends talking in the past and you have the present narrators parsing of how this language relates to topics that infringe upon their very context, the racial realities of the south. So what you see here is a narrator who has learned to do that parsing. Some of these terms that he uses are literary, climax, the creation of suspense, so he's tracking this as if it were the development of a narrative, but he's also suggesting how humor is used to broach topics that are impossible to talk about in more direct ways or that feel more dangerous to these boys to approach in more direct ways. So there's a kind of grammar of race that this boy is learning, while he experiences language in all these other more visceral, family oriented ways. There's this social context of race relations whose grammar

he is also learning. And I would just remind you of the passage where he starts to ask his mother about whether his granny is white or not. There's a long conversation and she gets very frustrated with him, she doesn't really want to answer that question, she is a woman who looks very white, but is categorized as black in that system of the south. And so, Richard is learning a grammar of race even while he tries to work out how to use language as a source of power in his family. The split voice, the development of what you could say is that racial double consciousness, the W. E. B. DuBois talks about. That double consciousness of racial reality is manifested in that split in the narrative. In the horror and the glory, the second half of the book as originally written, that voice become the parenthetical. It takes another development all together. So if you look in certain passages, let's see on 272 and 273, actually I'm going to start on 271. This is where Richard is talking about the white waitresses he works with in the restraint in Chicago, this is what he says about them about three quarters of the page, "During my lunch hour which I spent on a bench in a nearby park, the waitresses would come and sit beside me talking at random, laughing, joking, smoking cigarettes. I learned about their tawdry dreams, their simple hopes, their home lives, their fear of feeling anything deeply, their sex problems, their husbands. They were an eager, restless, talkative, ignorant, bunch, but casually kind and impersonal for all that. They knew nothing of hate and fear and strove instinctively to avoid all passion." That commentary that you get right in the scene, not in the parenthetical, it's as if the voice of Richard remembering the early parts of his childhood. The voice that can parse a conversation is then part of what gets remembered as part of the scene. When Richard is with those waitresses, he's reflecting on these things as he experiences them. But there's a second kind of development and this gets to that second childhood he invokes that happens to him when he goes to Chicago. There's a social analysis that he begins to be able to advance, partly to his reading in Marxism, in sociology, Wright was very interested in the sociology of the 1930's and 40's, he read a lot in that vein. He was very interested in economics and he wanted to understand how the social structures of capitalism and the economics structures of capitalism impinged upon the way personalities were formed. And that's why he's interested in the emotions of these waitresses, and in fact, the question of emotion bears directly on his sense of what books are for. There's a remarkable moment on page 280 where he talks about his aspiration as a writer, and this is remarkable from how different it is from someone like Neubauchaug or John Bark, or many of our other writers on the syllabus. "If I could fasten the mind of the reader, among words firmly that he would forget words and be conscious only of his response, I felt that I would be in sight knowing how to write narrative. I strove to master words to make the disappear, to make them important by making them new, to make them melt into a writhing spiral of emotional stimuli, each greater than the other, each feeding and reinforcing the other, and all ending in an emotional climax that would drench the reader with a sense of a new world. That was the single aim of my living." That's remarkable for a writer to say, "I want to write so that my words disappear." He doesn't want us to see the art of his sentences, he wants us to feel, and it is in fact feeling that he credits to novels that allows him to imagine that he himself could have a different life. And he talks about this if you look at the published ending on 413 that we find in the notes. When this second half wasn't there, when he asks, "How dare I consider my feeling superior to the gross environment that sought to claim me," he sates the problem of living in the south as a problem of feeling that he needed to claim and consider his own feelings. He says, "It had only been through books, at best no more than vicarious cultural transfusions that I had managed to keep myself alive in a negatively vital way. My belief in books had risen more out of a sense of desperation than out of my abiding conviction of their ultimate value." And I'm just going to skip down, "It had been my accidental reading of fiction and literary criticism that had invoked in me vague

glimpses of life's possibilities." Reading for him is a way of accessing feeling and that's the kind of reading that he wants from us, from the people who read his book. The kind of feeling that he wants us to have is sort of stated in that alternate ending, but the horror and the glory shows how that kind of feeling enters into a much larger cultural analysis. That piece of it which is gone, when the second half disappears, that piece of it is what he tries to communicate in a very condensed way. And I want now to show you some of those letters that I mentioned. Andrew can you get the screen and the lights? I'm switching gear pretty quickly here because we don't have a lot of time. As I explained last time, it was the book of the moth club that caused him to make this change in his account. What I have in front of you right now is the second page of the first letter that Dorothy Canfield Fisher wrote to Wright, where she raises the problem that she sees in the ending as he has revised it. Now, the shame here is that she's talking about a version of the ending you see in that note in 413 of our edition. She's talking about an early draft of that ending and it's not in the binaque, I don't know where it is. I don't know where the drafts that accompany these correspondences are. Now it's just possible that they're in that big archive somewhere and I just haven't found them yet, so if any of you want to be an archive sleuth and find them, great. I looked and I can't find them, sometimes when correspondents save, you run into these sorts of problems. So, we have to guess a little bit at what she was looking at. What I want to point out to you is this part of her letter, the third paragraph here where she says, "My idea is this." In the first part of the letter, she has made some sentence level suggestions for the end of the book, and now she embarks very tentatively on her major suggestions. "My idea is this, you ask a question all of your many readers have asked themselves about you with an eagerness full of anxious hope. What was it that always made me feel that way? What was it that made me conscious of possibilities? From where had I caught a sense of freedom?" And if you've read the ending and the notes, then you'll remember those passages where he asks that questions. And his answer in that published version is from books. But this is what she's thinking, "We too ask ourselves that question. We, meaning those American who follow in the example of their parents and grandparents have done what they could to lighten this dark stain of racial discrimination in our nation. What we have hoped, faintly hoped, was that those efforts of men of good will have somewhat availed, a little, enough so that those suffering from racial injustice might catch a passing glimpse of the fact that they are rooted in those American principles, so mocked and degraded by the practices racial discrimination. In what else could they be rooted? That they exist is a proof that American ideals are not the tawdry pretenses they are so often accused of being." And then I'm going to skip down to the bottom of the next paragraph, "To keep that conception in regard to decent race relations alive and growing has been the aspiration of generation after generation in many American families, judging by my own and by those I know to receive in the closing pages of your book one recognition for this aspiration. If it were possible for you to give such recognition honestly would hearten all who believe in American ideals." This is quite striking. Imagine that you are Richard Wright, and you've grown up with the life that he describes in this book, now you've read some of it, and you're being asked to suggest something in the closing pages of your autobiography, which is closing where you did not want it to close, in the middle of your book, not at the end of your book, you're being asked to essentially thank the good liberal white people who have been working on behalf of the end of racial discrimination. Well, wright finds this an extremely difficult request to respond to, and you can track it here in his response. I'm gonna read from here so I can actually see it. He says, "Okay, I'll respond to those sentence level things. Your more general suggestion was much harder to deal with. I fully understand the value of what you were driving at, but frankly, the narrative as it now stands simply will not support a more general or hopeful conclusion. The Negro who flees the south is really a refugee.

He is so pinched and straightened in his environment that his leaving is more an avoidance than a race. For me, it is my reading of fiction, far removed from political considerations that evoked in me a sense of personal freedom where the possibilities of escaping the south. I added a paragraph to the body of the epilogue, expanding this notion," and I take this to be the paragraph where he talks about fiction and what it has done for him specifically. Canfield Fisher is not satisfied with this, she comes back at the problem. This is at the bottom of the letter, "I gather that you cannot bring yourself to use even once the word American in speaking of the tinge of warmth which came from an unseen light, such a beautiful sensitive phrase. Some of the novels and stories you read were, it is probable, laid in your own country of America, hence some of the characters in books through who you had glimpsed life's possibilities, were fellow Americans of yours. These unseen lights which shown through them upon your faith were reflections of American efforts to live up to an idea. Those characters could have been no other than products of American tradition. However, dimly that light came through to you, suffering so acutely from the rough denial of the very existence of American ideals. Part of it must have come through American delineation of American characters. Now keep in mind, this is 1944, this the summer of 1944, American is just joining the war effort in Europe. This is a fight against Fascism, that's the way that it was presented to the American public, a fight against Nazi Germany, and in later letters in this series between her and Richard. And also in the review, the little sort of summary that she wrote up for the book of the month club newsletter, she invokes the Nazis specifically as a comparison to the kind of oppression that Richard was trying to escape in the south. So this is caught up in a moment of patriotism, where American freedom is being help up very much as the ideal, that thing that we fight for when we go to Europe to fight. And so, to have Richard present this picture of America that doesn't ring the changes of that patriotism, comes to be a problem in her mind. Now when *Black Boy* was published, there was a war -bond advertisement on the back cover of the book. It really was just even as a physical context, all bound up with the politics of its moment. Richard's response to this, we just have two seconds and I want to show it to you, I love these pieces because you can just see him struggling on the page. This is his first attempt at writing back to her, see all the scribbles? This was hard for him, there are two other drafts, if you go and look at them, it's quite interesting. He's trying extremely hard to make an answer. And what he ends up doing is bringing that knowledge that he built up in Chicago, the knowledge that he gets from read economics and sociology and Marxism. He gives an analysis of industrial capitalism, that's the kind of framework he uses to try to get her to understand what it would mean to be a negro in the south, how isolated he was culturally, how impossible it is to see something like an ideal America of freedom and justice from that subject position. In the end, the compromise is that he notes several writers including Driserc and Sherwood Anderson, and I just want to have you compare the catalog of writers on 413, that he mentions. There Driserc, Edgar Lee Masters, H. L. Mincon, Anderson, and Lewis, all American writers. Compare that with the catalog that he gives of his reading on 249, and you'll see what being allided. This is the top of 249, "So certainly we have Sinclair Lewis, Sherwood Anderson, but then we have Dusty Afske, George Moore, Gustafe Mobear, Tolstoy, Frank Harris, Mark Twain, Thomas Hardy, Arnold Bennett, Stephen Crane, Zola Norris, Gorkey, Burgson, Ebson, Balsac, you get the point." This is a very cosmopolitan reading list. What Canfield fisher asks him to present is a totally nationalistic one. My point in sum, what I want you to take away from this is to see how an account of a life is struggling against forces outside of itself, publishing forces, the forces of politics, of war, of an editor. How a writer is struggling to make his account faithful to his own artistic vision, his own social vision, against those forces, and how those forces have an impact, try as he might, have an impact on what the text looks like when we hold it in our hands. *Black Boy* or *American Hunger*

is a dramatic example and thanks to the binaque and to the scholarship that's been done on it by the editor who brought this whole text out in the 1990's, Arnold Ramparstat. Thanks to that work we get to see it up close. We get to see what that back and forth looks like. We'll have another version of this when we think about Lolita, which in our edition, has an essay at the end called "On a novel entitle Lolita." That's only there because someone tried to sensor that book. It's another example of how the world comes to impinge on and change our reading experience. It's something that we will come back to and explore more in the next class.