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Subjugated Citizenship:
The Politics and Psychology of Domesticity in
The Street by Ann Petry, *The Dollmaker* by Harriet Arnow,
and *The Changelings* by Jo Sinclair

By

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Women's Studies

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B.A., Syracuse University, 1997
M.A., The Ohio State University, 2002

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Abstract

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and *The Changelings* by Jo Sinclair

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This dissertation examines three novels: *The Street* by Ann Petry, *The Dollmaker* by Hariette Arnow*,* and *The Changelings* by Jo Sinclair and explores the following questions: Do these novels offer any insights into the politics of American citizenship? Do they illuminate or challenge conventional knowledge regarding the political context of the 1940s and 1950s? Can contemporary political analyses—particularly those concerned with autonomy, individualism, and liberalism be useful in interpreting midcentury literary texts? This analysis uses contemporary feminist political theory and its criticism of liberalism to examine the discursive context within which these novels were produced. While it can be argued that these novels anticipate a feminist criticism of liberalism and its reliance on conventional gender expectations, they do not present a cohesive criticism of liberal political philosophy. Instead, they engage and oppose the dominant discourses of citizenship that were in circulation during this time period, which positioned motherhood and the domestic sphere as the site upon which the stability of democracy and the production of ideal citizens depended. The novels resist these discourses in several ways. First, they undermine the strict division between the public sphere and the private sphere that was said to be crucial for securing democracy. However, the novels do not refute the importance of the domestic sphere and its role in socializing individuals and perpetuating social values. Rather, they demonstrate how the ideal domestic space, characterized by an insular nuclear family, is unattainable by some families and individuals and not conducive to fostering democratic values for others—whether due to structural inequality or psychological anxiety. Second, they address specific social expectations regarding behavior and relationships—especially with respect to sexuality and motherhood—and indicate the ways in which these expectations are, again, unattainable or contradictory to the goal of upholding democracy. Finally, the analysis concludes by arguing that as they reveal the contradictions that inhere in the dominant discourses of American citizenship, the novels illustrate the economic and psychological conditions that render citizenship and its promises difficult, if not impossible, to attain for women, the poor and working class, and families of color.

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Introduction

In this dissertation, I examine three novels: *The Street* by Ann Petry, *The Dollmaker* by Hariette Arnow, and *The Changelings* by Jo Sinclair. These novels were published and set in times of extraordinary political and economic transition in the United States between 1946 and 1955. I seek to explore the following questions: Do these novels offer any insights into the politics of citizenship? Do they illuminate or challenge conventional knowledge regarding the political context of the 1940s and 1950s? Can contemporary political analyses—particularly those concerned with autonomy, individualism, and liberalism be useful in interpreting midcentury literary texts?

In what follows, I develop these questions using contemporary feminist political theory and outline the historical context in which these novels were produced, paying specific attention to how the politics of citizenship were articulated during this time period. Rather than argue that these socially critical novels exemplify contemporary feminist theory, I use this theory (and its criticism of liberalism) to develop a discursive context within which these novels were produced. While it can be argued that these novels do, indeed, anticipate a feminist criticism of liberalism and its reliance on conventional gender expectations, they do not present a cohesive criticism of liberal political philosophy. Instead, they engage and oppose the politics of citizenship that were in circulation during this time period, which positioned motherhood and the domestic sphere as the site upon which the stability of democracy and the production of ideal citizens depended. Rather than argue that these novels collectively represent a particular genre of

protest, my analysis assumes, as Ann Petry does in her essay, "The Novel as Social Criticism", that "The novel, like all other forms of art, will always reflect the political, economic, and social structure in which it was created….The moment the novelist begins to show how society affected the lives of his characters, how they were formed and shaped by the sprawling inchoate world in which they lived, he is writing a novel of social criticism, whether he calls it that or not" (33). In this respect, I am not concerned *specifically* with authorial intent but rather, with the critical labor that each novel performs within its historical context. I depend on a broad and somewhat informal definition of citizenship (one that encompasses the everyday actions and activities of individuals and their families) and relies on how experts—mostly sociologists and psychologists—defined mainstream assumptions regarding the ideal citizen and how he is produced. This definition is supported on the one hand by contemporary feminist theory and activism, which has insisted on the recognition of the private sphere as a political space, "[examining] the private oppression of women in the domestic sphere, how it is exported to the public sphere [and] how conduct in the family and in personal relations affects conduct in the public sphere" (Frazer 127). On the other hand, in the years following World War II, antiracist sociologists and psychologists, committed to understanding and challenging racism as a fundamentally anti-American problem, articulated mainstream assumptions regarding citizenship—linking the domestic sphere, and the activities therein, with the preservation of democratic values and the production of ideal (read: male) citizens. This represented a shift from previous approaches to racism and other social problems. In *Motherhood in Black and White: Race and Sex*

in American Liberalism, 1930-1965, Ruth Feldstein discusses how "In the New Deal era, liberalism had largely subordinated problems of race to questions of class, economics, and individual opportunity. By contrast, in the 1940s and 1950s liberals came to view prejudice as a psychological problem *and* a problem of citizenship" (40).

In my analysis, I examine how each author engages politics of citizenship and their accompanying changes, paying particular attention to an increased emphasis on individual adherence to social, sexual, and economic codes as a means of personal and civic responsibility. Following this, *The Street* (1946) represents a structural approach to the problems of racism, sexism, and poverty while it also anticipates the aforementioned shift to psychology. Given the literary context within which it emerged and its focus on the harsh environment that its protagonist, Lutie Jones, must navigate, early critical analyses of *The Street* positioned it primarily within the Richard Wright school of literary naturalism and social protest. However, more recent analyses have suggested that restricting the novel within this literary mode does not do the novel justice. Indeed, such analyses suggest that the text not only transcends the boundaries of literary naturalism, it also challenges the "practices of spectatorship" inherent in the naturalist genre and that "Petry's self-conscious negotiation of these issues produces a commentary on the (racial) politics of realism that effectively exposes and dismantles the power structures encoded into that genre" (Hicks 91). Clare Virginia Eby maintains that *The Street* is as much a humanitarian narrative as it is protest and that the novel's critical strength derives "by counterbalancing naturalistic protest with affirmations of the humanity of Lutie

and also, and more significantly, of numerous secondary characters….These individual histories create sympathy, revealing to the reader (and sometimes also to Lutie) that what appeared to be an abject being is, rather, a person" (34). Further, she argues that "the sympathy generated by the humanitarian narrative is no idle or armchair emotion but implies a politics and impels action" (35). Indeed, it is within this framework that I look at how Petry both reflects and resists the assumptions of antiracist liberalism and its treatment of citizenship, motherhood, and the domestic sphere.

The Dollmaker (1954), on the other hand, focuses less on structural inequalities and economics and more on the individual and individualism. With its focus on the ways in which its protagonist, Gertie Nevels, navigates the harsh conditions of her environment, the novel demonstrates characteristics of literary naturalism. As a novel of social protest, it aims its criticism not only at the dehumanizing structures of urban industrialism, but also at individuals and the choices they make. Indeed, critical analyses of Arnow emphasize that while she depicts the harsh realities of poor and working class individuals and families, her work is not explicitly and overtly political. She does not "uncritically follow the conventions of proletarian literature" but rather "awakens readers' social consciences by allowing them to identify with her character's plight" (Chung 107). However, in an interesting twist on the politics of sympathy and the humanitarian narrative (as defined above by Eby), Arnow generates not only sympathy for the loss and suffering experienced by Gertie, but also disdain for the ways in which she is complicit in her own suffering (Walsh 187). Furthermore, unlike *The Street* and

The Changelings, *The Dollmaker* is not explicitly concerned with racism or with antiracist liberalism; it does, however, engage the politics of American citizenship, particularly as Appalachian scholars and social scientists articulated it.

Finally, *The Changelings* (1955) depicts the psychological landscape of a community of individuals struggling, in the aftermath of the Holocaust, with American assimilation, Jewish identity, and economic mobility. The depictions of the distress, despair, and anxiety with which the characters struggle position this novel as one of psychological realism. As a novel of protest, it reflects the time period's "split personalities" (Karl 20). Frederick Karl argues that one of the most apparent literary and artistic themes during the 1950s was alienation. He cites several prominent novels—Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1953), Saul Bellow's *The Adventures of Augie March* (1953), and James Baldwin's *Go Tell it on the Mountain* (1953)—and describes how in these texts "the very quality of what it means to be an American has become confusing and ambiguous. Each protagonist is on a quest or search, in which in the face of rapid change he or she has to grasp some form of self or autonomy" (32). *The Changelings* makes clear early on that its protagonist, Judy Vincent (called Vincent), is struggling with a self divided among three separate worlds. Her quest navigates these and the tensions surrounding identity, assimilation, family, and community.

These psychological themes emphasize the political goals of the novel, which aims its criticism at the psychological mechanisms that produce social problems, specifically racial prejudice. In this respect, it embraces the psychological approach to racism advocated by the time period's antiracist liberals. However, it would be

incorrect to suggest that Sinclair embraces those gender politics defined by her contemporaries. Specifically, Sinclair resists their assumptions by decentralizing the role of motherhood and domesticity and revealing the anxieties over masculinity and ethnicity that helped to perpetuate racism.

Collectively, the novels reflect the aforementioned social and political changes during this time period, particularly those in liberal circles (i.e. moving from economics to social science as a way of examining and solving social problems). Of the three novels, *The Street* best represents an economic and structural approach to the problems of racism, sexism, and poverty that it depicts. *The Dollmaker*, on the other hand, starts to move away from a purely economic and structural approach to the problems of poverty and industrialism to focus on the individual and individual accountability. The novel is characterized by the kind of naturalism found in conventional protest novels, but the novel's disdain is aimed, not only at the dehumanizing structures of industrialism, but also at individuals and the choices they make. Finally, *The Changelings* aims its criticism at the psychological mechanisms that produce racial prejudice. There is discussion of economics, but the sources of and solutions to racism are located within an individual's psychology and reflected in the choices that she makes. It would be incorrect, however, to suggest that Sinclair fully embraces the shift to social science as defined by her contemporaries. Specifically, the novel resists certain assumptions about gender and motherhood that were perpetuated during this time.

Contemporary feminist political scientists and legal theorists such as Carol Pateman, Elizabeth Frazer, Martha Albertson Fineman, Nancy Fraser, and Linda

Gordon look at the ways in which political liberalism has systematically excluded women from attaining full citizenship. Carole Pateman examines how the position of women in liberal democratic philosophy turns on the establishment of women's "natural" subordination to men, which is institutionalized through the establishment of two separate spheres—the public and the private. Her work examines the philosophical foundations of liberal democratic theory and the institutions that structure it. She explains how, regardless of its individualist, egalitarian, and conventionalist doctrine, liberalism managed to secure patriarchal social relations. For example, in traditional contract theory, women are depicted as naturally incapable of sublimating their passions and cannot develop the sense of justice that is necessary for maintaining civil society (21). In this depiction, women are unable to claim citizenship because they are "naturally" incapable of accepting civic responsibility. Reading through both Jean-Jacques Rousseau and Sigmund Freud, Pateman explains, "Women, naturally lacking the capacities for public participation, remain within an association constituted by love, ties of blood, natural subjection, and particularity….The public world of universal citizenship is an association of free and equal individuals, a sphere of property, rights, and contract—and of men, who interact as formally equal citizens" (183).

Despite its opposition to the claims of the public sphere and the goals of liberal and democratic citizenship, the private sphere is inextricably linked to both. Symbolically, the public sphere gains meaning by excluding the private; ideologically, the public and private are yoked together in the idea of the American Dream, and substantially they are linked through women's reproductive labor,

which subsidizes men's full participation in the public sphere. In *The Autonomy Myth*, Martha Fineman argues that autonomy is an unattainable ideal, whose perpetuation in both social and economic institutions precludes women's full participation in the public sphere, evidencing women's precarious and contradictory status as citizens. Autonomy, the ideal by which citizenship is assumed, is not a natural stage into which individuals are born but rather a status that is achieved through the acquisition of income in the public workplace and depends on the unpaid, caretaking labor of women, exemplified by (but not limited to) motherhood (21-22, 47-49). Individuals (read: men) as well as market and government institutions enjoy the fruits of this labor, but (on a social level) bear none of its burdens. The status of motherhood, according to Fineman, is incompatible with autonomy and therefore prevents substantial claims to citizenship. She illustrates how the gender norms that Patemen identifies in liberal contract theory are perpetuated by contemporary marriage legislation.

Pateman and Fineman (and other feminist theorists in this vein) illustrate how despite its claim to the principles of rights, freedoms, and equality, liberalism has failed to emancipate women. Women's claims to citizenship are only partial, and these claims are even more compromised when issues of race, class, ethnicity, and so forth are included in analyses of liberalism. These analyses inspired the following question, which is the foundation of my analysis: How do these novels depict motherhood and the domestic sphere and following that, the relationship of the public to the private? It is not my contention that these novels engage the question of women's status as citizens but rather, the dominant discourse of

citizenship and its treatment of motherhood and the domestic sphere. I also investigate how class, race, and ethnicity are implicated within this discourse and the novels' treatment of them.

Published between the years 1946 and 1955, all these texts—to some extent—depict pressures exerted by changing urban demographics and rapid industrial growth during the early to mid-century, the precarious position of black and working class families, and the destructive and dehumanizing implications of dominant economic and social values. The postwar period, beset by social anxiety, ushered in a set of conservative political and social ideologies that linked national security and economic prosperity with adherence to traditional gender roles within the nuclear family. The economic instability of the Great Depression and the distress wrought by a world-wide war against totalitarianism and by increased hostility between the U.S. and the Soviet Union in the "atomic age" created an environment in which vulnerable Americans sought comfort and security in the privacy of their homes and in their commitment to family life.

Within this context, domesticity and motherhood were politicized in specific ways to help secure domestic security and produce ideal male citizens. Ruth Feldstein's analysis of the time period's "psychologically informed liberalism" examines how advocates of liberalism during the 1940s and 1950s argued that racial hatred and racial prejudice weakened American masculinity: "They were preoccupied with white and black sons whose mothers failed them psychologically and who therefore lacked the codes of masculinity necessary for healthy and productive citizenship" (41). In the 1940s two popular texts helped establish

popular conceptions of what constituted “bad motherhood”: Philip Wylie’s *Generation of Vipers* (1942) and Marynia F. Farnham and Ferdinand Lundberg’s *Modern Woman: The Lost Sex* (1947). Wylie believed “Americans have lost their moral sensibilities” and his text confronts a range of topics—politics, religion, science, and so forth. One of the most significant and prominent symptoms of the growing apathy he identified in American culture was related to “momism” the term he coined to describe society’s adulation of power hungry and narcissistic mothers and the detrimental effects she and her admirers were having on society (186-204). Farnham and Lundberg, on the other hand, were concerned with the specific “problem” of modern women whom they felt had been diverted from their natural sexual and maternal inclinations by feminism. Their antifeminist text defines the contours of ideal femininity, which is characterized by a natural dependence on men and steadfast desire for children (319).

In both popular media and academic studies, conflicting images of bad mothers proliferated; women were characterized as either overindulgent and overprotective or too strict and dismissive of their children. Maternal failure was consistently linked with sexual dysfunction: “Praise for mothers and criticism of them insisted on the centrality of women to the private sphere and on the centrality of the private sphere as a source of psychological health. Moms, mothers, and matriarchs—these were three prominent icons in the 1940s through which psychology, gendered ideals, and racial liberalism converged to redefine masculinity and to redefine the ideal American citizen” (Feldstein 43).

In *Homeward Bound: American Families in the Cold War Era* (2008), Elaine Tyler May examines a relationship between American international and domestic policy and explains how "containment" came to define American national identity (10). In the postwar years, American society was characterized by cold war security fears and a revival of domestic ideology. In this context, containment of so-called subversive forces, both internal and external, was the primary goal of political and industrial leaders. The things that needed to be contained were communism, Soviet aggression, and female sexuality. Indeed, anti-communist rhetoric and strategies not only helped construct citizenship based on consumption in the free market, but also contributed to the acceptance of and adherence to strict gender roles in part by linking communism and sexual depravity. According to May:

> The logic went as follows. National strength depended on the ability of strong, manly men to stand up against communist threats….According to the common wisdom of the time, "normal" heterosexual behavior culminating in marriage represented "maturity" and "responsibility," therefore; those who were "deviant" were, by definition, irresponsible, immature, and weak. (94)

On a bedrock of strict gender norms, American citizenship became inextricably linked to heterosexual marriage. Consumerism also joined the matrix. Although not everyone had access to postwar affluence, the "consumer-oriented suburban home" became the symbol of the American Dream. Marriage, procreation, and consumption were the hallmarks of civic duty as each had its own role in suppressing the communist threat and maintaining American global domination (May 30). In this context, "The Baby Boom," the term given to describe the period

with respect to marriage and procreation, refers to "the coalescence of a sustained, elevated birthrate with other demographic features and a reinforcing ideology of pronatalism" (Lassonde 5).

During this time period, popular culture (supported by mass media, industry leaders, and public policy) shifted from previous decades' portrayals of independent women who transgressed gender norms and exhibited liberated sexuality to images of more restrained, conservative, and domesticated women who happily deferred authority to men and cultivated a softer, more feminine image (May 65-67). Beginning in the early 1940s, cinematic depictions of marriage and childrearing increased, bolstering the nation's growing pronatalist ideology. Movies such as *Penny Serenade* (1941) celebrated motherhood and fatherhood as the ultimate goal of marriage and absolutely integral to its merit. Social scientists maintained that "the true fulfillment of female sexuality was in motherhood," while professional, occupational language was employed to reinforce the significance of child rearing (145, 159). However, the depiction of motherhood as women's most important occupation did not offer women a sense of control and empowerment within the domestic sphere. With the growth of industrialization and the increase in employment in larger organizations, it was believed that work in the public sphere offered men less in the way of individual autonomy. Since the public sphere no longer gave men the opportunity to exercise power and independence, the home became the site in which men asserted their authority. Fatherhood took on a new significance as a symbol of masculinity, as fathers were needed to protect against the threat of "momism," an excess of maternal care that would render male children

passive, weak, and vulnerable to sexual perversions and therefore unprepared to protect the nation from the communist threat (74, 96, 146).

Finally, the model of the democratic family gained mainstream attention in the early 1940s when, at the White House Conference on Children in a Democracy, President Franklin Roosevelt maintained, "A succession of world events has shown us that our democracy must be strengthened at every point of strain or weakness. All Americans want this country to be a place where children can live in safety and grow in understanding of the part they are going to play in the future of our American nation" (70). Roosevelt indicated that given children's integral role in democratic society, the entire nation should be invested in their physical, intellectual, emotional, and moral development.

Sociologists, psychologists, and other scholars who studied American domestic and family arrangements argued that patriarchal authority was declining and a new, more democratic family structure was emerging. The roles of husbands and wives were becoming increasingly egalitarian, and children were relying on peer interaction as their primary means of socialization. Beginning in the 1920s, women were accorded more authority in the domestic sphere. Since they were in charge of children's development and mediating family relationships, most childrearing literature, marital advice, and parent education programs were targeted toward them. Even during the Depression, when male unemployment forced many mothers into the labor force, family experts continued to adhere to these role definitions (Michel 155). One sociologist observed that in this situation "families organized along democratic lines allowing for some flexibility in authority

patterns and family member [roles] adapted better than families organized along patriarchal lines" (Lumpkin 169), but she implied that maternal employment should be regarded merely as a temporary expedient. For sociologists, democracy within the family was never meant to imply wider social equality for women (Michel 155-156). The democratic family and antiracist liberalism converged to politicize the private sphere by linking it to the stability of democracy and the production of healthy citizens. However, despite the relationship forged with public sphere and the importance accorded to domesticity with respect to democracy, these efforts did little more than maintain distinct and separate spheres and consolidate male power.

In the early 1940s, family sociologists and psychologists observed the shift to an individualist family structure that lacked connection to both extended family and other community members. One psychologist noted, "Marriage commitment is now driven by individual desire, not social pressure and deep rooted desire to do one's duty to family and to society" (Arlitt 4). Under these new conditions, psychologists provided expert advice that would enable families to continue the most important function of "rearing desirable citizens to carry on the best traditions of American family life" (5). The democratic family represented a distinct turn away from early twentieth century behaviorist theories of childrearing. According to Barbara Ehrenreich, the change was abrupt and powerful:

> The new spirit, which would dominate the multiplicity of twentieth century child-rearing techniques, was permissiveness. In the broadest sense, permissiveness was about much more than child raising—it was like a national mood, a wind of change that swept through everything. The

> American economy was becoming more and more dependent on individual consumption—of cars, housing, and an ever-expanding panoply of domestic goods—and the ethos of permissiveness flourished in the climate of consumption. The experts who had been concerned with discipline and self-control now discovered that self-indulgence was healthy for the individual personality just as it was good for the entire economy. (232)

Feminist historians contend that this new emphasis on personal enjoyment hindered feminism and other reform efforts. Within the "age of enjoyment" a "relentlessly domestic" notion of female individuality developed. The home was now at the center of all things—economically and socially (233). Furthermore, the values defined for and within the domestic sphere in the 1950s were new. The emphasis on producing a whole world of "satisfaction, amusement, and inventiveness" within the nuclear family had no precedents. Elaine Tyler May comments: "The legendary family of the 1950s…was not, as common wisdom tells us, the last grasp of 'traditional' family life with deep roots in the past. Rather, it was the first wholehearted effort to create a home that would fulfill virtually all its members' personal needs through an energized and expressive personal life" (May 11).

According to Ada Arlitt (1941), "parents who rear their children today have far more obligations and a far more difficult task than parents had in any era previous to our own….[Within] the democratic family, which is the type of organization in the United States, every individual has a voice and vote in the formation of family policies" (154-155). Child psychologists Arnold Gesell and

Frances Ilg (1943) maintained, "the household serves as a 'cultural workshop' for the transmission of old traditions and for the creation of new social values" (9). It was expected that the organization of the family would reflect and reinforce this political and historical culture. They compared the ideals of a democratic family to that of a totalitarian "Kultur," which subordinates the family completely to the state and fosters autocratic parent-child relationships. On the other hand, a democratic culture affirms the dignity of the individual person and should be reflected in parent-child relationships (10-11).

Following these psychological theories and popular writings, I examine how the novels treat antiracist liberalism's conception of domesticity and motherhood, contained sexuality, and the emphasis on the democratic family structure and the individual. Indeed, with respect to chronology, the novels form a trajectory in which the material and economic dynamics of social problems give way to psychological ones. The shift parallels the aforementioned changes in liberal discourse; however, this is not intended as a claim with respect to literary history, but rather to place the parallels among and differences between these texts into a specific historical context.

Each novel indicates in different ways how the domestic space functions with respect to specific ideals about and conflicts over the politics of American citizenship (whether through conflicts over class, gender, or ethnicity). At times, the domestic space has clearly defined boundaries separating the public and the private and at others, these boundaries are blurred. Attention to domestic spaces in the novels also illustrates a shift in from an emphasis on the material, structural

dimensions of social problems to a psychological emphasis and enables a reading that takes seriously the nuances of everyday existence and the complex relationship between the structural and the psychological.

The chapter on *The Street* focuses primarily on motherhood and domesticity and examines the contours of citizenship and the emphasis on its psychological characteristics with respect to the following: contained sexual, antiracist liberalism, and the democratic family. Previous criticism of this novel positioned it as an indictment of the American Dream and an examination of the way that gender, race, and class intersect in the lives of African American women living on "the street." I elaborate on the issue of the American Dream by looking closely at how American citizenship was defined during this time period and I focus on how *The Street* engages dominant ideas about domesticity and gender and their relationship to American citizenship. I argue that, with respect to defining citizenship, the novel anticipates a shift in politics that links social problems to psychological dynamics rather than economics and insists that psychological dynamics cannot be separated from the economic structures in which they are embedded.

The protagonist of the novel, Lutie Johnson, is a young, single, African American mother who is trying to secure a better life for herself and her son. Lutie embraces and remains committed to contemporary ideologies with respect to gender and domesticity (i.e., the nuclear family, contained domesticity, and the democratic family) despite the fact that her material circumstances have rendered these difficult—if not impossible—to attain. As a result, the strict division between the public and private spheres is often blurred, and I examine how this illustrates

the ways in which people of color were systematically excluded from contemporary conceptions of American citizenship.

The protagonist of *The Dollmaker*, Gertie Nevels, is a mother who has moved from her home in rural Kentucky to Detroit, Michigan. The changes that Gertie confronts within the domestic sphere parallel the economic changes that the family faces when they move to Detroit so that Gertie's husband can take a war manufacturing job. The move to the urban environment reflects not only a physical change, but also a cultural and historical shift in the expectations of the public and private spheres, the increased reliance on consumerism as an indicator of American identity, and the loss of autonomy in an industrialized society. Arguably, the domestic ideals presented in the novel represent the changes that emerged in the 1950s with World War II acting as a backdrop to these ideological changes. Further, the regional differences between the rural and urban contexts reveal a different set of material (as well as psychological) circumstances with respect to American identity and values. The politics of citizenship that the novel engages are linked, not only to the expectations of the public and private spheres within liberalism and the democratic family, but also expectations of and assumptions about rural Appalachia and its relationship to American identity and citizenship.

The Dollmaker portrays the harsh and dehumanizing living conditions endured by poor, working families but its social criticism is aimed, not at the structural inequalities inherent in the dominant culture (as in *The Street*) or on the psychological mechanisms that produce prejudicial behavior (as in *The*

Changelings), but rather at how individuals navigate the conflicts and contradictions that inhere in the social institutions that they encounter.

Gertie's attempts to maintain an educational and cultural domestic space within the confines of the home are continuously interrupted by the ways in which other spaces influence her family, whether it is the school (for her children), the union (for her husband), or the community at large. In constant conflict are her family's desire for adjustment and belongingness and Gertie's stubborn resistance to the domestic role that is assumed of her in Detroit. Further, I argue that Gertie's experiences illustrate some of the contradictions between postwar ideology (with respect to democracy, citizenship, and the individual) and the needs of industry and institutionalized public education. Rather than foster individualism—as prescribed by prevailing ideology—these institutions limit individual development in favor of adjustment and reduce individuals to numbers.

Finally, *The Changelings* is a coming of age story about a teenage girl, Vincent, who is learning to cope with the changes taking place in the working class Jewish community in which she grew up. Although mothers are prominent, the story is mostly concerned with the perspective of children and the generational tensions within these families. Vincent and others must learn to navigate their parents' commitment to the community's Jewish identity (and the racism that ensues) with their own changing views of what it means to be a Jew and an American. Although class and economic issues are prevalent, the novel is less concerned with structural inequality than it is with the psychology of economic mobility and class identity. I look at how the novel represents a shift from liberal economic ideas to psychological

ones and also how it resists dominant assumptions about motherhood and expands responsibility for social change across generational, family, and community boundaries.

Although *The Changelings* depicts the anxieties over masculinity and citizenship that were central to antiracist liberalism, it decentralizes the role of motherhood and domesticity and spreads the source of racial prejudice and responsibility of social change across family and community relationships. Further, it complicates constructions of motherhood that work within race and class binaries by revealing how experiences of religious persecution and immigration intersect with those social binaries. In this novel the anxieties that produce racial prejudice within this community of Jewish Americans living in the aftermath of the Holocaust are inextricably linked to the conflicting pressures of assimilation and maintaining an ethnic, cultural, and religious identity, while also attempting to achieve upward mobility in pursuit of the American dream. Moreover, these anxieties are of a gendered nature, encompassing issues of family, sexuality, and marriage.

This novel illustrates how spaces that function as sites of democratic socialization and education exceed that of the private, domestic spaces of individual families. The mothers in this novel are caught up in the anxieties over Jewish identity and most of them are committed to maintaining a segregated community—accepting and perpetuating racist beliefs and actions in order to do so. When Vincent meets an African American girl whose friendship challenges her own prejudiced beliefs, she seeks guidance from her friend, Jules Golden, a young, antiracist individual who admonishes his family and friends to transgress their

blinkered notions by appealing to common, American democratic values. In this respect, the domestic space functions as an educational space. However, this knowledge is disseminated amongst peers rather than from maternal figures and is not limited to the independent, isolated nuclear family. Indeed, rather than an institution that can be relied upon to foster ideal citizens, the family is indicated as the source of much of the anxiety that perpetuates racial prejudice. As such, the novel embraces the time period's focus on the child, and positions children (the following generation) as the advocates of antiracism. I argue that the novel challenges the presumption that substantial social change will take place within the family and instead, maintains that this change will only occur when individuals break with convention and foster and implement their own values.

In their illustrations of the everyday activities and experiences of an African American family in Harlem, an urban Appalachian family in Detroit, and Jewish American families in Cleveland, these novels engage the politics of citizenship that were in circulation during the time they were written and published. As novels of social criticism, they illustrate how academic and political appeals to the domestic space (and to mothers specifically) fail to consider how structural inequalities and psychological resistance to change render the ideals advocated by sociological and psychological experts difficult, if not impossible, to attain.

Chapter One: "Always the mother's fault": Recalling Structural Inequality in Anticipation of Antiracist Liberalism in Ann Petry's *The Street* (1946)

Ann Petry's *The Street* depicts the trials of Lutie Johnson, a single African American mother trying to create a better life for her and her son, but is overwhelmed by the intersecting forces of racism, sexism, and poverty. When it was first published in 1946, *The Street* garnered such favorable attention from readers and critics that Ann Petry became the first African American woman writer to sell over a million copies of a novel. Critical analyses, such as that by Vernon E. Lattin, argue that within *The Street* there lies, "a thread of deep seated revolt and criticism…against the falsifications of life, the dreams, rationalizations, and illusions that distort one's grasp of reality; [Lutie] rebels especially against the American dream and all of its attendant illusions, which blinds one to the stark, sordid existence that is America" (34). Richard Yarborough places *The Street* alongside Chester Himes' *If He Hollers Let Him Go* (1945) and Ralph Ellison's *Invisible Man* (1952) as novels emerging from the Wright school of naturalistic fiction, whose resolutions "define the predominant reactions evoked by the failure of the Dream: the cynical acceptance of defeat; explosive rage and then despair; and finally, the desperate hope that something of the American Dream can be salvaged" (55). Bernard Bell argues, "Ann Petry actually moves beyond the naturalistic vision of Wright and Himes" (74). He maintains that Petry's distinction from them is rooted in the psychological characterization of her protagonist, Lutie, who is "not consumed by fear and hatred and rage." As a result, she not only debunks the myth of the American dream as it applies to African Americans, but also offers a more

complex and varied depiction of black women and illustrates a "demythologizing of American culture and Afro-American character" (76).

Feminist critics hailed *The Street* as "Womanist" and praised Petry as the first to portray, not only the oppression of black women, but also the role of black men in the perpetuation of that oppression (Hernton 94-96). Nellie McKay states that "new feminist evaluations reveal a more complex structure that expands the boundaries of the traditional naturalistic novel" ("Ann Petry" 156) and Keith Clark maintains, "not only does Petry depict how women pursue the Dream in traditionally 'American' turns, but, most deftly, she illustrates how black women subvert the quest for the American dream and fulfill their own version of it" (166). More recent analyses dedicated specifically to the question of genre illustrate the ways in which the novel not only exceeds the boundaries of naturalism, but also protests the inequality inherent within literary naturalism. Heather J. Hicks identifies moments of self-scrutiny on the part of Petry, which challenge the "politics of spectatorship" encoded within naturalism and "expose and dismantle [its] power structures" (91). Finally, Clare Virginia Eby argues that *The Street*, in addition to being a protest narrative, is also a humanitarian one. The novel derives its critical strength by combining Lutie's perspective and experience with those of secondary characters. In doing so, the novel generates sympathy, "revealing to the reader (and sometimes also to Lutie) that what appeared to be an abject being is, rather, a person" (34). This sympathy is not simply a matter of emotional manipulation. Instead, it "implies a politics and impels action" (35).

I agree that Petry's innovations include a revision of Naturalism and reveal some aspects of what would later come to be known as Womanism, but my chapter focuses on how *The Street* engages dominant ideas about domesticity and gender and their relationship to American citizenship during the years that followed World War II. I argue that, with respect to defining citizenship, the novel anticipates a shift in politics that links social problems to psychological dynamics and insists that psychological dynamics cannot be separated from the economic structures in which they are embedded.

Most critical analyses of *The Street* examine contradictions between Lutie's inspirational narrative of choice, *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*; her steadfast commitment to the notion that in America, hard work and determination will yield prosperity; and influences of racism, sexism, and poverty in her own life. They claim that despite her recognition of these forces, Lutie fully accepts the premise of the dream narrative and does not, until the very end, "understand the ironic reality of the American dream as it applies to her" (Lattin 34). Lutie's commitment to hard work and determination lead her, not to wealth and prosperity, but rather, to "murder, despair, and the abandonment of her every aspiration" (Yarborough 61). Following this, I move from the grand narrative of the American dream to American citizenship as it was defined within post World War II mainstream culture. In this chapter, I examine contours of citizenship emphasizing sexuality and contained domesticity, antiracist liberalism, and the ideal of the democratic family. Collectively, these themes demonstrate Petry's engagement with

a historical shift in approaches to social problems by focusing on private life, intimate domestic relations, and motherhood.

Feminist historians, in their analyses of motherhood and domesticity in the years following World War II (loosely characterized as "the 50s"), argue that the era that modern conservatives tout as embodying ideal, traditional family values was, in fact, a novelty. According to Elaine Tyler May, the family of the 50s was "the first wholehearted effort to create a home that would fulfill virtually all its members' personal needs through an energized and expressive personal life" (xxii). The changes that took place in the years following the war were without precedent, including the commitment to nuclear family life, the insularity of the domestic space, the sharp divide that emerged between the public and private spheres, and so forth,.

The new expectations of domesticity and motherhood were, both explicitly and implicitly, connected to civic duty and citizenship. Analyses of political ideology and private life in the cold war era reveal how America's fervent commitment to the nuclear family emerged and how it was reinforced in popular culture and supported by public policy. According to May, wide spread acceptance of traditional gender roles and family structures was due in part to ways in which national security concerns were linked to heterosexual marriage and motherhood. The primary goal of political and industrial leaders was the containment of subversive forces, both internal and external, including women's sexuality. Anti-communist rhetoric and strategies contributed to the acceptance of and adherence to strict gender roles by linking communism and sexual depravity. According to May, "the logic went as follows. National strength depended on the ability of strong, manly men to stand up

against communist threats….According to common wisdom at the time, 'normal' heterosexual behavior culminating in marriage represented 'maturity' and 'responsibility.' 'Deviant' behaviors were, by definition, irresponsible, immature, and weak" (82). American citizenship, in this context, came to be defined by (nuclear) family life and individual adherence to social codes within the private sphere.

Americans increasingly sought comfort and security in the privacy of their homes and in their commitment to family life as a reaction to the economic vulnerability of the Great Depression and stress created as a result of a worldwide war against totalitarianism and the beginning of the cold war between the United States and the Soviety Union. Adherence to the nuclear family not only promised individual fulfillment, it also assured Americans that they were contributing to national security and helping to preserve the American way of life. Widespread acceptance of this ideology triggered suspicion of individuals who did not marry and have children. Although rampant homophobia was the most blatant form of this "sexual paranoia," society at large perceived anyone who deviated from the norm as "perverted, immoral, unpatriotic, and pathological" (May 83). Further, popular and academic writers often targeted women, linking the failure of society to produce citizens capable of resisting and challenging the communist scourge to their dysfunctional sexuality.

In *Motherhood in Black and White: Race and Sex in American Liberalism, 1930-1965* (2000), Ruth Feldstein explains how antiracist psychologists and other social scientists addressed the contradictions between racism and American democratic

values. Instead of economic inequality (which was the focus of Depression era and New Deal liberals), these experts concentrated on individual personality. They articulated "a vision of masculinity as neither too frustrated nor too aggressive [as] the normative *ideal for citizenship*" [emphasis added] (63). Further, shifts from economic frameworks to psychological frameworks for defining citizenship assigned mothers to the task of producing of healthy, successful citizens. *The Street* depicts its protagonist Lutie's struggling to fashion herself according to the tenets of this ideal and to provide the necessary environment to raise her son, Bub, accordingly. While *The Street* does not address issues of communism or homosexuality specifically, it does engage other issues of domestic containment: the nuclear family, the expectations of the private sphere, and women's sexuality. Through these issues, the novel anticipates ways in which contemporary concepts of American citizenship excluded African American women and their families.

Petry begins her novel with Lutie attempting to secure an apartment for herself and her son. From the outset, one of the things that the novel makes clear is that "containment" in the private space does not equal safety and security despite mainstream assurances otherwise. The apartment she is looking at is advertised as "Three rooms, steam heat, parquet floors, respectable tenants. Reasonable" (3). Lutie's assessment of the advertisement makes it clear that these domestic accommodations will not be able to fulfill the promises of a safe and secure private sphere:

> Respectable tenants in these homes where colored people were allowed to live included anyone who could pay the rent, so some of them would be

> drunk and loud-mouthed and quarrelsome; given to fits of depression when they would curse and cry violently, given to fits of equally violent elation. And, she thought the good people, the bad people, the children, the dogs, and the godawful smells would all be wrapped up together in one big package—the package that was called respectable tenants. (3)

Petry uses language that resonates with "containment" to describe Lutie's first impression of her new apartment building: "When they reached the fourth floor, she thought, instead of reaching out for the walls, the walls were reaching out for her—ebending and swaying toward her in an effort to envelop her" (12). Fear engulfs Lutie: "As she climbed up the last flight of stairs, she was aware that the skin on her back was crawling with fear. Fear of what? She asked herself. Fear of him, fear of the dark, of the smells in the halls, the high steep of stairs, of yourself?" (13) Nonetheless, hope subdues fear and Lutie agrees to rent the apartment despite its shortcomings. Proudly, Lutie pays the deposit: "Opening her pocketbook she took out a ten-dollar bill and handed it to him. Ten whole dollars that it had taken a good many weeks to save. By the time she had moved here and paid the balance which would be due on the rent, her savings would have disappeared. But it would be worth it to be living in *a place of her own*" [emphasis added] (22).

Since her separation from husband, Lutie had been living in her father's boarding house in conditions she deemed unsuitable for raising Bub. However, despite her separation, Lutie's desire to break ties with her father and move into her own place establishes her commitment to the nuclear family ideology. The economic necessities of the Great Depression and World War II reinforced extended

family ties, but these were often experienced as stressful. Popular culture in the postwar years emphasized nuclear family autonomy as a way of avoiding intergenerational conflicts in matters of marriage, intimacy, and childrearing; although attainment of these ideals were limited mostly to white, middle class families (Coontz 26, Smith 230). May explains that this "new vision of home life, therefore, depended heavily on the staunch commitment of individual family members….What mattered was that family members remained bound to each other—and to the modern, emancipated home they intended to create" (20). Lutie's ability to secure a place of her own helps her achieve success according to dominant values.

Petry illustrates Lutie's commitment to the nuclear family ideal in flashbacks, such as when Lutie and Jim were together in their own home in Jamaica, a neighborhood in Queens, New York:

> Going home on the subway, Jim would put his arm around her and say, "I'll make it up to you some day, Lutie. You just wait and see. I'm going to give you everything you ever wanted. Just being close to him like that, knowing that they were both thinking much the same thing, shut out the roar and rush of the train, blotted out the other passengers. She would ride home dreaming of the time when she and Jim and Bub would be together—safe and secure and alone. (175)

Soon, Lutie had to sacrifice the "alone" in order to enhance their security. When Jim was unable to find a job, they took in state foster children to earn enough money to pay their mortgage. Under these circumstances, Lutie transforms their home into a

quasi-public space: "It had been nothing but work, work, work—morning, noon, and night—making bread, washing clothes and ironing them, looking after the children, and cleaning the house. The investigator used to compliment her, "Mrs. Johnson, you do a wonderful job. The house and the children fairly shine" (171). The state children are never named or described, which underscores a public and private divide within the household. The security of their marriage is challenged when Lutie's father, whose unemployment led to eviction, moves in with them. Jim is especially unhappy with this arrangement and a combination of stressors triggers a series of events that ultimately leads to the loss of their home and the breakup of their marriage. Thus, the novel illustrates a way in which economic constraints can render the isolated nuclear family an unachievable ideal for poor African American families. In this way, the novel anticipates their exclusion from the family model that sociologists in the 1950s would come to define as the ideal—the one most likely to succeed within modern industrial society and produce productive citizens to meet its needs (Parsons 10-14, Coontz 26). Post World War II expectations of domesticity assumed that for the nuclear family, the home would function as a unit and provide for its members a "whole world of satisfaction, amusement, and inventiveness" (Coontz 27). Following this, the novel illustrates how, despite her fervent commitment to dominant values, Lutie's home fails to provide even a modicum of safety and satisfaction, demonstrating a disconnect between individual personality and access to the promises afforded by the American dream. That is, Lutie's failure to achieve success as a citizen cannot explained by prevailing and emerging psychological theories.

Still, Lutie envisions the new apartment as another chance. However, the satisfaction that the new apartment initially provided is short lived:

> She had wanted an apartment to herself and she got it. And now looking down at the accumulation of rubbish, she was suddenly appalled, for she didn't know what the next step would be. She hadn't thought any further than the apartment. Would they have to go on living here year after year? With just enough money to pay the rent, just enough money to buy goods and clothes and to see an occasional movie? What happened next? (74)

Lutie's domestic space is inadequate for her dreams: "The trouble is that these rooms are so small. After she had been in them just a few minutes, the walls seemed to come in toward her, to push against her" (79). Lutie continues to feel confined and to reflect on the direness of her situation until she cannot stay in the apartment any longer and leaves to seek respite from her worries and the domestic space that exacerbates them:

> When she put the coat on, it was with the thought that wearing it would give her the feeling that she was on her way to a place where she could forget for a little while about the gas bill and the rent bill and the light bill. It would be a place where there was a lot of room and the walls didn't continually walk at you—crowding you. (83)

Being in the apartment did not provide a sense of safety and security. Indeed, it seemed to trigger an ongoing set of problems and disappointments. The inability of the domestic space to provide recreation and comfort is further reinforced by the language used to describe the comforts provided by other public spaces. She

observes Bub's excitement when she gives him permission and money to go to the movies: "He had been so happy about going to the movies. A simple little thing like that and he got all excited" (78). Lutie's attempt at escaping the confinement of her apartment brings her to Junto's bar. Initially described as a "social club and meeting place" (143), Junto's bar is another public space that provides those comforts denied to African Americans in both private and public spaces: "The inside of the Junto was always crowded, too, because the white bartenders in their immaculate coats greeted the customers graciously. Their courteous friendliness was a heart-warming thing that helped rebuild egos battered and bruised during the course of the day's work" (143). The needs that the club fulfilled were varied. Some women desired intimate companionship, "and the Junto offered men of all sizes and descriptions" (144). Others simply sought some leisure time away from the stress of their jobs and from the cramped spaces of their homes: "Lutie was one of these. For she wasn't going to the Junto to pick up a man or to quench a consuming, constant thirst. She was going there so that she could for a moment, capture the illusion of having some of the things that she lacked" (144). It is only within the public space of the bar that Lutie, and so many others, are able to procure temporarily the psychological comforts unavailable in their own homes—although these are illusory comforts at best.

The description of the bar and its patrons emphasizes this connection between public comforts and the denial of these in the private domestic sphere. Lutie observes: "They were here for the same reason she was—because she couldn't bear to spend an evening alone in some small dark room, because they couldn't bear

to look what they could see of the future smack in the face while listening to radios or trying to read an evening paper" (145). Further, the description highlights the deliberate way in which the bar is constructed to sell the illusion to its patrons:

> The big mirror in front of her made the Junto an enormous place. It pushed the walls back and back into space. It reflected the lights from the ceiling and the concealed lighting that glowed in the corners of the room. It added a rosy radiance to the men and women standing at the bar; it pushed the world of other people's kitchen sinks back where it belonged and destroyed the existence of dirty streets and small shadowed rooms….No matter what it cost them, people had to come to places like the Junto, she thought. They had to replace the haunting silences of rented rooms and little apartments with the murmur of voices, the sound of laughter; they had to empty two or three small glasses of liquid gold so they could believe in themselves again. (146-147)

Again, this quote emphasizes the illusory quality of the comforts provided by Junto's bar; how, rather than complement the comforts of the home, it momentarily destroys the despair wrought by the public sphere and fulfills the need for psychological security and self-esteem that are denied in their homes. Despite this, however, Lutie retains her confidence and holds herself in high esteem throughout most of the novel. There is nothing that she feels less entitled to because of her race or economic and domestic circumstances. Other characters in the novel are less fortunate with respect to self-worth and the novel depicts how this psychological state emerges. They will be discussed shortly.

Domesticated sexuality is an ideal that the novel explores and one to which Lutie aspires. The value that she places on "containing" her sexuality is a theme that pervades the novel. She maintains a sexual identity that is consistent with contemporary ideals linking heterosexual desire, domesticity, and motherhood. Accordingly, ideal domesticity and family life demanded that women's sexuality be neither frigid nor promiscuous. In their popular text, *Modern Woman: The Lost Sex* (1947), Ferdinand Lundberg and Marynia F. Farnham claimed that "the proper mother…does not reject, overprotect, dominant or overfondle her child. More positively, she accepts herself fully as a woman, which means that she fully accepts her sexuality without parading it" (319). These ideas were central not only to individual fulfillment, but also to social order (May 98-99, Feldstein 42-43). Throughout the novel, Lutie is fiercely protective of her body, resisting the advances of men like Jones (the building's super), Junto (the white owner of the neighborhood bar), and Boots (a blues musician who works for Junto). Her interactions with these men are bound by what she needs from them, whether an apartment or a job, but also constrained by a need to protect herself and thwart their advances. For Lutie, these are calculated but also characterized by uncertainty and insecurity. After their initial meeting, she leaves Jones with "A long, hard look, malignant, steady, continued" (25) and with Boots, a man with whose band she hopes to sing, "her mind sought some plausible way of frustrating him without offending him. She couldn't think of anything…she twisted out of his arms, not caring what he thought, intent only on escaping from his ruthless hands and mouth" (161). Lutie's actions indicate a desire to protect herself from unwanted advances; however, these

scenarios and her reactions to them are consistent with contemporary expectations with regard to gender. Regardless of her commitment to dominant sexual mores, Lutie is unable to adhere to them fully. Due to her failed marriage, she cannot fulfill the nuclear family ideals. Further, because of her economic position and race, she must navigate a society in which her sexuality is treated as a commodity.

Although Lutie's attempts to move out of her father's apartment and secure one of her own resonate with contemporary ideas about separating from extended family members (particularly those of the older generation), her primary reason for moving is to keep Bub away from her father's live-in girlfriend, Lil. Lutie recalls the living conditions of her father's apartment:

> Those seven rooms where Pop lived with Lil, his girlfriend. A place with roomers. A place spilling over with Lil. There seemed to be no part of it that wasn't full of Lil. She was always swallowing coffee in the kitchen; trailing through all seven rooms in lush housecoats that didn't quite meet across her lush, loose bosom; drinking beer in tall glasses and leaving the glasses in the kitchen sink so the foam dried in a crust around the rim—the dark red of her lipstick like an accent mark on the crust; lounging on the wide bed she shared with Pop and only God knows who else; drinking gin with the roomers until late at night. (10)

Poor and working class African Americans living in the urban north often took in boarders in order to pay the exorbitant rents charged in black neighborhoods—a situation that rendered a commitment to the insular nuclear family difficult, if not impossible, to uphold (Boyd 651-652). Again, economics intrude upon the dream of

a home as a private domestic space. Nevertheless, Lutie's primary concern is with Lil's influence on Bub's innocence.

Lil is described as a promiscuous woman in language that resonates with "containment" (or lack thereof). She is not married to Lutie's father. This places her outside the realm of acceptable sexual expression, and neither the rooms of the apartment nor her clothing can contain her. Lil's presence trumps all the apparent benefits of staying with her father, which include a modicum of physical safety and the ability to save money. Her priority, however, is Bub and her decision to move reinforces this: "Now that she had this apartment, she was just one step further up on the ladder of success. With this apartment Bub would be standing a better chance, for he'd be far away from Lil" (26). This conflation of success and Bub's chances indicates the degree to which her conception of the American dream and success is enmeshed with motherhood.

Lutie looks contemptuously on her neighbors (who don't appear to share her values): Min, the woman who lives with Jones, and Mrs. Hedges, a woman who runs a brothel out of her apartment. Like Lil, these women resist domesticated sexuality. Although the novel reveals the material circumstances that led Min and Mrs. Hedges to make the choices they did, the differences that Lutie perceives is a barrier she cannot transcend. The closest that Lutie comes to friendship with her neighbors is when Mrs. Hedges rescues Lutie from an assault attempted by Jones. Lutie enjoys a moment of comfort in Mrs. Hedges' apartment: "The tea was scalding hot and fragrant. As Lutie sipped it, she could feel some of the shuddering fear go out of her" (239). This respite is eventually broken, however, when Mrs. Hedges says to her,

"Don't forget what I told you about the white gentleman. Any time you want to earn a little extra money" (240).

Lutie reveals her internalized ideal of domesticated sexuality by her reaction to Mrs. Hedges' suggestion:

> Once she stopped and leaned against the wall, filled with a sick loathing of herself, wondering if there was something about her that subtly suggested to the Super that she would welcome his love-making, wondering if the same thing had led Mrs. Hedges to believe that she would leap at the opportunity to make money sleeping with white men, remembering the women at the Chandlers who looked at her and assumed she wanted their husbands. (240-241)

The psychological effect of both the attempted assault and the solicitation of her body are made clear: self-loathing and insecurity over her inability to enact her ideal replace her previous self-esteem and the high regard in which she held herself. For a moment, she believes that she has failed to attain respectable womanhood and motherhood and instead embodies to the characteristics associated with sexual dysfunction and pathological, disorganized motherhood.

Finally, Lutie's acceptance of domesticated sexuality is reinforced in reflections upon her failed marriage, a marriage that, as long as she occupied the private sphere as wife and mother, she was able to express her desire with confidence:

> As they went up the stairs, Jim would put his arm around her waist. His silence, the bulky feel of his shoulders in the darkness, turned their

> relationship into something mysterious and exciting, and she wanted to put the moment when she would undress and get in bed beside him, wanted to defer it at the same time that she wanted to hurry it. (176)

The intersection of sexuality and domesticity is further illustrated by her reaction to her husband's infidelity:

> The girl was cooking supper and Jim was sitting in the kitchen watching her. If he hadn't held her arms, she would have killed the other girl. Even now she could feel rage rise inside of her at the very thought….Month after month and that black bitch had been eating the food she bought, sleeping in her bed, making love to Jim. (53-54)

For Lutie, the rage felt at discovering another woman in her kitchen and performing several of her domestic duties is akin to finding the two lovers in bed together. Collectively, these passages indicate Lutie's commitment to dominant ideals of sexuality and how sexual expression was permitted as long as it was linked to domesticity and motherhood (Lundberg and Farnham 271).

Ultimately, Lutie's adherence to domestic ideology does not give her to access the promised material comforts. Her commitment and high esteem, however, enable her to resist the racist stereotypes she confronts while working in Connecticut, in the home of the Chandler family: "They didn't know she had a big handsome husband of her own; that she didn't want any of their thin, unhappy husbands" (41). In this way she is able to maintain a sense of personal integrity in an otherwise hostile environment. Further, her refusal to accept Mrs. Hedges' proposal to work as a prostitute means that Junto, the powerful white entrepreneur,

finds that there are some black women's bodies that are not for sale. The smallness of these gestures in the face of unyielding economic hardship further illustrates the inaccessibility of the middle class ideals and lifestyle to which Lutie so fervently works to achieve.

In addition to the instability of Lutie's home life (which can be directly linked to public, economic conditions), the novel illustrates the instability of the boundaries that divide the private space from that of the public. Lutie observes the attempts that people make in order to separate themselves from each other: "As the train gathered speed for the long run to 125th Street, the passengers settled down into small private worlds, thus creating *the illusion of space between them and their fellow passengers*" [emphasis added] (27). The novel depicts the precarious boundary between the private space of the apartment and the public space of the street: As Lutie arrives in her own neighborhood, "She got off the train, thinking that she never felt really human until she reached Harlem and thus got away from the hostility in the eyes of the white women who stared at her on the downtown streets and in the subway….These folks feel the same way, she thought—that once they are freed from the contempt in the eyes of the downtown world, they instantly become individuals" (57). The novel continues to blur the boundary between the private domestic space and the street by depicting comforts sought in the street:

> As the thermometer crawled higher and higher, the people who lived on the street moved outdoors because the inside of the buildings was unbearable. The grown-ups lounging in chairs in front of the houses, the half-naked children playing along the curb, transformed the street into *an outdoor living*

> *room*. And because the people took to sleeping on rooftops and fire escapes and park benches, the street also because *a great outdoor bedroom*. [emphasis added] (142)

Considering the dehumanizing effects of the street and the neighborhood on its residents that Lutie observes throughout the novel, this conflation of the neighborhood and positive depictions of home is somewhat ironic. This blurring of the boundaries between the home and the street begins to create a link between subjectivity and personality formation and the public sphere. This anticipates and challenges the link between social problems and motherhood and the focus on domesticity that is currently developing and will become dominant in the years following the novel's publication.

In the postwar period, social problems such as racism and poverty were not linked to economic inequality (as they had been during the Depression and with the implementation of New Deal policies), but to the psychological make up of black men and white men. In this context, conservative cold war politics were not the only ones linking motherhood and domesticity to civic duty and citizenship. According to Ruth Feldstein, liberals during the 1940s and 1950s began to move away from New Deal-era economic theories to psychological and other social science explanations of racial inequality and poverty (Feldstein 40). Psychological theories of racism studied both the sources of prejudice in whites and its effects on blacks. According to Feldstein, this antiracist liberalism implicated black mothers and white mothers in two important ways:

> First, this discourse suggested that certain kinds of mothers created racial prejudice in whites and perpetuated ostensible pathology in blacks. Second, progressive experts were concerned that racial hatred weakened American masculinity. They were preoccupied with white and black sons whose mothers failed them psychologically and who, therefore, lacked the codes of masculinity necessary for healthy and productive citizenship. Prejudice, enabled by white and black mothers, undermined the ideal male citizen. (41)

These psychological depictions of mothers and the relationship between domesticity and racism were strengthened by depictions of mothers in popular writing, which (although not concerned with racism specifically) linked social problems and American national character to pathological womanhood. Philip Wylie's popular book, *A Generation of Vipers* (1942), coined the term "momism" and, using Freudian and Jungian psychology and supported by examples from classical literature and history, claimed that narcissistic, controlling, and aggressive women were responsible for creating a generation of weak and apathetic men (184-196). Throughout the 1940s, Wylie and other popular writers, along with academic experts, advanced theories that described the detrimental effect of pathological motherhood on American society. These texts described "Moms" as sexual failures who withheld appropriate intimacy from their husbands and overindulged their children.

The subject of Wylie's (and others) diatribe referred, either implicitly or explicitly, almost exclusively to white, middle class women. However, popular and academic writing discussed black women and mothers, as well. They described

"Matriarchs," black women whose men "cut loose from all family ties [and] joined the great body of homeless men who wandered about looking for new work and new experiences" (Frazier 88). Without the structure of the family to "contain" them, common wisdom purported that black women's sexual contacts became more casual and resulted in multiple dependent children for whom they were the sole caretakers. E. Franklin Frazier's study, *The Negro Family in the United States* (1939), examines the "career of the Negro family where motherhood has been free on the whole from both institutional and communal control and *the woman has played the dominant role*" [emphasis added] (88). Moms and matriarchs, describing white women and black women, respectively, were keywords that embodied the characteristics of pathological motherhood. In both cases, this pathology was linked to sexuality and was said to have a tremendous effect on society and national character.

Psychological depictions of ideal motherhood in the post World War II period emphasized a strict balance between emotional indulgence and emotional restraint—warning against both being over-involved with and indifferent to one's children (Feldstein 48, 52). As with female sexuality, women were expected neither to withhold nor overindulge their maternal desire, and maternal failure was characterized by both rigidity and excess. Lutie's aspirations toward (and her ultimate fall from) ideal motherhood frame the novel. *The Street* engages these ideals by illustrating social and economic conditions that make dominant ideals of domesticity and motherhood unattainable for many poor black women. Petry examines these issues by juxtaposing examples of "maternal failure" and with Lutie.

When Lutie goes to work for the Chandlers, a very wealthy family from Connecticut, she encounters examples of upper middle class white domestic and maternal failure in Mrs. Chandler and Mrs. Chandler's mother. Lutie's initial impression of the Chandler home is that of sheer perfection. Indeed, the description of the Connecticut home is a stark contrast to Lutie's apartment: "She never got over that first glimpse of the outside of the house—so gracious with such long low lines, its white paint almost sparkling in the sun and the river very blue behind the house" (37). She soon observes, however, that not everything in the Chandler household is ideal: "Yet after six months of living there she was uneasily conscious that there was something wrong. She wasn't too sure that Mrs. Chandler was over fond of Little Henry; she never held him on her lap or picked him up and cuddled him the way mothers do their children. She was always pushing him away from her" (43).

Dominant images of bad mothers during this time period ranged from the "indulgent" to the overly restrictive, from frivolous and materialistic to "drab" and concerned only with children. According to Feldstein, writers during this period "popularized competing and overlapping theories of "maternal protection" and "maternal rejection" (42). The indifference that Mrs. Chandler demonstrates toward her son, Little Henry, exemplifies this rejection and positions her as a failed maternal figure. This is further emphasized by the way that she treats her husband. Lutie observes that Mrs. Chandler is far more attentive to and affectionate with other women's husbands (44). Women were expected to maintain a healthy level of marital intimacy and balance their affection between husbands and children, and Mrs. Chandler does neither.

During this time period, sexuality became both implicitly and explicitly linked with motherhood. According to Feldstein, women who failed as mothers were linked by one characteristic: "sexual dysfunction" (42). The 1940s were a turning point for women's sexuality that enabled, at the very least, an acknowledgment of female sexuality. However, this "liberation" was partial—sexual desire was only acceptable as long as it was contained within heterosexual marriage and for the purpose of becoming a mother (Lundberg and Farnham 217). In this context, Mrs. Chandler embodies failed, pathological motherhood.

Petry juxtaposes Lutie and Mrs. Chandler to emphasize Lutie's commitment to domesticated sexuality and motherhood and illustrate the external forces that render her goals and ideals impossible to attain. Despite the fact that Mrs. Chandler demonstrates a proclivity toward sexual indiscretion, it is Lutie who bears the brunt of white society's assumptions about promiscuity and black female sexuality. After she overhears Mrs. Chandler's mother warning her daughter about "how they are," she invokes her position as a wife and mother to contradict these assumptions: "Here she was highly respectable, married, mother of a small boy, and in spite of that, knowing all that, these people took one look at her and immediately got that now-I-wonder look" (45).

The racism depicted here also resonates with the time period's theories of failed motherhood. Antiracist psychologists and sociologists asserted that white supremacy and racial hatred such as this "weakened American masculinity" (Feldstein 41). Later, Petry positions Lutie as the superior mother figure when, on Christmas day, Mr. Chandler's brother obtains a gun from Mr. Chandler's desk and

shoots himself in front of the family. The family's reaction is not of sadness and despair, but ranges from hysteria on the part of Mrs. Chandler to embarrassment on the part of her mother. These women embody all the worst traits of failed motherhood, running the gamut of excessive and overly emotional to cold and conniving—with neither admitting any expression of nurturing.

In the aftermath of the suicide Lutie is appalled at their lack of compassion and, in particular, of their neglect of a terrified Little Henry: "None of them had given him a thought; they had deserted as neatly as though they had him on the doorstep of a foundling hospital" (48). It is Lutie, rather than Mrs. Chandler, who is able to provide Little Henry with the precise amount of attention and affection to take care of his immediate emotional needs: "She picked him up and held him close to her, letting him get the feel of her arms around him; telling him through her arms that his world had not suddenly collapsed about him, that the strong arms holding him so close were a solid, safe place where he belonged, where he was safe" (49). Lutie's demeanor compensates for the Chandlers' lack of affection. In keeping with contemporary ideals, she remains calm and collected in order to restore some emotional stability to Little Henry. However, despite her ability to demonstrate ideal motherhood, she remains marginalized and excluded from this ideal. Her inability to demonstrate this ideal in her own home is not linked to her personality, but to her economic conditions.

Despite its emphasis on economic conditions and its insistence on the role of the public space regarding subjectivity and personality formation, the novel admits that the domestic space does play a significant role in the socialization of individuals

with respect to dominant values. I argue that the focus on psychology and subjectivity, rather than undermine the role of economics, insists that any discussion of psychology and social problems cannot be separated from the economic context in which they emerge. During the time she worked in the Chandler's home, Lutie become fully indoctrinated in principles of white middle and upper class America. She listened to their commentary on economics and the American Dream, she read all of Mrs. Chandler's women's magazines and attempted to apply these philosophies in her own life—saving as much money as she could and restricting visits to her family in order to do so. Notably, although she is an outsider within the private space of the Chandler's home, it becomes for her a site of education and socialization into dominant American values. With respect to Frazier and other black social science scholars who advocated adherence to dominant values, there can be no question that Lutie's commitment to and her knowledge of these values is anything other than complete. This also continues to blur the boundaries between the public and the private. As the place of her employment, the Chandler's domestic space is not private. However, the nature of domestic work, the intimacy between her and the Chandlers, the emotional work that she performs, and so forth, indicate that this is not a wholly public space either. This establishes the private space as a site of education—an issue that will be elaborated later when the democratic family is discussed. In what follows, however, Petry's depiction of domesticity and psychology is examined.

One of the ways that the novel explores the relationship between the domestic space and the psychology of individuals is through the perspectives of

other characters. As stated previously, including the perspectives of secondary characters gives the novel its critical strength and enables it to transcend the boundaries of conventional protest genres (Hernton 98, Joyce 45, Eby 24). Much of this criticism has focused on other women in the text, namely, Mrs. Hedges and Min, and their ability to subvert the status quo. Previous analyses of characters like Jones, Boots, and Junto (the men who each play a part in disrupting Lutie's life) have focused on their misogynist nature (and rightfully so). In this chapter, I examine the attention Petry gives to their psychological development and temperaments, in particular with Jones. This chapter also looks at her estranged husband, Jim, who, according to one critic, simply wanted to "dominate" Lutie just as Junto, Boots, and Jones did (Hernton 107). I would argue that this characterization is somewhat unfair and that, despite his flaws, Jim acts as a foil to the other men in the novel. In order to understand fully the novel's engagement with antiracist liberalism and its characterization of masculine citizenship and motherhood, it is necessary to examine these characters. I also examine Petry's depiction of Bub. Given her depiction of motherhood and psychology, his perspective and experience reinforce Petry's anticipation of and challenge to psychological approaches to racism.

Jones is the first of the three men introduced in the novel. As stated, Lutie's initial impressions of him are a mixture of fear, aversion, and pity (25). To be certain, Jones is a brutal individual whose obsessive desire for Lutie leads him first, to attempt rape, and second, to enact revenge by implicating her son in a scam that lands Bub in jail and then off to reform school. However, a close look at Jones with respect to the aforementioned ideals of citizenship reveals a complex and

contradictory character, one who struggles with social norms and his need for companionship. Lutie, according to Jones, "made him more aware of the deadly loneliness that ate into him day and night. It was a loneliness born of years of living in basements and sleeping in mattresses in boiler rooms" (85). Petry links Jones's temperament to his domestic spaces (which supports theories of personality formation). These domestic spaces, however, are also his places of employment. The novel continues to blur the boundaries of the public and the private. He takes the job as a super in the hopes that having people around him all the time will alleviate some of his loneliness and that having his own apartment will make him more desirable to women (86-87). However, his years spent living in basements and boiler rooms have left him socially inept and he struggles with how he presents himself to Lutie. His imagined courtship with her is characterized by light banter and deliberate attempts to appear calm and restrained: "He was imagining that Lutie was curled up on the couch where the boy sat. He wouldn't sit by her; he would stay where he was and talk to her about that—not make any sudden moves toward her" (102). The emphasis on restraint resonates with the time period's masculine ideals and model citizenship.

Nevertheless, when he is around her, he feels unable to control his baser urges: "She went into the kitchen and the bathroom and he made himself stand still. For he knew if he followed her in there, he would force her down on the floor, down against the worn floor boards" (99). These observations culminate in Jones's attempted rape of Lutie. Again, just before he sees her, he imagines a restrained courtship: "He went steadily up the stairs, his thoughts running ahead of him. This

time he would tell her that he had come to see her. She would invite him in and they would really get to know each other" (232). The encounter ends violently and is stopped only when Mrs. Hedges steps in. In her assessment of Jones's character, Mrs. Hedges reinforces the relationship between psychological temperament and domestic space, "He ain't really responsible…'He's lived in cellars so long he's kind of cellar crazy" (240). Her explanation illustrates how the relationship between domesticity and temperament circulate as part of dominant discourse. Lutie dissents, arguing that there exist individuals from comparable circumstances and do not exhibit such behavior. This reinforces her steadfast commitment to overcoming her adverse circumstances rather than resigning herself to them.

Jones's relationship with Min also reveals a deep-seated need for companionship and domestic stability. Kimberly Drake characterizes their relationship as an economic arrangement for Min (249). For Jones, however, it provides comfort, and is a relationship about which he harbors deep ambivalence. Before Lutie arrived, Min provided a basic level of companionship: "A first he had thought it was kind of cheerful to have her around. She kept the place from getting so deadly quiet" (98). However, once Lutie arrived, Min only seemed to anger him. In order to pursue Lutie, he must rid himself of Min; however, he finds it impossible to relinquish his need for her (or, his need for what she represents, a companion over whom he maintains a higher status): "Even though he had come downstairs with the intention of putting her out, the thought of her leaving him was unbearable" (111). In this particular context, Min becomes a gauge by which he judges his desirability. Jones continues to remain obsessed with Lutie and

minimizes his need for Min. When it becomes clear that Min has left him for good his feelings are characterized, not by sadness at the loss of Min, but by dissatisfaction in the changes of the domestic space:

> The wall in front of him was bare, blank. That was it—that long empty space was where the table used to stand. He pushed the easy-chair over against the wall and started at it, dissatisfied. It couldn't begin to take the place of the table; instead it emphasized the absence of the gleam and shine and the table's length; made him remember how majestic the claw feet had looked down near the floor. He hadn't realized how familiar he had become with all the detail of that table until it was gone. It was only natural that he should miss it, because he had stared at it for hours on end when he sad there on the sofa. He would put the desk there instead. That's where it was before Min moved in. Immediately he began pushing and pulling the desk across the room, and while he struggled with it he wondered why he bothered, tired as he was. The room still didn't look right. (375)

This passage, toward the end of the novel, reinforces the primacy of the domestic space and its stability for Jones. However, the domestic space is not the only place that can produce a disturbed and unrestrained temperament within the novel, nor is it the most powerful. The depictions of characters such as Boots and Jim assert the role of the public sphere and the effect that economic inequality has on individuals.

Lutie's observations of Boots Smith indicate that he has far more economic advantages than other African Americans she encounters on the street (148-149). His temperament is initially portrayed as restrained but self-involved: "There was

no expression in his eyes, no softness, nothing, to indicate that he would ever lift a finger to help anyone but himself" (152). However, Boots's hardness and self-assurance belies his true status as an individual who has been beaten down within the economic system and betrayed in the domestic sphere, who retains his social position only at the behest of Junto, the white man who owns the local pub and the buildings in which Jones and Lutie live. Prior to playing music at Junto's pub, Boots worked as a Pullman porter, a job that left him completely bereft of self-regard:

> Porter! Porter this and Porter that. Boy. George. Nameless. He got a handful of silver at the end of the each run, and a mountain of silver couldn't pay a man to stay nameless like that. No Name, black my shoes. No Name, hold my coat. No Name, brush me off. No Name, take my bags. No Name. No Name. (264).

Boots's power is only partial and depends upon his ability to remain in line with Junto, who reminds him, "If I were you, I wouldn't overlook the fact that whoever makes a man can also break him" (264). Although his position is precarious under Junto's employ, Boots has far more freedom, status, and material advantage than his peers.

Unlike Jones, Boots does not seem to despair as a result of loneliness, but his self-worth is inextricably bound up with similar expectations of masculinity, which include having a woman. His reaction to his girlfriend's (Jubilee) betrayal is brutal and violent. After nearly beating her when he discovers she had cheated on him:

> He wanted to laugh at himself and at Jubilee. Him riding Pullman trains day in and day out and hoarding those handfuls of silver, so he could keep her

> there in this apartment, so he could buy her clothes. Bowing and scraping because the thought of her waiting at the end of a run kept him from choking on this 'Yes sirs' and 'No sirs' that he said week in and week out. He paused on the stairs thinking that he ought to go back up and finish the job, because leaving it like this left him less than half man, because he didn't even have a woman of his own, because he not only had to say 'Yes sir,' he had to stand by and take it while some white man grabbed off what belonged to him. (270)

Within the context of ideals that implicate contained domesticity and psychological restraint in the construction of American masculinity and citizenship, these passages conflate the public and private space as the source of personality and subjectivity. Following this, it becomes increasingly difficult to focus entirely on psychological and sociological explanations of social problems such as racism and poverty.

Ultimately, neither Boots nor Jones are sympathetic characters, but including their perspectives enables Petry to illustrate how it is both the private and the public spheres that produce individuals. Their perspectives are ultimately linked to Lutie's position as a mother because she wishes to avoid these economic and domestic conditions so that Bub can grow up "fine and strong" and not like either of these men. When she is able to step back and consider the situation objectively, it is Jim who emerges as a sympathetic male, one who might have embodied all the traits

desirable for democratic society if that society had not failed him first.[1] When she first meets Boots, she compares him with Jim:

> There was a streak of cruelty in Boots that showed up plain in his face. Jim's face had been open, honest, young. Come to think of it, when she and Jim got married it looked as though it should have been a happy, successful marriage. They were young enough and enough in love to have made a go of it. It always came back to the same thing. Jim couldn't find a job. So, day by day, month by month, big broad-shouldered Jim Johnson went to pieces because there wasn't any work for him and he couldn't earn anything at all. He got used to facing the fact that he couldn't support his wife and child. It ate into him. Slowly, bit by bit, it undermined his belief in himself until he could no longer bear it. And he got himself a woman so that in those moments when he clutched her close to him in bed he could prove that he was still needed, wanted. His self-respect was momentarily restored through this woman's desire for him. (168)

The example of Jim illustrates how economic inequality (rather than motherhood or domesticity) renders citizenship ideals inaccessible to people of color. When he is unable to attain these ideals in the public space, Jim seeks comfort in the private. This affirms the centrality of domestic relationships in people's lives and to their

[1] From a feminist perspective, this needs to be qualified a bit since the novel depicts violent fights between Lutie and Jim. All evidence suggests that Jim wanted to attain ideal masculinity and be dominant within their household. Nevertheless, I maintain that Jim is connected to Boots and Jones, not by a desire to dominate Lutie, but by their shared exclusion from the white, middle class construction of masculinity (and by extension, citizenship).

self-respect, but it does not ignore the ways in which those relationships are shaped by the public sphere of work and economics.

During this time period, African American sociologists sought to investigate and analyze blacks' transition from Southern rural communities to urban communities and the status of the African American family. Their work was consistent with aforementioned studies of race that emphasize psychological consequences of racism and focused on "shared patterns of adaptation to social contexts" (Young and Deskins 463). Charles S. Johnson's work focused on the feelings of inferiority that pervaded the African American community and believed that the urban setting would provide a place in which African Americans would enjoy new economic, cultural, and social opportunities and assimilate to mainstream social mores ("The New Frontage" 278-298). Franklin E. Frazier, on the other hand, focused on the concept of "social disorganization" which referred to social ills (crime, disease, promiscuity) that plagued urban ethnic ghettos. Although his work specifically focused on the transition from rural to urban, Petry addresses his characterizations of black domesticity, motherhood, and women's sexuality.

Frazier asserted that "organized" families were ones that made the transition from rural to urban and retained a patriarchal structure in which men and women assumed the roles expected of their gender. However, the "crisis" of emancipation and the transition from a rural setting to an urban setting also broke families apart when men had to leave in search of work and women became primarily responsible for the protection and care of their families. In this context, he maintains, women's sexual contacts became far more casual and resulted in multiple dependent

children. In the rural south, the consequences of this lack of institutional and communal control over women's sexuality were less problematic because illegitimate children were cared for in multigenerational households. However, as women move into areas outside of their rural communities and into urban enclaves, illegitimacy "loses its harmless character [and]…becomes part of the general disorganization of family life, in which the satisfaction of undisciplined impulses results in disease and in children who are unwanted and uncared for" (100). *The Street's* portrayal of Lutie provides a response to Frazier's "unfettered" mother.

Lutie's family structure appears, on the surface, to be disorganized according to Frazier's description. However, she does not fit the image of a woman with casual sexual encounters and an overabundance of neglected children. Lutie maintains very strict mores with respect to her sexuality—mores that were inculcated by her grandmother when she was young—and she is dedicated to the care and well being of her son. Further, while Frazier maintained that these women accepted their situation "with an attitude of resignation as if it were nature's decree," Lutie's attitude toward her situation is characterized by confidence, industriousness, and her unrelenting commitment to dominant American values (88).

Petry's depiction of Lutie and her commitment to and failure to achieve dominant ideals challenges the increasing focus on motherhood and the nuclear family as the genesis of racial inequality and related social ills. Indeed, while the years following the war saw a shift in mainstream politics that focused on the private sphere and assumed an insular domestic space, there nevertheless existed a model that solidified the relationship between the public and private spheres and

advanced a process for producing ideal citizens. The psychological approach to racism was preceded and supported by another political and cultural movement to politicize the home.

The model of the democratic family gained mainstream attention in the early 1940s when, at the White House Conference on Children in a Democracy, President Franklin Roosevelt indicated, "A succession of world events has shown us that our democracy must be strengthened at every point of strain or weakness. All Americans want this country to be a place where children can live in safety and grow in understanding of the part they are going to play in the future of our American nation" (70). Roosevelt maintained that given children's integral role in democratic society, the entire nation should be invested in their physical, intellectual, emotional, and moral development. In the early 1940s, family sociologists and psychologists observed a shift to a family structure that lacked connection to both extended family and other community members. This was exacerbated by increased migration to urban areas where social pressure from family and community decreased as a result of increased anonymity (Arlitt 2). One psychologist noted that "marriage commitment is now driven by individual desire, not social pressure and deep rooted desire to do one's duty to family and to society" (4). Under these new conditions psychologists provided expert advice that would enable families to continue the most important function of "rearing desirable citizens to carry on the best traditions of American family life" (5). The democratic family represented a sharp turn away from early twentieth century behaviorist

theories of childrearing and was compatible with antiracist admonitions for mothers to help produce antiracist citizens.

According to Ada Arlitt, "parents who rear their children today have far more obligations and a far more difficult task than parents had in any era previous to our own….[In] the democratic family, which is the type of organization in the United States, every individual has a voice and vote in the formation of family policies" (154). The tasks accorded to parents (read: mothers) within the democratic family included attention to physical and mental well-being, preparation for and involvement with school, and help with establishing friendships and organizing educational activities. Experts advocated assigning chores and training in the use of money, helping children develop a keen sense of judgment and the ability to use reason to control one's actions, rather than resort to escape mechanisms. Democratic society expected children to be well-socialized in its ideals and this training in citizenship began in infancy and continued into late childhood, fostering a sense of independence and individuality (173-176). This advice was prevalent in popular childcare books. Renowned childcare experts Arnold Gesell and Frances Ilg, advocated that the "the household [serve] as a 'cultural workshop' for the transmission of old traditions and for the creation of new social values" (9). A culture dedicated to democratic values would foster those values within the home—treating children with the respect and dignity accorded individuals within a democratic society. Petry demonstrates Lutie's commitment to dominant values and expectations and how her economic circumstances render it difficult, if not impossible, to attain them.

Lutie desires a home environment in which she can raise Bub according to dominant standards, which include those of the democratic family. Petry engages these ideals by continuously depicting domestic spaces as sites of education and socialization. The characterization of Lil as a failed maternal figure (against whom Lutie is compared and who threatens to undermine Lutie as a mother) early on in the novel is integral to understanding the association between domesticity and education. The repetition of certain words places the novel within the discourse of the democratic family:

> Or she could go on living with Pop. And Lil. Bub would *learn* to like the taste of gin, would *learn* to smoke, would *learn*, in fact a lot of other things that Lil could *teach* him – things that Lil would think it amusing to *teach* him. Bub at eight would get a liberal *education* from Lil, for she was home all day and Bub got home from school a little after three. You've got a choice a yard wide and ten miles long. You can sit down and twiddle your thumbs while your kid gets a free *education* [emphasis added] from your father's blowsy girl friend or you can take this apartment. (9)

Lutie aspires to the standards that advocate that the home be a site of educational and cultural development. These standards also direct mothers to engage with their children's formal education. She is concerned, when inspecting the new apartment, with its suitability for Bub's education, wanting to know "how much light there would be for Bub to study by when he came home from school" (14). Further, she remains determined to be involved with Bub's education: "As soon as she could afford to, she would take an afternoon off from work and visit the school so that she

could find out for herself what the menus were like. But until then Bub would have to eat lunch at home, and that wasn't anything to worry about" (60). Early in the novel, Lutie worries that just as it proves to be an inadequate space for recreation and security, the apartment is an inadequate space for education. In doing so she also anticipates that much of Bub's education will come from the street:

> How had he known how to get in despite the fact kids weren't allowed in the movies alone at night? Probably learned it from the kids in the street or at school. It wasn't right though….There must be something he could do after school, some place he could go where he would have some fun and be safe, too. Leaning out of a kitchen window to play some kind of game with those dogs down there in the rubbish wasn't exactly wholesome play for an eight-year old boy! (78)

The democratic model advised appropriate play and study spaces. It also advised education in the use of money (Arlitt 173). Indeed, one of Lutie's greatest challenges with respect to Bub's education is how to negotiate lessons of economics and the values of hard work and perseverance with that of inequality and exploitation. After she punishes Bub for attempting to earn money as a shoeshine boy, she must explain to him why. Her initial rebuke was harsh and she attempts to compensate by listening to him carefully: "So she turned toward him and instead of hugging him listened to him gravely, trying to tell him by her manner that whatever he had to say was important and she would give it all her attention" (69). As dictated by the ideals of the democratic family, this approach treats Bub as an individual. Lutie is forced to reevaluate the lessons Bub has been learning in their

home, of the importance of making and saving money (70). Bub's attempt to make money as a shoeshine boy is a logical outcome of such a lesson. However, while it allows him to contribute to the household, it also conditions him "for the role they were supposed to play. If they start out young like this shining shoes, they'll take it for granted they've got to sweep floors and mop stairs the rest of their lives" (66). Lutie and Bub's experience indicates some of the ways in which the aforementioned democratic characteristics assume a white, middle-class family that does not have to negotiate racial and economic inequality. Lutie struggles to present Bub with knowledge of racial inequality and exploitation in ways that are accessible to him: "He listened to her with his eyes fixed on her face, not saying anything, concentrating on her words. His expression was so serious that she began to wonder if she should have said that part about white folks. He was awfully young to be told such a thing like that, and she wasn't sure she had made her meaning quite clear" (71). The democratic model insists on teaching children how to function in a democratic society. However, black Americans like Lutie who wish to inculcate their children with positive values associated with democracy and individualism must also prepare their children to function in a society that renders the fruits of those values unattainable.

When asked why white people want people of color to shine their shoes, Lutie is unable to articulate why: "For she had never been able to figure it out for herself" (71). In doing so, she reveals the contradictory position of African American mothers, who are not only tasked with raising ideal citizens but who must

do so under economic and social conditions that discourage (rather than encourage) some individuals from growing up "fine and strong."

For Lutie, the notion of the home as a "cultural workshop" cannot be confined to the space of their apartment. Throughout the novel, the power of the street to corrupt is overwhelming and she sees little hope that their domestic space can withstand it:

> All the responsibility for Bub was hers. It was up to her to keep him safe, to get him out of here so he would have a chance to grow up fine and strong. Because this street and the other streets just like it would, if he stayed in them long enough, do something terrible to him. Sooner or later, they would do something equally as terrible to her. And as she sat there in the dark, she began to think about the things that she had seen on such streets as this one she lived in. (194)

This paragraph foreshadows Bub's fate, which is also linked explicitly to the economic lessons learned in the home. Lutie's commitment to dominant values and her equally high self-esteem cannot withstand the strength of the violence and corruption of the street. With its domestic-like qualities, Petry solidifies a link between the street and the socialization of individuals and anticipates the psychological theories that, following the democratic family model, focus on the relationship between social problems and individual psychology. However, Petry's depiction of the "domesticated" street and socialization insists that social problems cannot be understood apart from the economic and material circumstances that

relegate families to living conditions that are not conducive to fostering democratic values.

As Lutie recalls the violence and criminality she has observed, a link between social problems, domesticity, and education is made:

> She felt she knew the steps by which that girl landed on the stretcher in the hospital. She could trace them easily. It could be that Bub might follow the same path. The girl probably went to high school for a few months and got tired of it. She had no place to study at night because the house was full of roomers, and she had no real incentive anyway, because she didn't have a real home. The mother was out to work all day and the father was long gone. She found out that boys liked her and she started bringing them to the apartment. The mother wasn't there to know what was going on. They didn't have real homes, no base, no family life. So at sixteen or seventeen the girl was fooling around with two or three different boys. One of them found out about the others. Like all the rest of them, he had only a curious supersensitive kind of pride that kept him going, so he had to have revenge and knives are cheap. (204)

Lutie is just as disturbed by the acquiescence and resignation displayed by the street's residents to the violence that they encounter: "Lutie got that same jolting sense of shock and then of rage, because these people, all of them – the girl, the crowd in back of her – showed no horror, no surprise, no dismay. They had expected this. They were used to it. And they had become resigned to it" (205). The resignation that Lutie identifies is a psychological reaction that cannot be attributed

to mothering without taking into consideration the economic and material conditions within which these domestic spaces are contained.

Although Petry indicates a relationship between the private domestic space and social issues of violence and (uncontained) teenage sexuality, bad mothers are not to blame. Further, within this psychological and sociological phenomenon, the private domestic space (and the domesticated street) is not the only space that is implicated. Again, the novel blurs the boundary between the public and the private and illustrates how both spaces produce individuals, “citizens,” who are both vulnerable and apathetic to this violence. Petry observes socio-psychological phenomena that are also being examined by antiracist liberals. However, her criticism is aimed, not at women who have failed their children, but at white people and the particular set of economic relationships represented within, but not limited to, the street:

> And it wasn’t just this city….Yes. It was any place where people were so damn poor they didn’t have time to do anything but work, and their bodies were the only source of relief from the pressure under which they lived; and where the crowding together made the young girls wise beyond their years. It all added up to the same thing, she decided—white people. She hated them. She would always hate them. She forced herself to stop that train of thought. It led nowhere. It was unpleasant. (206)

Recall that emotional restraint and moderation are associated with ideal citizenship. This paragraph also illustrates Lutie’s struggle to retain a restrained outward appearance. Despite her overwhelming circumstances and despite constant

exclusion from the means to realize her ideals, she is steadfast in her commitment to them.

Lutie's struggle to balance the reality of their economic lives and protect Bub from the overwhelming stress that it caused continues throughout the novel:

> If he left a cake of soap soaking in the bowl in the bathroom, she pointed out how it wasted the soap and that careless thing ate into their meager budget. When she went to bed she scolded herself roundly because it wasn't right to be always harping on the cost of living to Bub. On the other hand, if they didn't manage to save faster than she'd been able to do so far, it would be months before they could move and moving was uppermost in her thoughts. So, the next day she explained to him why it was necessary to move, and that they had to be careful with money if they were going to do it soon. (317)

Despite her best efforts to create a space appropriate for Bub, he becomes aware of her anxiety over their economic situation and conforms to the expectations of the street—her values and mothering skills not withstanding. Lutie believes that despite her best efforts she, like so many other mothers who live on the street, is unable to keep him safe:

> At this hour there were countless children with door keys tied around their necks, hovering at the corner. They were seeking their mothers in the homecoming throng surging up from the subway. They're too young to be familiar with worry, she thought, for their expressions were exactly like Bub's – apprehensive, a little frightened.

Note that the emphasis here is on the psychological, rather than the physical, vulnerability of the children. Worried about the effect that "her growing frustration and hatred" would have on Bub, she struggles to restrain her emotions and provide Bub with affection and attention. (324)

The inclusion of Bub's experience and perspective enables the humanitarian goals of the novel to generate politically informed sympathy (Eby 34) but it also signals the novel's engagement with the politics of domesticity, motherhood, and the democratic family. Bub's perspective helps illustrate the degree to which Lutie's position as a mother is constantly undermined by their precarious economic situation, while it also resonates with emerging perspectives on psychology and citizenship. Ruth Feldstein argues that during this time period "a near consensus emerged that childhood experiences were important in understaning the sources of prejudice in whites and the effects of prejudice in blacks: *events in childhood had a role in determining the kinds of citizens white and black could be*" [emphasis added] (46). When Lutie leaves to seek work singing in Junto's bar, Bub reacts to Lutie's absence:

> He lay down in the middle of the couch and looked up at the ceiling, trying to think of something that would delay her going out. When she wasn't there, he was filled with a sense of loss. It wasn't just the darkness, for the same thing happened in the daylight when he came home from school. The instant he opened the door, he was filled with a sense of desolation, for the house was empty and quiet and strange. At noon he would eat his lunch fast and go out to the street. After school he changed his clothes quickly and, even as he

> changed them, no matter how quick he was, the house was frightening and cold. But when she was in it, it was warm and friendly. (214)

This passage indicates that Bub's psychological well-being is tied to his mother's presence and is affected by more that than the physical conditions of their apartment. Again, this resonates with claims that link subjectivity and personality to childhood experiences and mother-child relationships. However, as noted, Lutie's absence is motivated by their economic circumstances and not due to a pathological personality.

The focus on Bub's perspective also elucidates the type of "education" that he is receiving within and outside of his home. His education comes, not from the appropriate spaces of the classroom and the home, but from popular culture and schoolmates from whom he learns about gender roles and the ideals of masculinity to which he strives:

> He hoped she would notice there was something wrong with him. Then, when she did, he suddenly didn't want her to know he was a coward about the dark and about staying alone. He thought about the hard-riding cowboys, the swaggering, brave detectives in the movies, and the big tough boys in six B in school, and he said, 'Sure, I'm all right.' (216)

Furthermore, Bub's reaction to the enclosed space, to the sounds of domestic violence within the building is especially poignant: "He was alone, lost in the dark, lost in a strange place filled with terrifying things" (218). In this context, the novel's humanitarian goals of generating politically informed sympathy are particularly

potent given the time period's focus on children and their role in advancing and securing democracy.

Bub's experience is not linked only to the problem Lutie's absence but also to their economic position. He is momentarily comforted when he turns the lights in the apartment on and sees the things with which he is familiar. In order to save money, Lutie forbids him from keeping the lights on and he falls asleep that night, "still trying to think of something he could do to earn money" (219). Bub's position as the child of a poor single mother left alone in their apartment leaves him vulnerable to the machinations of Jones who offers him a way to make money. Initially, he refuses knowing that his mother would not likely approve of him working for Jones. Bub's fate is ultimately motivated by a momentary loss of emotional restraint by Lutie. One evening after burning herself on the gas stove she could no longer control the "rage that welled up in her" (325). After shouting about being poor and setting the table with a series of angry bangs and rattles, Bub is motivated to seek out Jones and accept his offer of "work." The work Jones provides involves stealing money from people's mailboxes. By corrupting Bub, Jones hopes to take revenge on Lutie for thwarting his advances.

Just prior to Bub's acceptance of Jones's offer, the novel inserts the perspective of Bub's elementary school teacher, Miss. Rinner. Given the emphasis on education in the democratic family model and its role in producing ideal citizens, I believe that this section warrants some critical attention. Miss Rinner has nothing but disdain for Harlem and her students: "These children were impudent. They were ill-clad, dirty. They wriggled about like worms, moving their arms and legs in

endless, intricate patterns, and they frightened her. Their parents and Harlem itself frightened her." Feeling powerless to change her situation, she exerts what little power she has over the children: "Having taught ten years in Harlem, she had learned that a sharp pinch administered to the soft flesh of the upper arm, a sudden twist of the wrist, a violent shove in the back would keep these eight- and nine-year olds under control, but she was still afraid of them. There was a sudden, reckless violence about them and about their parents that terrified her." Finally, the characteristics of the education she provides are revealed:

> She regarded teaching them anything as a hopeless task, so she devoted most of the day to maintaining order and devising ingenious ways of keeping them occupied. She sent them on errands. They brought back supplies: paper, pencils, chalk, rulers; they trotted back and forth with notes to the nurse, to the principle, to other teachers. The building was old and vast, and a trip to another section of it used up a good half-hour or more; and if the child lingered going and coming, it took even longer. Because the school was in Harlem she knew she wasn't expected to do any more than this. Each year she promoted the entire class, with few exceptions. (330)

Thus, Bub's activity is not simply a result of flawed interpersonal relationships within the private sphere; it is also a result of neglect within institutionalized formal education.

Bub is initially ambivalent about the manner in which he is earning money. He is certain that Lutie would object to it, which indicates the positive influence that Lutie has had on him. However, the stress of their economic situation forces him to

rationalize his choice. He expects that the money will bring about positive changes in their home:

> But he earned three whole dollars last week. Three whole dollars at one time, and Mom ought to be pleased by that. When he had a lot more, he'd tell her about it, and they would laugh and joke and have a good time together the way they used to before she changed so. He tried to think of word that would describe the way she had been lately—mad, he guessed. Well, anyway, different because she was so worried about their not having any money. (341)

Bub also sincerely believes that the work he is doing (stealing money from mailboxes throughout the neighborhood) is helping the police, that he is doing something for the greater good and engaging in work that is more acceptable than shining shoes. The first thing that Bub does with his money (forgoing chocolate, hard candy, and gum for himself) is to buy his mother a pair of gold colored earrings (336). In the context of the novel, this otherwise innocuous gesture links Bub to Jones (who planned to give Lutie jewelry as part of his imagined courtship of her) and to Junto and Boots (who planned to buy Lutie gifts in lieu of the salary that she needed).

Eventually, Bub's work brings him a sense of immense satisfaction and confidence that ultimately leads him to trouble: "His excitement and his pleasure in this thing he was doing enchanted him so that he walked straight into the middle of the gang of boys who had chased him earlier in the afternoon" (344). This description of Bub's state of mind is in stark contrast to the fear and anxiety he feels

within his home and illustrates the influence of the street on subjectivity. As expected, the encounter turns out badly and Bub finds safety in two unlikely places, first from Mrs. Hedges who reprimands the bullies and second, from Jones who Bub now views as something of a mentor and father figure. Since he is unable to feel safe in his own apartment, Bub now seeks Jones's basement for security:

> When they reached the bottom step, he began to feel better. He always delivered the letters to Supe down here. The fire was friendly, warm….This was real. The other was a bad dream. Going upstairs after school to a silent, empty house wasn't real either. This was the reality. This great, warm, open space was where he really belonged. Supe was captain of the detectives and he, Bub, was his most valued henchman. (349-350)

What happens here is a culmination of Lutie's worst fears. Not only has her son moved on to criminal behavior but he also discovered that this space provides greater comfort than that which Lutie tried to provide for him. The open spaces of the basement and the presence of an adult caretaker inspire genuine feelings of confidence and compensate for the dark and empty apartment that had caused him little more than discomfort and fear. Bub has found a home in Jones's cellar—the cellar that is indicated in the novel as the origins of Jones pathological personality.

Despite the warmth and safety that Bub feels, the security offered by Jones and the basement is temporary and, more importantly, it is an illusion. That Bub relies on detective movies to navigate his experience is significant. It illustrates his inability to use sound judgment and reason when making decisions and a failure to

face facts and do away with escape mechanisms—all important facets of childrearing within the democratic family model (Arlitt 173).

The depiction of Bub, his relationships with Lutie and Jones, and his experiences in his community and at school—all of these are integral to fulfilling the socio-psychological goals of the novel and illustrating the inadequacy of emerging antiracist liberalism and its emphasis on motherhood and the domestic space. Despite this, it is not necessarily mothers who exert the most influence, particularly in situations where economic conditions make the fulfillment of psychological needs impossible. Community, peer groups, and education eclipse the role of the family and the private space when their integrity is compromised by economic inequality—often with devastating consequences.

At the time *The Street* was published, the nation was on the verge of major economic and social change. The novel's engagement with the politics of sexual containment, the domestic space, and the democratic family anticipates psychological theories of motherhood and citizenship that antiracist liberals advance in the decades following the war. *The Street* affirms many of their ideas, in particular the relationship between domestic experience and relationships and the production of citizens. However, the novel directs its criticism not at mothers, but to the economic conditions that make attaining domestic ideals and reaping the fruits of democratic society impossible for women and families of color.

Chapter Two: "Many children from many places and in they end they all adjust": American Citizenship and the Contradictions of Conformity in Harriette Arnow's *The Dollmaker* (1954)

The Dollmaker is Harriette Simpson Arnow's third and most critically acclaimed novel. Arnow depicts the trial**s** of Gertie Nevels and her family who, during World War II, move from their home in the hill country of Kentucky to Detroit, Michigan. Unlike *The Street* and *The Changelings*, *The Dollmaker* is not strictly a protest novel and it does not deal specifically with racism and liberalism. Although Arnow portrays the harsh and dehumanizing living conditions endured by poor, working families, as a work of social criticism the novel's focus is not on structural inequalities inherent in the dominant culture (as in *The Street*) or on psychological mechanisms that produce prejudicial beliefs and behavior (as will be seen in *The Changelings*). Instead, Arnow focuses on individuals and how they navigate the conflicts and contradictions that inhere in the social institutions that they encounter. As such, my analysis resonates with that of Kathleen Walsh who argues, "Those who read *The Dollmaker* as a social indictment tend to exaggerate the contrast between Gertie's life in Kentucky and her trials in Detroit—without noting that Gertie acquiesces in her uprooting" (187). Published in the early 1950s, I maintain that the contrast between Kentucky and Detroit is not simply one of rural vs. urban, but that the move mirrors a larger shift from a pre- to a postwar economy and culture, and that Arnow uses the backdrop of the war to examine social changes that took place in the years following the war and that were taking hold as the novel was published. Joyce Carol Oats has proclaimed *The Dollmaker* as "one of those excellent American works that have yet to be properly assessed, not only as

excellent, but as very much American" (110). Indeed, in this chapter I seek to analyze the novel according to prevailing notions of American citizenship and identity, particularly as they relate to motherhood and domesticity and work and economics. I argue that Gertie's experience illustrates contradictions contained within postwar ideology with respect to democracy, citizenship, and the individual. *The Dollmaker* challenges prevailing notions of motherhood, domesticity, and citizenship by examining tensions between the expectations of the private space to foster individualism and the public space with its new emphasis on belonging and collectivity. In doing so, it indicates how these tensions betray the expectations and ideals advocated by proponents of the democratic family, as well as sociologist and psychologists. Rather than foster individualism, these institutions limit individual development in favor of adjustment and conformity.

As a migration narrative, the novel presents—in seemingly stark contrast—two cultures: that of rural Kentucky and urban Detroit. Kathleen Parker argues that the novel's contrast between "pastoral values and industrial realities" reveals the betrayal and destruction of the pastoral by the industrial: "At its heart, the literary pastoral tradition is tied to the historical reality of the land, and has its roots in a deep American longing to maintain the values born of its earliest Agrarian beginnings. These values have been shown to be antithetical to those of industrialism" (205, 208). Further, ethnographic studies of Appalachia during the 1950s contrasted "the model form of the rural mountain family" with the "contemporary, urban American family" and found that "familism put kinship cooperation at the center of social life. It defined a traditionalistic and personalistic

way of life for rural Appalachians that seemed to contradict the principles of individualism, achievement motivation, and universalism that were said to underlay a modern, urban-industrial American economy" (Lewis and Billings 4). Despite the fact that Appalachian scholars recognized that "the people [of the region] are restless and ready for change' ("Population and Migration Changes" Brown 45), the stereotypical depictions of Appalachian life and culture persisted through the 1960s and 1970s as the United States sought ways to address poverty in Appalachia. It was assumed that Appalachian values were an impediment to economic and technological development.

Indeed, familism and kinship cooperation characterize life in Kentucky within the novel. However, despite this and despite Gertie's memories of and longing for a highly idealized and romantic pastoral setting, Arnow does not simply create or reinforce a clear dichotomy between antiquated rural values and modern urban ones. While Arnow illustrates failures of institutions such as industry and education to foster democratic values, her depiction of domesticity, motherhood, and economics illustrates ways in which rural Appalachian culture was not entirely incompatible with modern development. In some ways, *The Dollmaker* anticipates and illustrates the analyses made by modern Appalachian scholars who challenge stereotypical depictions of Appalachia's "otherness" and its isolation from America (and American values), and insist upon a more historically accurate and complex understanding of Appalachian history and culture (16). In this chapter, I examine how Arnow's treatment of motherhood, domesticity, and economics illustrates ways

in which Appalachian culture (during this period) was conducive to and supportive of national democratic values such as individualism and achievement.

The first part of *The Dollmaker* establishes Gertie's ideals and values with respect to the domestic space and motherhood. It depicts gender dynamics contained within her marriage to Clovis and relationships between the public and the private common to themselves and others. Gertie's ideals represent a combination of pre-war ideals, shaped—in part—by the shared experience and economy of the Great Depression in the United States. But her ideals also suggest her own deep commitment to principles of individualism and economic success. Although Gertie values the isolation of her Kentucky home, she also indicates a subtle rejection of the notion that her home (and by extension Appalachia itself) is separate from the rest of the country.

The novel opens with Gertie attempting to get her very sick son to a doctor, first by riding a mule and then by flagging a car on the road—a car that happens to be driving a military officer. The distance that Gertie must travel for medical assistance initially reinforced the apparent isolation of Gertie's community. However, the ensuing scene between Gertie and the officer undermine notions of isolation and reveal the personal impact of the war and industrialization on Gertie, her family, and her community. In this context, the officer represents military authority, but he also symbolizes American values. Their interaction is characterized by a series of contrasts: chaotic and instinctual on the part of Gertie and ordered and rational on the part of the officer. Gertie is neither weak nor serene; she is physically and mentally strong, able act swiftly to fix the car when it

gets stuck and to put the shouting officer in his place (5, 8-9). Ironically, the officer (who lectures on about military affairs) and the soldier driving the car, presumably trained in warfare, are rendered helpless by the situation at hand. Further, they are unable to grasp the relationship between the current predicament and the war in general. They believe that while life and death hang in the balance overseas, the domestic front is safe from all of that. However, Gertie's problems of life and death with her son are not just comparable to military experience, they are intimately connected. For example, Gertie has to travel a great distance for medical help because the war has taken all the local doctors away. The interactions between Gertie and the officers demonstrate a relationship between the war abroad and material and psychological conditions at home. It reinforces a relationship between military and industrial authority and the lives of individuals in Appalachia. For the officer, military affairs are a matter of pragmatic reasoning, reducing individuals and their livelihoods to numbers that can be reorganized and distributed according to the military's needs (15). For Gertie and her community, military affairs are traumatic; they disrupt family relationships and inhibit the community's ability to sustain itself.

Within this context, the government and the military disrupt the community and the domestic space, and Gertie is not willing to let this officer forget that. Because small-time, local farmers and miners did not "produce a lot of what the country needs" they were unable to receive government exceptions and were sent off to war. Gertie's brother (a "little" farmer) was killed and her brother-in-law is among the soldiers missing in action (16). When asked about the primary crops

grown in the area, Gertie responds sharply regarding the children (youngens) born there and shipped off to war: "Youngens…Youngens fer th wars an them factories" to emphasize her interpretation of and disdain for the military's treatment of citizens as commodities (19). Through the juxtaposition of the officer's highhanded proclamations about the military and Gertie's examples of the devastating effect that military recruitment has had on her town, this passage illustrates a theme that is examined throughout the novel, which is an apparent disconnect between government and industry authorities and the material and psychological conditions under which poor, working Americans live. However, despite the disconnect between military and industry and the everyday lives of rural Americans depicted here, Arnow challenges the assumption that Appalachian culture is simply resistant to and incompatible with modernization. Indeed, the depiction of Gertie's domestic space and family relationships reveals a much more complicated picture.

At the doctor's office different aspects of Gertie's personality are revealed, as well as her beliefs concerning work and economics. Her interactions with the doctor (and later with her husband) are in stark contrast to those with the military officer, and they are characterized by insecurity and guilt. In the office, Gertie takes a moment to note her earnings and reveals her economic philosophy:

> Each [dollar] she unfolded and smoothed flat on her floor with the palm of her hand, looked at it an instant with first a searching, then a remembering glance. Sometimes after a moment of puzzlement she whispered, "That was eggs at Samuel's two years ago last July," and to a five, "That was th walnut-kernel money winter before last," and to another one, "That was th big

> dominecker that wouldn't lay at all; she'd bring close to two dollars now." Of one so old and thin it seemed ready to fall apart at the creases, she was doubtful, and she held it to the light until she saw the pinhole through Lincoln's eye. "Molasses money." (35)

For Gertie, the money she earns is a testament the history of her labor. Her criticism at the government and military's treatment of individuals as commodities is consistent with this. Gertie's economic philosophy (combined with her persistent insecurity) stimulates one of the primary tensions in the novel—that between the values associated with savings and stability and consumption and mobility.

Ostensibly, Gertie is committed to Depression-era/pre-war ideals and this is evident in her family structure and the priorities that she places on her family. This time period witnessed a shift with respect to family structure as Americans became increasingly dedicated to the ideal of the nuclear family. Postwar sociologists such as Talcott Parsons argued that the nuclear family structure emerged as a result of changes in the economic structure. As society grew to rely less on the production of goods within the private sphere and more on occupational wages (ideally earned by the husband), the family became a more specialized unit, with its primary function being the "socialization of children…and the stabilization of adult personalities" (16). Gertie is not dedicated to the nuclear family ideal that pervaded postwar popular culture. With respect to interpersonal relationships, she is primarily devoted to her children's well being and following that, her father (rather than her husband). Despite the fact that she is critical of industrial and military work that treats workers as mere numbers, she is supportive of occupational wage work to the

extent that it can help her secure a farm that will enable her family to be completely self-sufficient.

Ultimately, Gertie's ability to purchase the farm is secured by a small inheritance from her brother, Henley, who wished to repay his sister for the work she did growing up on their farm (67). This manner of extended family cooperation is one that Gertie intends to maintain and the acquisition of the Tipton farm will enable her to do so. In this respect, Arnow illustrates ethnographic observations of rural Appalachia which emphasized "both kin-based relations of economic and social life and a psychological sense of affectionate ties to kin" (Lewis and Billings 4).

The association of extended family relationships with Depression-era values was advanced by sociological observations made during the Great Depression, in which it was noted that economic hardship would "revive the economic functions and social importance of kin and family ties." Some expects were optimistic about this, believing that the increased alienation of modern urban life was detrimental to individuals and communities (Coontz 13). However, in the years following World War II, this optimism waned as advocates of the nuclear family model dominated discussions surrounding family life and American culture. Nuclear family advocates argued that the influence of extended family members, particularly those of different (read: older) generations, should be avoided because it would hinder the process of socialization (26).

Gertie's extended family is also implicated in her marriage as Clovis takes it upon himself to mediate tensions between Gertie and her mother, despite Gertie's objections: "Gertie said nothing, and Clovis began wondering on what he should tell

her mother to keep her quiet so she wouldn't go into her fainting spells again; and after listening with many headshakes to Gertie's advice to tell her all about Amos, the hole in his neck, the needle in his arm, the tent, and everything, so as to take her mind off Henley, he went away" (34). Indeed, Gertie feels greater affection toward her mother-in-law, Kate Nevels, than own mother, which again strengthens the bonds with extended family rather than focusing attention inward toward the nuclear family. In what follows, I discuss Gertie's resistance to the expectations of the nuclear family.

Dominant discourse assumed that the postwar nuclear family would fulfill all of its members' emotional and psychological needs, and that a commitment to the social and sexual mores associated with the nuclear family would support American democracy. Marital relationships were expected to be appropriately affectionate and intimate, characterized by strong men and submissive women. Within the boundaries of heterosexual marriage, women's sexuality was recognized and affirmed. It was assumed that this form of sexual containment "would enhance family togetherness…and would, in turn, foster wholesome childrearing" (May 90). This was further linked, both explicitly and implicitly, to democratic ideals and American citizenship. These ideals were perpetuated from within both popular culture and official policy. Elaine Tyler May's analysis of cold war domestic culture and public policy states

> Men in sexually fulfilling marriages would not be tempted by the degenerative seductions of the outside world that came from pornography, prostitution, "loose women," or homosexuals. They would be able to stand

> up to the communists. They would be able to prevent the destruction of the nation's moral fiber and its inevitable result: communist takeover from inside as well as outside the country. At the same time, women had to turn their energies toward the family in healthy ways. As long as they were subordinate to their husbands, sexually and otherwise, they would be contented and fulfilled wives devoting themselves to expert childrearing and professionalized homemaking. As loving erotic mates, they would be preventing their husbands from straying from the straight-and-narrow. And they would raise healthy children to be strong, vital citizens. (85)

Despite her criticism of military practices, Gertie does not explicitly challenge the politics of domesticity and government cold war policy as defined above. Nevertheless, her economic and familial commitments defy social expectations.

Gertie's relationship with Clovis lacks overt gestures of affection and is characterized by deceit and mistrust. For example, Gertie withholds information concerning her role in her son's care when Clovis meets her in the doctor's office (29). Within their relationship, Gertie is motivated by convenience and practicality rather than love and affection. She is the primary provider for the family (and desires to remain so), and is dismissive of the work that Clovis does, referring it to as "tinkerin," despite his objections. Despite the fact that she recently lost her brother in the war, she is eager for Clovis to go overseas so that she can use his earnings to buy the Tipton farm. Gertie feels guilty "over her own hardness of heart—Clovis going to war, and she thought only of money" (69). This guilt,

however, is not inspired by her affection for Clovis. Their ideas about marriage are not shared. Clovis's attempts at affection are thwarted:

> He hugged her with both arms about her shoulders, playfully pushing his chin into the back of her neck, jiggling her so that she tipped the wooden mixing bowl until buttermilk sloshed on the table. She jerked one elbow back against him, and spoke sharply as she might have to one of the children….His hands slipped from her shoulders, but he stood an instant, his chin pressed against her, like a child's head leaning. "Oh Gert, lots a times I think you don't love me, nary a bit." The words were the same he had used many times, but the tone was different, less teasing, almost sad. (77)

Gertie resists expectations of marital intimacy while Clovis desires it. *The Dollmaker* does not address women's sexuality with the same explicitness as *The Street* and *The Changelings*. However, Gertie's rejection of her husband indicates a rejection of some of the period's social and sexual mores with respect to contained sexuality and the nuclear family. Other expectations of the nuclear family such as "expert childrearing" and "professionalized homemaking" will be discussed shortly.

Although Gertie rejects contemporary mainstream expectations of American culture and citizenship, she is nevertheless committed to principles of American democracy and individualism. Like *The Street*, in which Lutie draws personal inspiration from *The Autobiography of Benjamin Franklin*, Gertie's aspirations and viewpoints toward American citizenship are derived from her education. This education included reading the Bible, poetry, and the Constitution in equal parts. Gertie's Christianity is not strict (in the fundamentalist sense), however, she does

adhere to a strict protestant work ethic. In Kentucky, Gertie is able to enact and reap the benefits of her work ethic and the early sections of the novel establish her knowledge of the Constitution and her pragmatic reasoning. This is quite different from the fire and brimstone doctrine espoused by her mother who confuses her patriotism and her fundamentalism, much to Gertie's chagrin who must correct her mother's misunderstanding of the first Amendment's establishment clause (59).

Gertie is able to use both the Bible and the Constitution to create a set of values from which she can draw to make sense of the conflicts and problems that arise in her life. In this context, Arnow anticipates analyses of Appalachian culture and economics that link Appalachia's lack of economic development to its culture. Gertie's rejection of her mother's fundamentalism and the value she places on education predicts sociological studies that cite the region's religious fundamentalism as one of the primary hindrances to modernization (Lewis and Billings 5). According to these observations, "education has been the most important cultural bridge between the Great Society and Appalachian Kentucky" (Schwartzweller and Brown 136). Gertie exemplifies their claims about education and indicates that Appalachia was not wholly fundamentalist. To this point, however, Gertie's conception of the American Dream and her commitments to citizenship and democratic values are not motivated by modernization and development. Instead, she is driven by her protestant work ethic and its emphasis on hard work and personal salvation. Further, she is dedicated the freedom to enact that ethic that the Constitution secures.

Although Gertie does not personally represent a desire for economic modernization, she makes the strict divisions between urban and rural and American and "other" (that emerged in Appalachian studies) difficult to sustain. Following that, Gertie's goals with respect to domesticity are simple; she wants to buy the Tipton farm so that she and her children will no longer have to pay rent. In doing so they will obtain economic autonomy. The contours of domestic space in Kentucky are given from Gertie's perspective and through these descriptions Arnow reveals Gertie's values:

> She shook her head over the ugliness of the tin heating stove, looked with satisfaction on the other things: the rag rug of her mother-in-law's weaving, given to Clovis as a wedding gift; the ceiling-high wood cherry side board put together with pegs, the wild cherry bed in one corner with the tops of the head-high post carved into the shapes of acorns, bigger and heavier than even the black walnut with pure around uncarved knobs in the other corner. All these wooden pieces had belonged to her father's grandmother and had been cast off from his house to the barn when her mother came there as a bride. (43)

Gertie values those artifacts that represent history and through which she can "read" the labor of her family through the generations. In this respect, she resists characteristics of modernization that emphasize the mass production and consumption of goods (Cohen 7). Indeed, even her attachment to the Tipton farm is articulated in terms of her family's historical relationship to the land on which it sits.

For Gertie, this space will enable safety, privacy, and most important, economic autonomy:

> Such a safe and sheltered place; if a body didn't know it was there she would never notice it among the leafless trees. It was close to her father, and her own, all her own. Never, never would she have to move again; never see again that weary, sullen look on Reuben's face that came when they worked together in a field not their own, and he knew that half his sweat went to another man. (70)

To this point, Gertie's desire for autonomy and subsistence is consistent with certain cultural expectations within her social and economic (lower, rural, working) class position. Gertie's insistence on savings, of acquiring their own farm, and on the slow acquisition of goods is consistent with the expectations that lower class individuals and families were more likely to save and invest their money to stabilize their current economic position than aim for upward economic mobility and increase their earnings (Martineau 124). Within the rural context, Gertie is able to balance her rural aspirations (e.g. maintaining kinship networks) with her more mainstream ones (e.g. commitment to education). In what follows, I discuss how Arnow depicts the relationship between rural Kentucky and modern America, and tensions that emerge with respect to economic mobility as the family relocates to urban Detroit.

Regarding the education and socialization of her children, Gertie's goals are more consistent with mainstream expectations of domesticity. Arnow demonstrates Gertie's ability to provide a learning environment within the home, which was, in part, a primary goal of the democratic family model that sought to socialize

American children to the norms and expectations of American democracy (Michel 155). Proponents of the democratic family and Appalachian scholars both assumed that rural families had a distinct "ecological psychology" and that their labor requirements precluded democratic parenting and required strict disciplinary techniques. They assumed that because of its inadequate educational institutions and the family's "monopoly over an individual's socialization," the rural context was resistant to new, more modern ideas (Brown and Schwarzweller 90).

Gertie's domestic space is one that first, provides a site for education and socialization and second, recognizes distinct contributions that individual family members make to the household (Grant 195). Indeed, her oldest son Reuben provides an economic contribution that is necessary to the family's survival. He represents the "ecological psychology" that rural families were assumed to exhibit. However, this psychology doesn't necessarily preclude an early democratic education. With respect to her younger children, Gertie provides an atmosphere that recognizes and nurtures each child's individual temperament and contribution to the family. It is in this regard that Gertie embraces contemporary democratic discourse. The diversity of personality within Gertie's household demonstrates her commitment to individualism.

Gertie takes great pride in her ability to provide everything her family needs and values highly the hand-crafted commodities that adorn her home and represent intimate connections to her family's history. Despite her commitment to pastoral mores, her domestic space in Kentucky is not depicted as one that is completely isolated from modern, dominant cultural values, nor does Gertie view all aspects of

commercial culture as an intrusion. Gertie's daughter, Clytie, is enchanted by the idea of home décor such as "real winder curtains, all white" and new dishes. Indeed, Gertie enjoys watching her children pore over the Montgomery Ward catalogue and helps them navigate the world of consumption and economics, encouraging them to buy necessities such as clothes, and save for other purchases later (123-125). The availability of commercial products indicates the degree to which modern mass-produced consumption is beginning to reach Appalachia. Moreover, the diversity of perspective and opinion in the family illustrates the way in which Appalachian culture is capable of producing citizens open to modernization. Collectively, Gertie's domestic space is not characterized by a single set of rural values, but by a diverse set of perspectives that embodies both rural values and modern values (as described by sociologists).

However, it is within the rural context and through the acquisition of the Tipton farm that we are introduced to one of the primary tensions that pervades the novel. Within the household, the diversity of opinion also produces tension as conflicting ideas about economics emerge. As indicated previously, her marital relationship is strained by Gertie's insecurity and her inability to assert herself and her abilities, as well as by her deceit. She keeps her intentions of buying the farm secret and interprets her husband's desires as a threat to the domestic values and goals that she is fashioning for herself and her children:

> Gertie turned sharply away. In another minute she'd be telling him about the money she had, and of how she meant to buy the Tipton place. Then he'd want the money for a bigger and better truck when he got out of the army,

> like the time he'd sold her heifer for tires. He might even want her to use up all his army pay, quit farming, and live in Town while he was gone. (78)

This perspective resists the time period's ideals which maintained that women's fulfillment and psychological adjustment should come from being "loving and devoted wives and mothers, rather than individuals in their own right" (Grant 209).

However, Gertie is not inspired to resist cultural norms. She is not a confident feminist heroine determined to challenge existing assumptions about gender. Rather, she is motivated by economic autonomy and dedicated to a culture and economic structure that, by virtue of economic necessity, often positioned women as the primary breadwinners in their families. Feminist historians have noted the ways in which the Great Depression and World War II opened up the possibility for radical changes regarding gender roles in the public and private spheres but, for a variety of reasons, these radical changes were never institutionalized. Despite their increased participation in the workforce, impediments to women's full economic autonomy remained in place (May 47-48). According to Elaine Tyler May, "The limited nature of most women's jobs legitimated employment for married women, while reinforcing women's subordinate position in the occupational hierarchy" (67). Further, in the years following the war popular depictions of women tended to focus on their roles as wives and mothers, rather than as workers (53). In the context of the novel, Gertie's personal insecurities made asserting such radical changes difficult, if not impossible (although these are exacerbated by the changes she faced in the urban context). As Kathleen Walsh maintains, Gertie is not compelled by structural inequalities that are

simply out of her control. Rather, she consistently "acquiesces in her uprooting," conceding to both her husband's desire and mother's insistence that she leave Kentucky and move to Detroit where Clovis has begun factory work (187). Indeed, it is Gertie's mother who invokes the model of the nuclear family (over the kinship relationships that Gertie values so highly) in order to push Gertie away from purchasing the Tipton place and join Clovis in Detroit instead (135).

The move to Detroit represents the shift from a prewar economy and culture and indicates the subsequent changes brought on by the war. In what follows, I discuss this section's treatment of domesticity, economics, and education and socialization. I argue that as Gertie and her family attempt to navigate the urban landscape, Arnow reveals the contradictions and conflicts between the expectations of democracy and American citizenship and the needs of institutions such as industry and education. The ability of Gertie to realize contemporary democratic values and create a "cultural workshop" in her home that is consistent with modernization does not preclude her resistance to the industrial consumer culture of Detroit. In Kentucky, Gertie is able to balance her commitments to both education and individualism with her commitments to kinship model of community and domestic self-sufficiency. Indeed, in Detroit, Gertie (and her son, Reuben) comes to represent a resistance to modernization as she finds it difficult to adjust to her new surroundings. The tension between rural values and urban values persists within the family and plays out in the domestic space. While Gertie and Reuben defy the demands of urbanization, Clovis, Enoch, and Clytie find the transition to be much easier. Given the time period's emphasis on psychology and the socialization of

children, I would suggest that Enoch and Clytie's transition is a testament to Gertie's ability to foster values open to modernization (even if she is resistant to them herself) and produce citizens eager and able to embrace urban values. This example of diversity resists the stereotypes of an isolated, backward Appalachian culture that persisted in academic studies.

The changes that Gertie's family experiences in their transition from Kentucky to Detroit reflect those described by Talcott Parsons in his essay, "The American Family: Its Relations to Personality and to the Social Structure." Gertie's family goes through the process of differentiation, which involves a "further step in the reduction of the importance in our society of kinship units other than the nuclear family…[and also] the transfer of a variety of functions from the nuclear family to other structures of the society" (9). The move removes Gertie from her parents (and also from the kinship-based community). Further, within the urban setting, a strict gender-based division characterizes the relationship between the private domestic sphere and the public sphere. It is expected that Gertie will take charge of the former, providing comfort and protection for Clovis while he toils in the harsh world of the factory and deals with union politics.

Upon arriving in Detroit, Gertie must contend with two problems of marginalization: of being labeled "other" by urban residents and of her own inability to conform. First, she confronts a pervasive prejudice against rural families: "She turned and a woman's eyes under a red scarf glared at her, and a wide red mouth said, "Hillbilly," spitting the words as if they shaped a vile thing to be spewed out quickly" (151). Stereotypes of rural Appalachians persisted within American

culture and were characterized by assumptions of backwardness and cultural isolation—that these individuals and their families were somehow not American. Second, she is rendered confused and helpless by the process of obtaining her luggage from the baggage compartment, which embarrasses her children: "She had pinned the ticket stubs and baggage checks in one pocket along with what had seemed money enough to spare for the journey, but now in her confusion all were mixed in the mental map of her pocket. Clytie watched her fumblings with shamed embarrassment" (156). This urban experience introduces a newly helpless Gertie and foreshadows the tensions between her inability to conform and her children's expectations of urban life.

In this section of *The Dollmaker*, Gertie also confronts differences between the subsistence economy to which she is accustomed in rural Kentucky and the more consumption-based economy of urban Detroit. When she hands money to her children to procure breakfast in the Detroit bus station, she contemplates the difference: "She looked an instant at the money before handing it to Clytie. 'Back home that id keep us in oats an sugar fer sweetenen more'n a month'" (152). Gertie continuously comments on the differences between Detroit and Kentucky with respect to consumption. Although she is not overtly political, her critical perspective links Gertie to a tradition of political consumption. The shift from careful and deliberate spending to mass consumption that Arnow depicts mirrors a larger social trend that linked consumption of mass-produced goods to citizenship in the ever-evolving narrative of the American dream during the cold war (May 13, Cohen 124).

The family has high expectations for Detroit: increased income, a larger home, and a better school. In addition to these, the move signals a shift in social class from that of a stable rural class to an upwardly mobile urban class. Gertie uses these expectations and changes to comfort herself and ameliorate the guilt that she feels for leaving Kentucky and not purchasing the Tipton farm. When the family discovers that their new accommodations fall far from their expectations, crushing disappointment replaces their excitement and enthusiasm.

Similar to *The Street*, domestic spaces in this section of the novel are confining, lack privacy, and fall well below what Gertie considers ideal. When they first see their new kitchen she and the children despair at the lack of space and together they struggle to make sense of the workings of their new home (165). Indeed, the atmosphere of the kitchen is likened to that of the train and begins to make Gertie feel ill: "Her uneasy wanderings on Clovis were smothered out by an ever growing awareness of the pale walls, the overcrowded little rooms, and the air that with the unventilated gas stove going grew even worse than that on the train, something thick and dirty that burned her nose and gave her eyes a sleepy feeling" (178). Her confusion is further compounded by the strangeness of the equipment in the kitchen:

> The cookstove itself turned out to be a contrary little thing: she was always turning the wrong knob, and twice she burned her fingers on pit handles that had got across the next flame. Worse, she was always hurrying up to it, thinking she had let the fire go out. She would stoop, reaching for wood, each time remembering only when, instead of the woodbox back home, she saw

> the gray cement of the floor. She was continually bumping into the children, especially Cassie. (179)

Gertie's inability to conform and adjust to her new domestic space is a source of tension in the novel and illustrates the degree to which the expectations and the ideals of the nuclear family were not easily realized, particularly in poor and working class urban communities. However, unlike *The Street*, *The Dollmaker* does not challenge the economic structures or social narratives that produce and reinforce these inequalities. As such, it functions less as a novel of protest and more as a historical inquiry into the changes wrought by industrialization and consumption and their impact on American democratic values and identity. Although the institutions shown in the novel (such as industry and public education) are depicted poorly, ultimately the onus is on the individual to navigate and confront these challenges.

The shift to the nuclear family model, in which male occupational earnings generated the primary source of income in the public sphere, established and reinforced females as the primary custodians of the domestic space. Although Gertie had previously performed all domestic functions in their Kentucky home, the urban domestic space requires a tremendous adjustment, a transition that is captured as she reflects on the difference between her old life and her new one:

> Worse than any noise, even the quivering of the house after a train had passed, were the spaces of silence when all sounds were shut away by the double windows and the cardboard walls, and she heard the ticking of the clock, louder it seemed than any clock could ever be. She had never lived

> with a clock since leaving her mother's house, and even there the cuckoo clock had seemed more ornament than a god measuring time; for in her mother's house, as in her own, time had been shaped by the needs of the land and the animals swinging through the seasons. She would sit, the knife forgotten in her hands, and listen to the seconds ticking by, and the clock would become the voice of the thing that had jerked Henley from the land, put Clovis in Detroit, and *now pushed her through the days where all her work, her meals, and her sleep were bossed by the ticking voice*. [emphasis added] (205)

The paragraph continues the novel's depiction of the way in which objects are imbued with symbolism. The clock comes to symbols the shift to a mechanized existence as well as a loss of autonomy felt by Gertie. The passage suggests that life in Kentucky had ill-prepared Gertie for urban existence, which seems to support the notion that Appalachian culture and values were incompatible with modernization. However, the scholarship that perpetuates those ideas (much like Gertie herself) are committed to a strict division between rural and urban, traditional and modern, whereas Arnow tries to break down that dichotomy by illustrating the ways in which members of Gertie's own family are receptive to the changes brought by the move to Detroit.

The strict, gendered division between the public and the private that Gertie and her family assume in Detroit produces tensions within the domestic sphere as Gertie is unable to replicate her domestic talents in her new surroundings. Her first meal in the new kitchen is terrible and disappoints Clovis who came home "starved

fer some a [her] good cooken" (181). Clovis continuously expresses a high degree of emotional investment in the strict public and private division, which demonstrates the strength of the dominant domestic ideals and affirms his commitment to modern, urban life.

The family, having just moved from a tight, interdependent community, must also adapt to the initial isolation of their new surroundings and learn to interact with their new community. This isolation is felt acutely by Reuben when he attempts to procure kindling for the fire and is run off angrily by a neighbor attempting to sleep (169). This initial confrontation invokes Reuben's bitterness about the move and foreshadows his own inability to conform to the expectations of urban life. However, soon after their arrival, their neighbor, Sophronie, dressed in a flimsy nightgown, arrives with food and offers to help with the fire. Gertie is flummoxed by the woman's attire and the encounter establishes the discomfort Gertie feels with the new level of intimacy among her neighbors (178-179). As with *The Street*, Gertie and her family must navigate the lack of privacy, the noise, and a veritable "exchange" of intrusions into each other's lives as they listen in on arguments and attempt to manage their own noise out of respect for the living and working schedules that their neighbors, mostly factory workers, are required to keep. Within these living conditions, the comforts and promises of the insular nuclear family remain unattainable.

Arnow's treatment of the nuclear family illustrates how survival in the harsh urban environment is dependent upon the community and how community ties are forged despite the differences among its members. In her article, "The Multi-Ethnic

Community of Women in Harriett Arnow's *The Dollmaker*," Charlotte Goodman explains how, despite the pervasive prejudices within the community, the woman of "Merry Hill" are able to support each other (49-54). Indeed, it is often the needs of domesticity that mediate the tensions of ethnic and geographical prejudice. In their analyses of rural and urban cultures, scholars often assumed that kinship networks "defined a traditionalistic and personalistic way of life for rural Appalachians that seemed to contradict the principles of individualism, achievement motivation, and universalism that were said to underlay a modern, urban-industrial American economy (Lewis and Billings 4). Arnow demonstrates how the "multi-ethnic community of women" replaced kinship networks in the urban setting and, rather than hinder individual progress, it was vital to the survival of urban families. The strict dichotomy between modern, urban culture and antiquated, rural culture breaks down and the novel illustrates that while the rural population produces individuals who are inclined toward modernization, within poor and working class communities, modernization is not sustainable without community networks.

As I discussed in my chapter on *The Street,* the supportive role of the community blurs the boundaries between the public and the private as the community takes on certain domestic roles (much to Lutie's dismay). Arnow depicts a similar dynamic in which the neighborhood complements the domestic sphere as a site of education and socialization into specific norms. Through their interactions with the community, Gertie learns to navigate the consumer culture and her children learn to "adapt." Two of her children, Clytie and Enoch, find the process of adjustment easier than Gertie and the other children, Reuben and Cassie.

Among those things that make adjustment a struggle is the pervasive prejudice against rural families. Characterizing this prejudice is the belief that rural families and individuals do not support American democratic values. While the most virulent displays of these prejudices are ignored, they nevertheless shape the expectations of Gertie's family and indicate social mores to which they are expected to conform.

Within the novel, certain families are especially prominent and it is through the depictions of these families that Arnow engages the politics of American citizenship as it pertains to domesticity and economics. The first is the Daly family, whose adults and children are outspoken anti-Semitic, anti-communist Catholics who continuously berate Gertie and her family for their "hillbilly" ways. The core of their rants reflect very narrow, prejudicial views on what constitutes American identity:

> Mrs. Daly flourished the broom. "I mean git. I'll call a cops; da red squad. Youse can't talk about u gover'ment thataway in front a Kathy Daly, see? I'm a good patriotic Christian American. See? No nigger-loven, Jew-loven, communist's gonna stand on mu steps and teel me wot I gotta do. Don't think I don't know th likes a youse, communists, not saluten du flag, an—." (219)

The Dalys represent, in exaggerated form, the pervasive prejudice against rural families, particularly those migrating from Appalachia during the war to work in factories. They rebuke the Nevels' dialect to assert their superiority as "real" Americans. According to Mr. Daly, "In Detroit youse gotta learn to speak English, yu big nigger-loven communist hillbilly. Yu gotta behave. I, Joseph Daly, will see out yu

do. I'm a dacent, respectable, religions good *American* [emphasis added]. See?" (312) Mr. Daly also accuses the Appalachian and other rural families of taking all the jobs away from Detroit citizens until it is pointed out that people like the Dalys, "never did see them ads an signs an letters beggen all the people back home to come up here an *save democracy* [emphasis added] fer you all" (509). One of the most persistent and pervasive stereotypes implicating Appalachian culture is that its isolation from the rest of America portrays its residents as somehow un-American. From the beginning of the 19th century, depictions in literature and analyses in sociological scholarship focused on Appalachia's apparent geographical and cultural isolation (Moore 86, Lewis and Billings 16). Outside of the rural context, these characterizations, perpetuated by popular culture and validated by scientific analyses institutionalized the notion of Appalachia and its residents as "other" to the urban (more modern and therefore, more American) context. Arnow's focus on this, however, is not intended as a criticism of a systemic exclusion of rural families from American culture and citizenship (as was the case for African Americans in *The Street*). Rather, she illustrates a more diverse and complex perspective on the part of Appalachian residents.

The Dalys represent the most extreme forms of anti-rural prejudice that, although pervasive in Detroit, are not uniformly shared by the other members of the community, many of whom have migrated to Detroit specifically for factory work. Although the Dalys are regarded as extremists in their neighborhood, Mr. Daly's tirade does express some shared prejudices. However, where the beliefs are shared, other neighbors are far more subtle and polite in their belief that rural folk are

outsiders within the urban context. In order to reconcile the tensions that prejudice produces, the neighborhood continuously reinforces its belief in adjustment—that in order to maximize comfort, individuals should conform to agreed upon social mores. Eventually, these beliefs penetrate Gertie's domestic space and Gertie's two best-adjusted children, Clytie and Enoch, attempt to teach Gertie how to adapt better to her surroundings. A key issue in this regard is language, and Gertie struggles to remember to refer to her children as "kids" rather than "youngens," to "remember" rather than "recollect," and so forth. In this respect, Arnow illustrates a shift, or reversal, within the model of the democratic family whereby the children take on the task of socializing their mother.

The social mores to which individuals are supposed to adhere are primarily domestic in nature. Arnow articulates the dominant expectations of motherhood and domesticity through another prominent family, the Andersons. Homer Anderson is a graduate student who appears to be living in factory housing with his family while he completes his degree. In some ways, his wife, Mrs. Anderson, is just as outspoken and assertive as the Dalys. Mrs. Anderson continuously asserts herself as an expert on childrearing, drawing on the expertise of her husband and other authorities to bolster her proclamations. For example, she cautions against breastfeeding past six months since "it's very detrimental to a child's emotional and social development," advocates letting babies cry to avoid "spoiling" them, and criticizes mothers who rock or sing their children to sleep claiming that it is "bad, very bad" (233, 255, 301). Mrs. Anderson champions the period's belief in "expert childrearing" that American women were expected to embrace (in order to raise

citizens capable of championing American values). For the most part, her assertions are ridiculed if not simply ignored by the community, which indicates a subtle rejection of this expertise. Indeed, even Mrs. Daly (who purports to know all there is about championing democracy in the face of the communist threat) dismisses her, declaring that she cannot possibly know anything with all her book learning (284).

It is revealed that Mr. Anderson is a sociology student studying "The Patterns of Racial and Religious Prejudice and Persecution in Industrial Detroit" (283). Indeed, the combined interest in racial prejudice and "expertise" in child development position the Andersons as representative of the antiracist sociology and psychology during this time period. Recall that during this period, proponents of antiracism increasingly used sociological and psychological theories to understand racial prejudice and combat its effects. Ruth Feldstein's analysis of liberalism in the postwar era found that psychological theories of racism focused on mothers and their male children. Experts advocated childrearing approaches that would produce ideal white citizens that would not succumb to racist beliefs and black citizens who would resist the most detrimental effects of racial prejudice. Gertie rebukes Mr. Anderson's research, informing Mrs. Anderson that acting as evidence in sociological research "ain't so interesten" (283). The community's treatment of the Andersons casts them in a critical light. However, this does not indicate an explicit rejection of antiracist liberalism. Rather, it illustrates a divide between experts and their theories of citizenship and democracy and the everyday lives of poor, working families.

Nevertheless, the dominant ideology expressed by the Andersons reflects that of "adjustment" and this is supported (though through less formal admonitions) throughout the community. The "adjustment" era of education took place took place between the years 1920-1954. A key goal of the era was "to provide a school experience that would enhance the youngster's development: psychological, social, physical, moral, civic, aesthetic, and even intellectual" (Graham 55). Proponents of the model assumed that if "children's psychological and social development prospered, then inevitably their intellectual development would as well" (56). They believed children taught in environments that emphasized "healthy social and psychological adjustment…would assure a democratic and progressive society" (60). This "child-centered" educational ethos gained momentum in the 1940s and 1950s with the acceptance and promotion of the child-centered, democratic family. The models and the ideals of the adjustment era emphasized individualized instruction. However, without adequate resources, schools were unable to achieve the broad reaching goals of this educational model. Indeed, in poor communities, workbooks that were intended to provide students with the tools necessary to work and progress at their own, individual pace became a way of keeping students busy "and neither completion nor mastery of the material was assured" (68-69).

One of Gertie's most significant encounters with the larger expectations of the community occurs when she meets her children's schoolteacher and principle. Miss Vashinski introduces herself as the children's "away-from-home mother," which is consistent with the time period's emphasis on the connection between domesticity, motherhood, and education. Her interaction with the principal, Mr.

Skyros, reveals the school's primary goal with respect to education. Of Gertie's children, he says, "They will…adjust. This school has many children from many places, but in the end they all—most—adjust, and so will yours….learn to get along, like it—*be like the others—learn to want to be like the others*." [emphasis added] Gertie is unsure of this concept and indicates that she would prefer her children be happy above all else. The principal's attitude is ambivalent, as if he does not fully accept the premise, but goes on to assure her that, not only will her children adjust but also that they will do so "better than their mother" (202).

It is the failure of the adjustment ideal that Arnow depicts. Due to overcrowding and a lack of resources, the school is unable to meet the needs of students adequately. In this context, adjustment and social development, rather than meeting the needs of individual students and fostering individualism, becomes a code for and a mechanism by which to inspire conformity. Teachers, members of the community, and students exert pressure to act "normal." Clovis, Clytie, and Enoch, having demonstrated the ability to adjust, pressure Gertie to socialize her other children, Rueben and Cassie, so that they can conform to the expectations of the larger community. Within the context of a child-centered culture that requires the domestic sphere to function as a cultural workshop where mainstream American values are acquired, Clytie and Enoch are evidence both of Gertie's success and of the diversity of perspective that can be fostered within Appalachian culture.

Regardless of Gertie's commitment to individualism and her success in raising two children who thrive in the urban context, Gertie is rebuked for her

failure to conform as well as that of her other children. Her oldest son, Reuben, has the most trouble in school. When Gertie meets with his teacher, Mrs. Whittle, she learns that "he has not adjusted. His writing is terrible—he's messy; quite good in math but his spelling is terrible. [She is] giving him a *U* in conduct because he just won't get along with other children" (334). Gertie defends some of her son's actions and attempts to help her understand their background. According to Mrs. Whittle, their "*psychology* and [their] story are…interesting and revealing" but she sees no point in discussing the issue since adjustment "is the most important thing, to learn to live with others, to get along, to adapt one's self to one's surroundings." Further, she insists that adjustment is particularly important for children like Gertie's, who are outsiders, implying that the point of adjustment is not to adapt to each other's differences but rather for others to learn to conform to a set of established social mores (334-335).

Gertie incites the teacher's anger when, by following the logic of adjustment as it is presented to her, she argues, "You mean that when they're through here, they could—if they went to Germany—start gitten along with Hitler, er if they went to—Russia, they'd git along there, they'd act like th Russians an be"—Mrs. Daly's word was slow in coming—"communists—an if they went to Rome they'd start worshipen th pope?" Gertie insists on defending her son's individual disposition claiming that "he cain't hep th way he's made. It's a lot more trouble to roll out steel –an make it what you want—than it is biscuit dough" (335-336). Although Gertie presents a logical critique of the rationale of adjustment, the news of the confrontation is not well received by her family. Clovis questions Gertie's role as a mother as well as her

ability to cooperate with others. Reuben's problems are connected, not to an inadequate school system or to the fact that his personality was not suited to urban living, but primarily to Gertie's failure as a mother:

> Clovis wanted to know why she had been such a fool as to go to the school and raise a racket with a teacher. Didn't she know that Detroit had the finest schools of almost any city in the country? His voice rose, drove in the knife, and turned it round and round. "You know you never was no good at talken. You allus look like you wanta fight. That's part a his trouble. He's big an tough-looken, an you've set him agin Detroit so he wouldn't like it now if you put him in a mansion in Grosse Pointe. You've got to git into yer head that it's you that's as much wrong with Reuben as anything."

Further, the exchange reveals the effects that the strict division of public and private roles is having on Gertie:

> Clovis said, "Wait a minute," as if she were a mule to be ordered around. Slowly her hand dropped from the doorknob, and she turned back to Clovis. It wasn't the way it had used to be back home when she had done her share, maybe more than her share of feeding and fending for the family. Then, with egg money, chicken money, a calf sold here, a pig sold there, she'd bought almost every bite of food they didn't raise. Here everything, even to the kindling, came from Clovis. She understood, in one second of time so many things—the trapped look in Mrs. Anderson's eyes, why Max's radio played so loudly sometimes when she had an evening off and Victor was home. (339-340)

This quote illustrates what contemporary feminist historians have observed about the contrast between Great Depression/pre-war economics and culture and the culture that followed the war. As she is relegated to the domestic sphere and stripped of her ability to contribute financially, she also loses her standing in the gendered household hierarchy.

Gertie's failure as a mother is felt acutely when, rather than attempt to conform, Reuben runs away back to Kentucky. Although Gertie is pleased that Reuben is safe and someplace where adjustment and conformity are no longer a problem for him, she remains haunted by her inability to be the kind of mother that Reuben needed and that she is the reason for his inability to fit in and live comfortably with others: "Still, she knew that most of the trouble with Reuben was herself—her never kept promises, her slowness to hide her hatred of Detroit….Her love had been burden, laying on him false hope that, dead, weighed down still more the burden of his misery" (370). Gertie's guilt is also compounded by the fact that, try as she might not to think of it, his absence made life in their home somewhat easier, the other children accept it easily, and there is a bit more room in their cramped quarters as well as money saved on food.

Following Reuben's departure, the novel focuses on Cassie, who is also unable to adapt to the community's expectations of appropriate behavior. Gertie is pressured by her family to help Cassie be normal, to stop "the alley jeers of, 'Cuckoo, cuckoo'" that were used to poke fun at her (372). Gertie defers to Mrs. Anderson's authority and Mr. Anderson's expertise to justify her decision: "You'll have to help her grow out of her dream world….They are, Homer has learned, supposed to give

all that up when they are three or four years old. The other children think them queer, and it gets harder and harder for them to adjust" (379). In order to help her child adjust, Gertie decides she must "kill" Cassie's imaginary friend, the witch child, Callie Lou. Although it pains her to do so and it breaks Cassie's heart, she insists that Cassie must play with the other children and not with her beloved friend.

Of particular note is the conflict within Gertie over Callie Lou and how she symbolizes Gertie's deeply held beliefs on the integrity of the individual: "She was breathing hard, choked up inside, fighting down a great hunger to seize and hug and kiss the child and cry; 'Keep her, Cassie. Keep Callie Lou. *A body's got to have somethen all their own*'" [emphasis added] (380). Indeed, Gertie's commitment to the individual has social support; theoretically both the expectations of the democratic family and the adjustment model of education emphasize the individual. However, these ideals are rendered unattainable given the community's economic and material circumstances. Gertie quells her discomfort and capitulates to the power of adjustment, to her fear of losing Cassie the way she did Reuben.

Gertie feels vindicated when she observes Cassie getting along better with the other children. She is also comforted when she learns that, among many children in the community, "Callie Lou" was not something that had painted Cassie as an outcast, but was a welcome addition to their games (399-401). Gertie is eager for Cassie to enjoy playing with her friend again, but when she attempts to find her, she learns that, much like Reuben, Cassie would not conform easily. The culmination of these events—the elimination and attempted recovery of Callie Lou—ends in tragedy. A train hits Cassie as she was secretly playing in a local train

yard so that she would not have to surrender her friend (405). The death of Cassie, the child whose imaginative spirit put her closest to Gertie's heart, is the most difficult event to bear. Arnow depicts the ideals of motherhood and domesticity within the urban context as fraught with contradictions and unattainable for poor and working class individuals. However, Cassie's death is not simply linked to pressure to conform to dominant ideals but to Gertie's inability to assert herself. In this context, Gertie once again acquiesces and tragedy ensues. As a work of criticism then, Arnow not only illustrates the exclusion of the poor and working class from dominant ideals—but also how individuals fail as they navigate the conditions they encounter.

Following the problems of adjustment and conformity, Gertie's biggest concern in Detroit is how to adapt to the new economic structure and culture. From the moment that they arrive in Detroit, all aspects of a consumer-oriented economy and culture bombard Gertie and her family. Gertie continuously negotiates the pressures of this culture (whose values are shared by her husband and two of her children) with her own values. Two of her children, Clytie and Enoch, are far more comfortable in this new culture and assist Gertie with the transition. The domestic space becomes transformed and rather than educating and socializing her children in the domestic space—Gertie is being educated and socialized by her children.

Gertie struggles with trying to balance the onslaught of unnecessary commodities with savings. While walking her children to school she observes the young boy who offers her youngest daughter, Cassie, some chewing gum:

> Gertie realized that he didn't have high rubber boots like her own and most of the other children. His leather ones were old and cracked. Plainly they would not hold out water, and the laces were not stout rawhide but broken strings. Still, he had money for gun. Shoestrings didn't cost any more than a package of gum; maybe there wasn't money for both. She glanced at Cassie clutching the gum as if it had been the little hickory doll. It was of course better to spend money for shoestrings but—The "but" still troubled her when, after walking for what seemed like a long while by traffic-crowded streets, they stopped again for another crossing and she looked about her at the children. She saw here and there a child shivering in an old coat or ragged overalls. There were red mittenless hands and unbooted feet in low shoes that were not new. She gave a slow headshake of wonderment. There couldn't be any poor people, not real poor, in Detroit when they were making men come out of the back hills to work in Detroit's factories. This boy, now, there ought to be lots of money in his house, money from the army and the factory job too. Maybe it was like she'd heard her mother say when somebody pitied Meg; factory workers, coal miners, and such were a shiftless, spendthrift tribe. (193)

This incident introduces Gertie to the problems of a consumer-based culture that will trouble her throughout the remainder of the novel. She observes the effect that the gum has on her daughter and Arnow indicates how the sharing of commodities offers a way to establish familiarity and community. Gertie's criticism of a consumer-based culture characterized by frivolous and wasteful spending, however,

is at odds with dominant ideas circulating during this time period. According to Lizabeth Cohen, "the flourishing of mass consumption was first and foremost a route to recovery and sustained health of the economy, but it also provided a ready weapon in the struggles of the cold war era." Further, considerable effort was expended by private corporations and nonprofit foundations linking "mass consumption to the American way of life" and the preservation of democracy (124, 125).

Ultimately, Gertie discovers that the pressures to consume and to consume carelessly are pervasive. Further, Arnow depicts how the pressure to consume begins to work its way into Gertie's consciousness: "So much foolishness. Yougens didn't need grapes in December, *or did they*? Shoestrings or bubble gum….All were buying, crowding round the truck, and she felt *foolish and stingy hanging back with Amos pulling at her coat, 'Git grapes, Mom, please*" [emphasis added] (208). Gertie resists the pressure to buy things she considers frivolous for a long time by buying, or trying to buy only "the things she might have had this time of year at home—cabbage, onions, and a few apples" (214). This example represents Gertie's ongoing attempts to control spending and maintain some semblance of comfort and familiarity by maintaining a connection to her former life in Kentucky. Gertie's resistance to consumer culture is linked to her feelings toward her rural home but positions her as an outsider within the community and resistant to the expectations of modern consumerism.

The pressure to buy comes from both within her family and in the community. Further, the pressure to buy intersects with the new expectations of

domesticity. As the linen salesman reminds her, "Think a yu kids lady. Kids gotta have curtains, rugs, bedspreads" (237). By invoking the children's "needs" the salesman implicitly challenges Gertie's role as a mother and how she provides for her children—despite the fact that logically, there is little need for such decoration. Gertie must contend with the expectations that her home not only provide food and shelter, but also be aesthetically appealing:

> She was smoothing the top of the head when Clytie came, *begging* for curtains at least for the living room, reminding her, *"Pop was quarrelen t'other night sayen we was th onliest people in th alley 'thout curtains but Miz Anderson; an Georgie swings on hers*. [emphasis added]" Gertie drew a deep breath. 'But they're so skimpy an flimsy—an they'll make the place seem litter. An all that money. Git that five-dollar bill from th high shelf. He'll have to have a down payment.'" (237)

In this instance, Gertie remains a critical consumer but nevertheless acquiesces to her family's request.

Christmas invokes a litany of emotion within the family with respect to consumption. Again, Gertie is critical at the sheer waste of money, but also sensitive to the desires of her children and to the pressures exerted by the community:

> Gertie tried not to show the scorn she felt for such a foolish waste of money. A little stuff for Santa Claus maybe, but not so much. Under the wrappings she caught glimpses of a sled, shiny contraptions on wheels, and boxes of all sizes. She saw on one the words *Hockey Skates*, and remembered with a twinge of guilt that Enoch had wished for such skates. Amos would love a

> contraption on wheels. "I ain't bought a think," she said, *half defiantly, half apologetically* to Sophronie as she helped her stow the stuff in the scant space under the bed in her room. (238)

Christmas day reflects the ongoing conflicts within Gertie and within her family over issues of consumption. Gertie struggles to present herself as a content wife and mother despite her ambivalence and aversion to the symbols of wasteful spending around her:

> She tried to smile. All morning that had been the hardest part, the trying to smile in the heat and the steam of the oven baking the turkey Clovis had bought. But she had smiled on everything, even on the dried-out Christmas tree that had no smell except one that made her think of shoe polish, for Clytie had sprayed it with artificial snow. It held no memory of earth or wind or sky or sun; a tree grown in a field. Clovis had said, just for Christmas. Lifeless as it was, as the ugly paper wreath Clytie had bought. But she had to smile, for the big gifts were for her. (373)

The big gifts turn out to be home appliances, a refrigerator and a washing machine. Many of Gertie's neighbors are impressed, particularly Mrs. Daly:

> Her voice was *warm with genuine pleasure* [emphasis added] as she went on, "A refrigerator—such a big one and so fine—linoleum anu washing machine….As soon as she had put the wagon through the door, she must turn back and examine the great white icebox. It rose higher than her head and blocked most of the kitchen window, but her eyes were worshipful, pleased, Gertie thought, as if the thing had been her own" (277).

Mrs. Daly's reaction is significant. Given her ongoing anti-communist rhetoric, her approval is not motivated simply by happiness for another individual, but by recognition and assurance of Gertie and her family's commitment to American democracy. When another neighbor deigns to question the assumption that all *American* woman dream of having such appliances, she is reprimanded: "Now, Max," Mrs. Anderson said, still smiling a strange Whit-like smile, "you're *un-American*—or else you don't listen to the radio. Every woman dreams of a ten-cubic-foot Icy Heart in her kitchen" (285). These passages signal Arnow's engagement with the politics of American citizenship and their relationship to the consumption of mass-produced goods—particularly appliances, which symbolized upward mobility and achievement in the domestic space (Martineau 124-126).

The connections between consumption, democracy, and American citizenship were made clear by the end of the war:

> A higher and more equitable standard of living for all, derived from economic growth, was the best route to the fulfillment of the nation's longstanding commitment to equality and democracy. High consumption, a growing economy, robust employment, and social and political equity would go hand in hand. For the champions of a postwar order empowering purchaser consumers, personal and national fulfillment converged, making unbridled mass production and consumption not just not just an economic panacea, but a political one as well. The American cycle of "mass employment, mass production, mass advertising, mass distribution and mass ownership of the products of industry," the conservative *Saturday Evening Post* reminded its

> end-of-war readers, had made, and would continue to make, the United States "the last bulwark of [democratic] civilization." (Cohen 101-102)

These ideals were also linked, both explicitly and implicitly to domesticity and motherhood. The conflation of consumption, domesticity, and democracy that Arnow anticipates would be fully articulated in 1959 in what would come to be known as the "kitchen debate" between Vice President Richard Nixon and Soviet Premier Nikita Kruchev in Moscow at the opening of the American National Exhibit. Accordingly, Nixon proclaimed that "American superiority rested on the ideal of the suburban home, complete with modern appliances, and distinct gender roles for family members. He proclaimed that the "model" home, with a male breadwinner and a full-time female homemaker, adorned with a wide variety of consumer goods, represented the essence of American freedom" (May 11).

Ultimately, Christmas, which should have been the pinnacle of Clovis's achievement as a provider, disappoints the family and illustrates the divide between the consumption of appliances and the execution of domestic duties:

> She kept her silence, but lost the warm-eyed look when, during the dinner that had cost so much, Clovis upbraided her ignorance of turkey cookery. Hemmed as it had been in the too-small oven, the turkey had burned on the outside, scorching the breast meat, but they all came near gagging when Clovis cut into a thigh joint, and blood ran out. The real butter, that was to have been a Christmas treat with hot biscuit, had got so hard and cold from its stay in the Icy Heart that it refused to melt even on the hottest of biscuit, and butter and biscuit were chilled together. Clytie had the lettuce in the

> wrong place, and it was frozen. Reuben complained the milk was so cold it hurt his teeth. Clytie blamed it on Enoch, who'd turned down the cold controls; Enoch was angry; and Clovis turned sorrowful because the Icy Heart, like Cassie's new doll and the other things he'd bought, was unappreciated. (286).

Again, we see the failure of domesticity brought on by Gertie's inability to adapt and use her appliances properly and the effect that this has on Clovis. I maintain that Clovis's reaction is significant because it illustrates the degree to which individuals were invested in these domestic ideals. Clovis's sadness not only indicates his personal feelings toward his family's reaction to gifts, but also toward the family's inability to appreciate his attempts at upward mobility—of realizing middle class American ideals.

Money characterizes the primary tension between Gertie and Clovis within the novel and is more pronounced in Detroit than in Kentucky. Gertie remains committed to saving and Clovis to spending and accumulating the mass-produced goods that are available in Detroit. By the time Gertie and the children have arrived in Detroit, Clovis has purchased new dishes, a radio, new clothing, and a car. The children are pleased and Gertie is as well, until she learns that he is using credit. When Gertie inquires about the amount of debt, Clovis attempts to reassure her that he's making plenty of money. When Gertie asks if it would be possible to live without a car, Clovis becomes angry: "He pushed his plate away. 'Gert, we ain't hardly seen each other 'fore you start quarrelen about money an th place I got fer ye. What was you expecten—a castle in Grosse Pointe where them rich dagoes lives? I

was lucky, mightly lucky, tu git this'" (183). Clovis interprets her concern as criticism of him as a provider. Meanwhile, the stress of being in debt triggers feelings of confinement that intersects with her domestic space: "Her empty hands found the dishrag. Somehow she washed the dishes. Hemmed in, shut down, by all this—and debts" (183). Clovis's investment in this consumer culture and the acquisition of high amounts of debt were not only linked to his desire to achieve and demonstrate his status as provider, they were also linked to American democratic values and full acceptance into American citizenship—in so far as citizenship was linked to consumption. According to Cohen, "Without a doubt, credit became an admission ticket that granted purchasers as citizens full entry into postwar mass consumer prosperity" (124). On the other hand, the compulsion to save and acquire commodities at a slower place was linked to lower class social status and indicated a resistance to and alienation from middle class aspirations—even when these aspirations were economically logical and would provide financial stability (Martineau 129).

Since Clovis earns the money, he holds Gertie accountable for how she spends it and demands that Gertie aspire to certain domestic standards (standards shaped in part by contemporary expectations and also by the standards she held in Kentucky). When Clovis confronts Gertie regarding the money he has allocated to her for groceries and the decline in the quality of the meals that she has prepared, an intense argument breaks out in which the two conflicting approaches to work and economics are made clear:

> "I'm tired a allus jist gotten by," she burst out, "an never haven nothen ahead." An pretty soon we'll be goen back home an…"
>
> "What have we got to go back to? How much've you saved out a my wages?"
>
> "What's the use a liven like this if a body cain't save something?"
>
> "*Save*." He was angry now. "That's all I've heard since we've been married. Cain't you git it into yer head that millions an millions a people that make a heap more money than I'll ever make don't save? They buy everything on time. They ain't allus a starven their youngens." (267)

When Clovis finds out that Gertie has saved about fifty dollars from his wages, he becomes further incensed:

> "You mean, Gertie, you're a given us all grub like this an a letten this house go like a pigpen…" He looked about the kitchen, at the uncurtained shelves, the bare floor, the few battered saucepans on a shelf by the stove. "Look, Gert," he cried, his voice a mingling of sorrow and anger, "all our life together I've wanted to make more money so's we could live better, so's you an th kids could have it kinda nice. I bet now I'm a maken more money than any man back home. An that cookware—look at it. If I recollect right, that's th same old beat-up aluminum pan yer mom give us when we married to make out with till we could do better." In one swift stride he was across the kitchen and grabbed the pan, and was flinging it through the door, almost hitting Enoch as he came up the walk. (268)

These passages exemplify conflicting approaches to work and economics, Clovis's high emotional investment into the expectations of urban living, and the way in which motherhood and domesticity become a site of conflict and tension.

Ultimately, Arnow illustrates how the model of the single occupational wage earner for poor and working class individuals (in an atmosphere that emphasizes excessive consumption) is not sustainable. Eventually, Gertie and the children must find ways to earn money so that they can contribute to the maintenance of the household. Throughout the novel, many neighbors and community members compliment Gertie on her woodwork and several ask her to carve religious figurines and dolls. Gertie enjoys this at first as it enables her to do her "whittling foolishness" that she loves and enables her to earn and save some money on the side. However, when Clovis and her family learn of her work, it is decided (primarily by Clovis) that she needs to be more efficient so that she can make as much money as possible. Clovis, with the help of Clytie and Enoch, develops an assembly line model to "mass produce" wooden dolls to sell throughout the neighborhood. Although Gertie concedes to this process, she resists as well:

> She strode to the block of wood, knife open in her hand. The radio was talking by it, something about the strike vote coming up at the Flint plants in three more days. She retreated to her bedroom. She ought to work on the dolls, but she couldn't, not tonight, she couldn't bear the eternal sameness of the ugly things. They needed the money, but she'd wash, she'd iron, she'd do anything. (524)

Gertie and the children's participation in the production and sale of commodities illustrates the degree to which the public world of work and the private domestic sphere cannot and do not remain sharply divided. With respect to Clovis'ss participation in occupational wage-based work, Arnow continues to blur line between the public and the private. Previously, I illustrated how Clovis's status as the primary provider of income altered the dynamic of their relationship, relegating Gertie to the status of "a mule to be ordered around." However, in keeping with the educational aspects of the home, Arnow illustrates how the domestic space becomes the space in which Gertie is educated on the particulars of occupational wage work and the politics of the factory and the union. Further, Clovis's experience in the factory and in the union represents a cultural shift toward belongingness. In his book, *The Organization Man*, William H. Whyte examines a shift in American work culture that is characterized by the breakdown of individualism, a loss of autonomy, and a commitment to the promises of the organization to provide economic security. These institutional changes were accompanied by "a belief in "belongingness" as the ultimate need of the individual" (7). Arnow depicts how Gertie must grapple, not only with her children's adjustment within education, but also with Clovis's commitment to the concept of belongingness within the factory and the union.

In Kentucky, Clovis made far less money than in he does in Detroit. As a handyman, however, he owned his own truck and tools and had considerably more autonomy than in Detroit. Clovis's description to the family of how his paycheck works in Detroit illustrates this lack of autonomy:

> "Do you know what my pay check-ull be this week?" he went on, laying down his knife and fork and twisting about in his chair to look at her, "Why, better'n a hundred dollars." She heard the admiring gasp of Reuben, hurt and sullen as he still was form his attempts to borrow kindling. Big as he was, he'd worked many a day for seventy-five cents. Clytie, her voice all jerky with surprise and delight, was exclaiming, "Oh Pop—why we're rich. That's way more'n a schoolteacher makes back home in a month."
>
> "I don't make it ever week," Clovis explained, "an recollect that's afore hospitalization, an union dues, an OAB, an taxes." (182)

Unlike Gertie, for whom securing a better life for her family depended on economic autonomy, Clovis defines success by obtaining higher wages and purchasing commodities with credit. Clovis is fully committed to the occupational model of work and to the ensuing changes to the division of labor within the family. When Gertie expresses an interest in getting a factory job of her own, Clovis refuses to consider it an option:

> "Now Gert," Clovis said, soothing now, for more than one she had hinted at the possibilities of her getting a factory job, though the mention of it always angered Clovis. The anger always, like now, gave way to calm reasoning. He reminded her that she was too big for the factory machinery, set up for slim little women like Sophronie, and also that she was so given to wool gathering she might get a hand or her head smashed the first day. (249)

However, as illustrated above, the division of labor in the household dramatically alters Clovis's treatment of Gertie, which is evident in their exchanges over

motherhood and domesticity. He criticizes her inability to facilitate Reuben and Cassie's adjustment as well as her inability to purchase groceries and prepare adequate meals like she once did in Kentucky.

Nevertheless, despite her commitment to returning to Kentucky and buying a farm, Gertie reconsiders her previously held beliefs with respect to work. In Kentucky, both she and Clovis were able to hold a highly individualized work ethic and toil accordingly. When Clovis entertains some of his fellow union members at home, Gertie's feelings about the union are made clear as are her feelings about the relationship between the autonomy she seeks and the cultures of consumption and conformity in Detroit:

> Gertie wished Clovis would speak. He hated the unions as much as she. He'd grumbled more times than one about the dues he had to pay to a union he had never wanted to join. A man oughtn't to have to join anything except of his own free will. Free will, free will: only your own place on your own land brought free will. (319)

Clovis's unwillingness to speak against his fellow union members also illustrates the degree to which he is willing to adjust and conform, to get alone with others. However, her attempts to understand and question union practices are rebuked by Clovis:

> "But—Clovis." She didn't want to make him mad again, but still she had to know. "When them others walked off, couldn't you ha stayed? You need th money, an th war needs whatever it is that you all are maken an…" She

> stopped in the face of his angry, jeering glance. "You want me to come home with a busted nose? When them others walk—you gotta walk." (248)

Eventually, however, Gertie begins to question her assumptions about work as she observes the dehumanizing and dangerous conditions under which Clovis and his colleagues are employed:

> She shut the door and stood trying not to think of Meg's letters from Harlan years ago when the big battle for the union was on. Meg had written of fights, killings, bombings, and what seemed worse—hungry children, the men out of work so long. Her mother had gone around sniffling, declaring that if a man didn't want to work and went on strike and left his children to starve he ought to be shot. She had agreed with her mother then, and wondered at Meg, who had seemed to take the idleness of her man for granted. But now? Suppose a man didn't want to strike after the vote was taken. Could he work? Or suppose the men in the mines hadn't struck, and one man alone stood up and said, "I won't work because the pay's too low, the timbering's bad, and too many men have already died from bad air and you won't fix the fans…." To that one man or the dozen men or the hundred the company could have said, "You're fired." Then what? (514)

However, Arnow also depicts the seedier side of union politics and the violent power struggles between factory management and the union. Through other members of the community, Gertie learns of individual experiences within the factory and the union. Eventually, Clovis gets caught in a fistfight with union busters

and when he returns home, he and Gertie disagree over the role of the union in a free society:

> Gertie folded another newspaper, dirtied with blood from Clovis; she straightened, thinking of Meg's man in Harlan, the redheaded woman in the station, Mrs. Miller, and now this. "But a body's got a right to be free. They oughtn't to belong tu nothen, not even a union." There was a moment's silence; the words had come almost without her knowing, an over-flowed weariness with the dues, the numbers, the badges, the meetings, the walkouts, the strike talk, and now blood. (531)

Clovis is embarrassed by Gertie's assertions, but his colleagues agree. With anecdotal tales of men dying on assembly lines due to poor air circulation in the August heat, the conclusion is not that unions are good in the face of the factory's evil, but that industry won't consider the needs of the individual unless the masses force it to concede. Ultimately, Arnow illustrates in a very poignant fashion, the conflict between the Protestant work ethic that formerly defined the American dream and the harsh realities of organization life (Whyte 5).

The Dollmaker was published during a time of great social and economic upheaval. During this time, it was asserted that democratic American values of individualism and achievement would best be fostered in a nuclear family environment, which would reap the benefits of a new consumer and wage based economy while advancing the dictates of the democratic family. Academics, policy makers, and sociological and psychological experts assumed that the nuclear family unit would be able to produce democratic citizens and prepare them for a public

sphere in which the values of democracy (individualism and achievement) are further encouraged. Further, it was assumed that these ideals would be realized in a modern, industrialized urban setting and studies of Appalachia perpetuated the idea that rural cultural values were incompatible with modern urban ones.

The Dollmaker depicts the postwar shift to an industrialized, consumer based culture and explores the assumed divide between antiquated rural and modern urban values. In doing so it deconstructs the dichotomy between the rural and the modern and challenges the myth of the backward, culturally isolated Appalachian culture. Moreover, it exposes the contradictions that inhered in social institutions that were purported to advance American democratic values. Despite its indictment of the institutionalized academic and cultural assumptions about Appalachian values and its critical perspective on the failure of American institutions to advance democratic principles, *The Dollmaker* does not advance a single agenda of social change, but rather of individual accountability and integrity in navigating the contradictions that inhere in social institutions.

Chapter Three: "Let us look to our hearts for identity": From the Anxiety of Assimilation to Psychological Protest in Jo Sinclair's *The Changelings* (1955)

Jo Sinclair's second novel, *The Changelings* (1955), is a coming of age story depicting Judith Vincent, a young Jewish American woman who struggles to reconcile her identity as both an American and a Jew. Like *The Street*, *The Changelings* is an antiracist protest novel, but unlike *The Street*, which considers both psychological and structural explanations of racial inequality, Sinclair focuses on and protests against psychological conditions that produce racial prejudice. This is consistent with liberal attempts to understand and explain racism in the 1940s and 1950s. Gordon Allport, for example, argued, "The rough, tough, and nasty behavior in boyhood culture can be explained, at least in part, as an overreaction to mother domination….The consequence is a compensatory hostility—displaced upon a socially sanctioned scapegoat" (362). In *Motherhood in Black and White: Race and Sex in American Liberalism, 1930—1965,* Ruth Feldstein demonstrates how psychological experts concluded that "racism in white men…emerged as a result of feelings of sexual inadequacy, "impotence" (a word that abounds in this discourse), and unresolved Oedipal conflicts—all of which white mothers helped create" (49). This psychological indictment of mothers was also apparent in the popular and controversial antiracist writing of Lillian Smith. According to Feldstein, "maternal pathology" was essential to Smith's antiracist politics (52). *The Changelings* resists such explanations by challenging their inherent sexism.

Sinclair accepts the basic premise of antiracist liberalism and its focus on psychological explanations of racism and establishes this in two ways. First, her primary focus is the psychological landscape of the characters and the anxieties and

fears with which they struggle. Second, their anxieties are explicitly linked to the community's racism and how this conflicts with American democratic values. Sinclair also accepts the premise of the democratic family, which was a model of child rearing and family relationships that emerged in the late 1930s and early 1940s and focused on children and their role in strengthening democratic values. In this model, "the household serves as a 'cultural workshop' for the transmission of old traditions and for the creation of new social values" (Gesell and Ilg 9). It was expected that this family organization would reflect and reinforce individualist, democratic values (Michel 155).

Rather than blaming mothers, Sinclair reveals anxieties over masculinity and American citizenship and identity that were a source of racism within this Jewish community. Ruth Feldstein argues that "in overlapping intellectual circles in the 1940s and 1950s women stood in for anxieties about masculinity…[writers] projected men's personal, racial, and political problems onto women, and did so through their descriptions of motherhood" (64). Sinclair resists depictions of pathological motherhood in circulation during this time by revealing how experiences of religious persecution and immigration intersect with race and class to produce different experiences and perspectives on masculinity. Finally, she depicts socialization and education within the domestic space as an integral part of overcoming racism while decentralizing the role of motherhood and spreading the source of racial prejudice and responsibility of social change across family and community relationships.

Within this community of Jewish Americans, the anxieties that produce racial prejudice are linked to the conflicting pressures of assimilation and maintaining ethnic, cultural, and religious identity, as well as achieving upward mobility in pursuit of the American dream. These anxieties are rooted in gender expectations and also encompass issues of family, sexuality, and marriage. Indeed, this is not only a story of Jewish racism and its psychological origin, it is also a story of the community's "polarizing internal differences based on class, religion, gender, politics, generation, occupation, and a host of other less tangible factors" (Greenberg 3).

In his analysis of relationships between blacks and Jews in post-Holocaust America, Eric Sundquist positions *The Changelings* within the context of the "postwar displacement of Jews by blacks" in a Midwestern city (fashioned after Cleveland, Ohio) (44). Johnetta B. Cole and Elizabeth Oakes laud *The Changelings* for "[exposing] the fragments of racism, family arguments, ethnic identity, and religion in all their complexities" (339). However, Cole and Oakes then ask, "why, though many individual characters are presented complexly, all the black characters…are not?" (346) Although one of the goals of the novel is to demonstrate the ability of Jews to identify with the plight of African Americans, it does not do so by depicting the similarities between Jews and blacks through comparable black characters—but by exposing psychological anxieties that inhibit a central characteristic of black-Jewish relations, what Cyntha Ozick calls the "Jewish assumption…that wounds recognize wounds" (46). Ultimately, *The Changelings* is not a novel about black-

Jewish relations; but rather an examination of the anxieties that produce racial prejudice specifically within a Jewish community.

Sinclair's protagonist is a young woman, Judith Vincent (who goes primarily by Vincent), and while the text focuses primarily on her perspective and coming of age experiences, it also incorporates those of other characters. This is similar to *The Street*. Sinclair's use of multiple points of view strengthens the novel in both its protest and humanitarian goals, inspiring, not only sympathy with its characters, but sympathy that is politically motivated and carries an imperative to social change (Eby 34). However, even when the point of view shifts, Sinclair remains committed to the perspectives of children rather than parents. This focus on children is consistent with the efforts to foster democratic individualism within child rearing practices during the 1940s and 1950s and with the time period's child-centered focus in general. In the title, "Changelings" refers to several characters though which Sinclair illustrates the novel's antiracist critique. Changelings, according to Sinclair, are children who do not belong to their parents; they are spirits who are placed in families who actively resist the values and ideals that their parents attempt to instill and, instead, belong to the world—living and loving freely (135-136). Specifically, it refers to the following characters: Vincent, Clara Jackson, Dave Zigman, and Jules Golden. While Sinclair's other characters represent the various anxieties associated with assimilation, gender expectations, and economic mobility, the changelings represent antiracist goals that both reflect and resist those advocated by the time period's psychologically oriented liberals.

Sinclair accepts the basic assumptions of the period's antiracist liberalism, which claims that racism is fundamentally anti-American, that it is psychological in origin, and that education and socialization of children is fundamental to the development and implementation of antiracist democratic values. In his highly influential study on American racism, *An American Dilemma* (1944), Gunnar Myrdal identified the psychological dilemma endemic in American society, which was the conflict between the "American Creed" [which he identifies as the "essential dignity of the human being, of the fundamental equality of all men, of certain inalienable rights in freedom, justice, and fair opportunity" (4)] and the persistence of racial prejudice. Despite the fact that racism was so deeply entrenched in American society Myrdal was confident that the deep desire for change and to live up to the American Creed would motivate Americans toward a profound change in race relations. His assessment of American values, his focus on psychology, and his optimism are reflected in the poetry and philosophy of Jules Golden, one of the main characters and also a changeling.

An American Dilemma was highly influential on the study of racism and racial relations in the United States, particularly as studies of racism shifted to psychological and sociological explanations. Within this context, a rash of studies and popular writing appeared that discussed causes of racism and its effect on both blacks and whites. These studies also emerged amid discussions of American national character and of the education and socialization of citizens who would be able to uphold democratic values and protect against the scourge of communism and other threats to America's prosperity and national strength. In her analysis,

Feldstein examines how advocates of liberalism during the 1940s and 1950s argued that racial hatred and racial prejudice weakened American masculinity: "They were preoccupied with white and black sons whose mothers failed them psychologically and who, therefore lacked the codes of masculinity necessary for healthy and productive citizenship" (41). In the 1940s, two popular texts, Philip Wylie's *Generation of Vipers* (1942) and Marynia Farnham and Ferdinand Lundberg's *Modern Woman: The Lost Sex* (1947), helped establish conceptions of what constituted "bad motherhood" and its detrimental effect on national character. In both popular media and academic studies, conflicting images of bad mothers proliferated. Wylie's screed against American "moms" and "Megaloid momworship" linked power and status hungry mothers to the downfall of American character: when "Mom got herself out of the nursery and the kitchen…The damage she forthwith did to society was so enormous and so rapid that even the best men lost track of things" (184, 188). According to Farnham and Lundberg, "the feminine mother" is in perfect balance: "she can tell, without reading books on child care, what to do for the children by waiting for them to indicate their need....Otherwise, she lives them pretty much to their own devices, although keeping a watchful eye on them" (318). Following this, women were characterized as either overindulgent and overprotective or too strict and dismissive of their children: "Praise for mothers and criticism of them insisted on the centrality of women to the private sphere and on the centrality of the private sphere as a source of psychological health" (Feldstein 43).

Viewing the family as "the point of intersection between the private individual and the social citizen," antiracist psychologists and social scientists contributed to dominant narratives of American citizenship (46). Within these narratives, the domestic sphere becomes the site in which personality is developed and democratic values fostered. The link between racism and motherhood gained more prominence when supported by popular media that linked motherhood, individual personality, and national character.

Within the novel, the private domestic sphere is the primary site in which antiracist values are taught, but it is not expected that mothers bear the sole responsibility. It is also not assumed that mothers are the cause of racial prejudice. Rather, Sinclair endows young adults and children with a sophisticated knowledge and acceptance of American democratic values as well as the ability to recognize and challenge the psychological dimensions of their community's racial prejudice. That the protagonist is a young girl who challenges conventional femininity indicates resistance to the assumptions of antiracist liberals that social change and the eradication of racism depended on the production of ideal *male* citizens. The novel is highly idealistic—requiring a spirit of rebellion on the part of children vis-à-vis their parents. Indeed, the "changelings" anticipate those Jewish American individuals who will become activists in the Civil Rights Movement.[2]

The tensions that drive the novel are carried on between two generations. The first is an older generation of immigrants and holocaust survivors who are committed to the preservation of Jewish community and ethnic identity. The second

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[2] See *Going South: Jewish Women in the Civil Rights Movement* by Debra L. Schultz and *Fight Against Fear: Southern Jews and Black Civil Rights* by Clive Webb.

is a generation of younger Jews who embraced post-WWII American liberal values that included the belief in the rights and desires of the individual over the group, an acceptance of pluralism, and social change brought on through moderation, compromise, and reform (Greenberg 9). Sinclair reveals these generational tensions in depictions of the private lives of the families in the novel. With respect to the public and private spheres, she reinforces the primacy of the domestic sphere as a place where identity and antiracist consciousness are formed. However, she challenges specific assumptions within the time period's antiracist liberalism, in particular, that antiracist socialization and democratic education must take place within the nuclear family and that (pathological) mothering practices are at the root of racism. As with both *The Street* and *The Dollmaker*, *The Changelings* resists a strict division between the public and private spheres and expands the private sphere past the confines of the nuclear family home and into the community.

The psychological dimensions of the text and the (blurred) boundaries that define the private and domestic are established early on by Vincent:

> For a long time Vincent had lived in three separate worlds: one was the gang gully, one was the street, one was Manny-Shirley. There were three levels of thinking and feeling in her, to match these separate worlds in which she moved so methodically. Rather suddenly, lately, her worlds had begun jumping out of their boundaries, fragments from one mixing confusingly with bits from the other two. Sometimes all of these fragments merged abruptly, making a peculiar composite of emotions she did not know how to handle. (12)

As with both *The Street* and *The Dollmaker*, private, domestic spaces have a tremendous amount of cultural and symbolic importance. However, the expectations of that space (that it will provide comfort and privacy from the harsher public sphere and that it will provide a space in which democratic ideals are fostered) and the betrayal of those expectations are depicted, not through artifacts (as in *The Dollmaker*) or physical confinement (as often occurred in both *The Street* and *The Dollmaker*) but within interpersonal relationships. Initially, the "gang-Gully" (which refers to the gang of children and teenagers led by Vincent) offered her a sense of security and a space in which she is able to challenge conventional gender roles. The ritual cooking of potatoes over a fire emphasizes its quasi-domestic function (11). For the children the clubhouse is a private space, offering an escape from the more stressful concerns of the community and the constraints of their individual homes. However, its boundaries are vulnerable to external influence and the children exhibit attitudes and behavior regarding race and gender that are reflective of their parents' beliefs and attitudes. For Vincent, the safety of this space is disturbed when the expectations of appropriate gendered behavior intrude upon the safety and security of the clubhouse. This occurs after her friend, Dave, undermines her authority as gang leader and violates her sense of security by ordering the rest of the gang to tackle her and violently strip her clothing in order to prove that she is a girl and not worthy of the status she had acquired among the children:

> It was an accusation. She had never called herself a boy, but neither had she ever thought of herself as one of the girls she despised for their soft, plaintive

> weakness. She was simply Vincent, with the proud right to walk with the strong. She had proved it—in a thousand ways. As she turned away, with her old disdain, she was stunned to see the other faces reflected Dave's ugly laughter. (17)

In the aftermath of this confrontation she meets Clara Jackson, an African American girl. Initially, Jackson disparages how Vincent handled herself against the gang but later offers her knife to Vincent as a token of friendship and for further protection. Having been indoctrinated into the racist beliefs of her family and neighborhood, Vincent is stunned at this act of protection from someone who is supposed to be her enemy.

Dave's resentment of Vincent's authority within the group highlights the issue of masculine anxiety, which is an important theme with respect to racial prejudice and its psychological origins. In her analysis, Feldstein found that "gender anxieties were integral to the liberal project of reasserting national strength as the country moved from Depression to war to cold war, *particularly* when national strength now included interracial harmony and psychological well-being" (84-85). These events set into motion—for Vincent—the need to call into question her previously held beliefs with respect to her community and all she'd been taught about African Americans. Recalling Clara, "She remembered the shared bitterness and fury. This was the enemy, described from house to house all summer with fear?" (23) This event also introduces the type of antiracist liberalism advocated in the text:

> As she approached the beginning of the slope, she groped to touch back to the way things had been before today. It was not the abrupt savagery of the act of violence that came with her out of the Gully but the protecting fierceness of the girl she had met there. And again, the realization came of *how alike they were—not only the pants, the way of standing on guard with their bodies, but the whole inner reflection of pride and arrogance* [emphasis added]. Had she dreamed Clara Jackson? No: her hand felt the knife in her pocket. (24)

This combines an egalitarian approach that emphasizes alikeness in their resistance to traditional gender roles as well as shared suffering. The dream-like quality of their interaction and the notion of Clara coming to Vincent in her time of need—as a savior—resonates with "Angel Levine," Bernard Malamud's 1955 short story about Alexander Levine, a black Jewish guardian angel sent to Manischewitz, a tailor fallen on hard times. According to Cynthia Ozick, this story reflects an ongoing sense of compassion and sympathy within Jewish thought and culture (44-45). By the end of the story, Manischewitz (who struggles throughout with his personal trials and disbelief in the black Angel) discovers that "there are Jews everywhere," (Malamaud) confirming an essential sameness between himself and Levine. This is illustrated throughout *The Changelings*.

Sinclair reveals the psychological struggles of a community traumatized by the recent Holocaust and their attempts to find balance between achieving success in American and maintaining their ethnic and cultural identity. In doing so, she accepts the psychological explanations of racism, but resists Freudian explanations

and the focus on (pathological) motherhood advocated by popular and academic writers. Despite Sinclair's rejection of flawed motherhood as the source of racism, the family remains a source of much of the anxiety that perpetuates racial prejudice. Sinclair focuses on four Jewish families: the Vincents, the Goldens, the Millers, and the Zigmans, and one Italian family, the Valentis. Love, pride, fear, and shame characterize these family relationships. She reveals the commitments that these families make to and the anxiety that they display over the stability of their community. In what follows, I examine her depiction of families and their domestic and other private spaces. I argue that these depictions confirm Sinclair's acceptance of the psychological basis of racism, while she resists the expectations of gender and motherhood put forth by her contemporaries and advocates more idealistic and assertive approaches to the problem of racism. These approaches offer alternative educational and domestic spaces, which help produce citizens who lack the fears and anxieties that plague their parents' generation.

According to older members of Vincent's neighborhood, the problem of race is not one of their anti-black prejudice but of the destruction wrought on the community that occurs when African Americans move into non-black neighborhoods:

> "It is an American habit," Mr. Levine said, "It has to happen. For years a neighborhood is peaceful, pretty, well kept. Then, overnight, the Black Ones start hammering to get in. They want it! No matter where you move: in ten years, in fifteen years, they're here again! They're hollering, 'Let me in, give me your house!'"

> "They say the same thing happens in other cities, too."
>
> "Certainly," Mr. Levine said." It is one of the American habits. And it always goes the same way. First a few Jews with money move. Then some of the Italians start getting nervous, so they move too—they always follow the Jews, you know. Then the gentiles start running. And the Jews without money? If they're frightened enough, they go, too. They mortgage their old age to the eightieth year, but they go! And all the while, more and more of the Black Ones sneak in. Soon a whole neighborhood is rotting." (40)

Note that this is described as part of American culture, a culture within which these men feel alienated. Within these conversations, the source of masculine anxiety that Sinclair explores is suggested. The first of these anxieties is related to upward mobility and the inability of some families to achieve a greater portion of the American dream and move from their working class neighborhoods to "the Heights," a middle class neighborhood. Paired with the fear that African Americans will ruin their community if allowed to rent apartments are equally strong feelings of being betrayed by the families who have gone, leaving apartments empty and forcing the remaining members of the community to confront the changing demographics of the neighborhood. Powerless to stop families from leaving, the community instead turns prospective black tenants away.

With a newly acquired racial consciousness from her encounter with Clare, Vincent observes the conversations and behavior within the community with confusion and, initially, lacks the words to express her feelings. As the novel progresses, Vincent develops confidence and the ability to articulate her feelings

and enact change based on her increased disillusionment with her community and family. This change is juxtaposed with the perspectives of other characters. As the older generation struggles with the sense of loss brought about by both changing demographics (within the neighborhood) and conflicts within their own families, the younger generation confronts the challenges of assimilation. These children and young adults increasingly challenge and reject the values espoused by their parents and elders and, to varying degrees, embrace American culture. This is illustrated by different generations of children seeking to make sense of the conflicts in their families and break of away from their parents' traditions and conventions.

Among those aspects of American culture embraced by the younger generation is the moral quandary posed by the problem of racism. Changelings are children who challenge racial prejudice, recognize shared experiences of suffering, and advocate shared American democratic values. Jules Golden is Vincent's best friend and mentor, the neighborhood's poet and philosopher, and is the voice of its conscience. In his poem "The Changelings" (which is dedicated to Vincent), Jules writes:

> Come, Changeling, be a son of the World, a daughter of Life!
> All doors are open, Changeling-my-brother, Changeling-my-sister.
> All doors are open to us, for we are young and strong and full of hope.
> We will take the big footsteps of faith, leave behind the narrow corner of our stranger parents, our frightened elders.
> We will journey to our own street—to the free and sunny room of our dream. (304)

The poem demonstrates the unyielding optimism that Jules shares with Myrdal and his belief in the ability of the community to overcome their fears and of his fellow changelings to change the world for the better. Vincent explains to Clara how this concept manifests in her own life:

> [Jules] says a lot of people are like that. They don't really belong with their parents, or their grandmother either, because they want different things out of life. They don't talk—well, the same language. I mean, in their hearts….I'm the changeling in my house—the way Jules has it in my poem. I'm not scared. I'm not going to run around crying and hating people. Spying to see who's going to do me dirt. See? I'm not going to talk their language. I'm going to be free, so I can go out in the world. And—and, beautiful. That's in the poem. You can't be free if you're scared of everybody, can you? (135)

The poem and Vincent's interpretation link freedom to a lack of fear, highlighting the link between prejudice and psychology (rather than structural and/or economic inequality). This sentiment expresses what I argue is the intention of the novel, that substantial social change cannot depend solely on changes within the family, with parents committed to raising psychologically healthy (male) citizens (Feldstein 44). Rather, social change depends on individuals breaking with convention, fostering their own set of values, and finding the confidence and courage to implement them.

Integral to the novel's vision of social change is the implementation of the values espoused by Jules and absorbed by Vincent. Due to a leaky valve in his heart Jules is confined to his home, where he observes the anxieties that plague the neighborhood and writes poems that call attention to the community's hypocrisy in

their treatment of African Americans (*die Schwartze*) seeking homes in the neighborhood: "Oh fable of democracy! Having come, a pilgrim, You can now deny a new kind of pilgrim: *Die Schwartze*!" (32) His commitments to equality are a point of contention between him and his mother, Mrs. Golden. Jules clearly enjoys taunting his mother with his liberal idealism and in doing so forces her to acknowledge the fear and anxiety that are at the source of her racial prejudice.

Jules combines the concept of shared suffering between Jews and blacks (both pilgrims) with the moral quandary and conflict articulated by Myrdal in *An American Dilemma*. In the Golden household, he acts as an instigator, repeatedly calling attention to the community's hypocrisy and antiquated beliefs and rituals. At the heart of his conviction is a concern for what it means to be an American. Jules is not able to "take the big footsteps of faith" and "leave behind the narrow corner of [his] stranger parents," and so he politicizes his home. His ability to upset his home life with his proselytizing reveals, not simply the stubborn ignorance of racial prejudice but also the persistence of the anxieties that compel it.

Sinclair also looks at relationship between Jules and his mother. Her focus on mother and child in this context would seem to complement those theories that locate the problem of racism within that relationship. Mrs. Golden's temperament is characterized by both over and under indulgence (she loves him fiercely while she argues with him relentlessly); she is hardly an example of reserved and moderate affection advocated by antiracist psychologists. Yet, their home functions as a "cultural workshop" in which the values of a democratic society are fostered (Gesell and Ilg 9). Jules takes up the proclamation that "our democracy must be

strengthened at every point of strain or weakness" by identifying the ways that his family and community fail to uphold democratic values (Roosevelt 70). Sinclair reverses and transforms the democratic family model, as Jules (a teenager) advocates American democratic ideals and teaches his mother and Vincent. Although Jules pushes his mother to acknowledge the true source of her fear and anxiety, his hope for social change and the upholding of American democratic values lies with Vincent and the other changelings. This is consistent with the democratic family's focus on children (Michel 155).

Throughout the novel Mrs. Golden provides constant commentary—much of it negative—on the everyday activities of her neighbors, particularly as they enact gender roles and maintain their Jewish identity and the solidarity of the community. Her perspective on the street and her surveillance over the activities of the other families reveal another way in which Sinclair blurs the boundaries of the public and the private by extending the boundaries of the domestic sphere into the community. In this context, Mrs. Golden "polices" the neighborhood, criticizing families and individuals for their gender transgressions and lack of respect for their community and maintaining its Jewish identity. This reflects her commitment to the identity of the group, rather than the particular needs and desires of individuals. The conflict within the Golden household reflects the increasing commitment to liberal, democratic ideals on the part of the younger generation.

When Jules accuses her of and the other Jews of claiming ownership to an entire street, she defends their position: "When is a Jew safe? Only when he is a landlord who watches every second—day and night. Only when he owns the street.

When he can holler out like a bell if anything comes to remind him he's only a Jew. If anybody tries to slap him in the face with the fact, like—like it is garbage" (115). With the Holocaust still fresh in the consciousness of the community and anti-Semitic sentiments pervasive among Americans, her fear is understandable. For example, in the 1940s, 15 to 24 percent of Americans believed the Jews to be a "menace to America" (Prell 125). Jules, however, is never content to let these explanations stand. As she posits her opinions about race, class, Judaism, and interfaith marriage, Jules pressures his mother to reveal her (and by extension, the community's) true feelings.

Regardless of his ability to teach and inspire, Jules remains frustrated by his illness and inability to enact the change for which he longs. His attempts at rebellion, for example, welcoming an African American women to look at an empty apartment, only enrage his mother and lead them to another angry confrontation, again pitting Jules' antiracist idealism against Mrs. Golden's persistent fear and hatred of *die Schwartze*. Jules' frustration also creates tensions with Vincent when, at times, he holds her to an unattainable standard of antiracist commitment and is unable to appreciate her conflicted feelings about her community and her family (223-224). Jules' own confinement produces fear, anxiety, and insecurity and these act as other psychological obstructions to his antiracist goals. Again, this confirms Sinclair's psychological focus and her refusal to limit her scope to motherhood.

Due to his confinement Jules is unable to implement his ideals with success. His attempt at "domestic rebellion" produces another, unsurprising, confrontation with his mother. Thus, while Sinclair reinforces the primacy of the domestic space

with respect to education and the fostering of democratic ideals, she also reveals the limits of that space. In this context, Vincent is positioned as the one more likely to succeed in implementing antiracist, democratic values. Her first success in this endeavor is her relationship with Clara in which she is able to "put a face" to and indentify with the *Schwartze*.

In many ways, the African Americans of Jules' poetry and proclamations are nameless—prefabricated characters with few (if any) distinguishing characteristics. Indeed, Jules is not immune to the racist assumptions that circulate within his community and he betrays his own ideals at times. When Vincent reveals to her friendship with Clara to him, he inquires about what she looks like "up close" and if she talks differently, "You know—Southern? How'd she act when you first talked?" (198). Here it is Vincent who calls attention to the discrepancy between what Jules is saying and what he has taught her, reiterating the colorblind, liberal antiracism advocated in the novel: "Hell," Vincent said resentfully, "you make it sound like she's—you said they're just like us! Not different. But now you're acting like she's all different. What's the big idea?" (198). Again, the burden of social change shifts to Vincent who, unlike Jules, is not confined to her home.

Vincent is able to work through the insularity, fear, and hatred that her family and community have attempted to instill through her friendship with Clara. This approach applies the philosophy espoused by Jules, but resists a psychological model that focuses primarily on personality and does not include, for example, acknowledging the shared experience of discrimination. Further, Sinclair indicates that seeking relationships with African Americans and challenging overt

expressions of racism as integral to antiracism. The limits of philosophy and intellectualism within the domestic space are also emphasized by Jules' continued inability to change his mother's mind despite the strength of his argument and the clarity of his logic.

While the Golden household is characterized by a great deal of conflict, it is also one of the few households bound tightly by bonds of affection and loyalty. When Jules' death is imminent, Mrs. Golden begins to have a change of heart. Before he dies, Jules is finally able to explain to his mother why he "took the *Schwartze* into his heart" and what he wants from their family. He explains: "The *Schwartze* is name you gave to a lot of stuff you're afraid of. You gave it a name and then you were able to curse it" (280). This is an example of the way in which the children in the novel are able to identify and articulate the source of racism and its relationship to individual and group psychology. As it is observed throughout the novel, black people become a scapegoat for his family's (and the community's) fears about class mobility, Jewish identity, and American assimilation. In this context, mothers are not immune from the psychological dynamics that produce racism but they are not positioned specifically as causal agents.

Throughout the novel the younger generation—through their words and actions—drive Sinclair's critical message. They affirm her psychological focus and use the private space as an educational medium. However, her criticism is directed, not at pathological mothers vilified by popular writers, psychologists, and other social scientists but rather, at anxieties that, although gendered in nature, emerge from specific experiences related to ethnicity, class, and immigration. Jules wants

his family not to live in fear and to "be the people the world is proud of....Not scared to change, if you have to" (281). Jules embraces psychology, but his vision exceeds that of antiracist psychologists. Within the latter, ideal (male) citizenship is described as "neither too frustrated nor to aggressive" (Feldstein 63). Through Jules, Sinclair expresses a vision of social change that values citizens willing to assert themselves in the name of social change and racial justice and not simply the even-tempered citizens of her contemporaries.

Nevertheless, social change begins in the home. Vincent gains inspiration and knowledge from Jules who encourages her resistance to the community's ideals and her family's values. Although Sinclair presents Vincent's friendship with Clara as the catalyst for her transformation from passive acceptance (of her community's racism) to active resistance, it is within her family that she enacts her first rebellion. Unlike the Goldens, whose family remains intact, Vicent's own family is fractured—her brother has left and her father has disowned her sister for marrying a non-Jew. The aforementioned world of "Manny and Shirley" is the secret relationship that she and her mother maintain with Shirley's family. Until this point, Vincent accepted that because Shirley married outside their faith that she is "dead" to her father and grandmother. Throughout the novel, however, Vincent questions the audacity of her father and grandmother:

> So, if Shirley is "as if dead" to Pa and the Grandmother, she thought carefully, what does that make Manny? Never even born—that's what it makes him! Can they do that to a baby? Can even the Grandmother do that? Act as if a

> baby wasn't even born in the world? And Pa! God damn it, Pa, who said you could do that? (103)

It is the contradictions and hypocrisy within her family that inspire her rebellion. Again, while this reinforces the primacy of the family and the private spheres as the site within which democratic and individualist ideals are fostered, it is not necessarily a result of socialization on the part of mothers (or parents in general). Rather, change comes from a younger generation of assertive and idealistic individuals.

Sinclair's portrayal of "the grandmother" illustrates a disdain for antiquated beliefs and non-nurturing relationships. Although the community—particularly the older Jews—revere her, Sinclair portrays the grandmother as aloof and controlling, their interactions devoid of genuine affection: "Vincent waited stiffly to kiss her cheek after she had seated herself and put on her glasses, placed her enormous leather pocketbook on the floor next to the chair. It was all ritual, each step done the way the grandmother wanted it" (97). Vincent grows critical of the way her father cowers before the grandmother and this compels her, not simply to defend Shirley and Shirley's family, but to force her father to acknowledge Manny's existence by bringing the baby to her home and putting him in her father's lap. Her father is clearly affected by the child, however, the emotional impact is unbearable and he rejects Manny. Although her gesture does not bear the results for which she hoped, this moment creates both clarity and confusion for Vincent who sees "how her father was struggling to stand by himself….She saw for the first time, and still without words to interpret it, a man's hunger of spirit" (181).

That Vincent's first rebellion takes place within the family reinforces Sinclair's acceptance of the private sphere as the space in which democratic ideals are fostered. Furthermore, the emotional impact that the gesture has on her father reinforces the psychological focus. Vincent's domestic rebellion is more successful than Jules', in part, because Mr. Vincent has within himself a spark of rebellion. Though not an adult Changeling, he has a need and a desire to break away from the expectations of his mother and the older generation of Jewish immigrants and embrace some American ideals and values.

This event also illustrates a way in which Sinclair reinforces one aspect of contemporary nuclear family ideology. In the moment that Vincent places Manny into her father's lap, she explicitly rejects the influence that the grandmother has on her and her family. As Mr. Vincent moves toward accepting his grandson, he begins to reject his mother and the influence that she has had on his adult life. During this time period, sociological and psychological assessments of family life advocated prioritizing the nuclear family and detaching from the extended family (Coontz 26, May 18-20). As he is reaching out to his grandson, Mr. Vincent is not breaking ties with extended family. However, he is breaking ties with an older generation that embodies a particular set of values (maintaining Jewish identity at all cost) and embracing more individualist, contemporary American ones.

This is further confirmed by tensions between the grandmother and Mr. Vincent that involve work and economics. The community reveres the grandmother for her economic success. Although it is unclear in which industry she worked, the grandmother represents a generation of Jewish immigrant entrepreneurs who

successfully navigated and transformed American industry (Heinze 182-183). Wanting him to follow a similar professional path, the grandmother pressured Mr. Vincent to open his own business, despite the fact that Mr. Vincent has neither the desire nor the aptitude for such an undertaking:

> The few months in which Abe Vincent had been a contractor were a painful memory to him. He had lost the money with which to pay his workers. He had gone through a nightmare of anxiety in his attempt to be a boss.…So he had been a miserable failure. He had gone back with relief to the safe and simple life of working for other men. Why did his mother continue, Sunday after Sunday, to punish him with the memory of how he had disappointed her? Her scorn, her insistent question each week, simply highlighted the way she had been able to walk through America and take from it the success that all men sought when they [immigrated] to a new country. (100-101)

Mr. Vincent's desire to work for someone else is not simply a matter of individual preference. As stated in my discussion of *The Dollmaker*, this time period saw a shift in American work culture. This shift was characterized by a breakdown of individualism, a loss of autonomy, and a commitment to the promises of the (industrial) organization to provide economic and psychological security (Whyte 7). Moving away from his mother's entrepreneurial tradition brings him closer to that of contemporary American culture and identity and reflects an ongoing struggle with assimilation. Further, it should be noted that the relationship between Mr. Vincent and the grandmother resonates with psychological and popular characterizations: the grandmother is domineering and controlling and their

relationship is an explicit source of anxiety and insecurity for Mr. Vincent. Rather than simply perpetuate a stereotype, however, this relationship depicts tensions between an older generation of immigrants whose economic aspirations conflicted with those of younger generations.

Although Sinclair challenges important aspects of the time period's expectations of domesticity, Sinclair does not reject the nuclear family outright. Shirley's family represents the ideals of the independent nuclear family and other American values that Vincent struggles to understand but that she also admires. In Shirley's home she feels a sense of contentment that is not present in her own:

> When she got to the apartment, Shirley and Johnnie were downstairs with Manny. There were a few people standing around languidly on the sidewalk, but Shirley and Johnnie looked fresh and young, not hot at all.…She watched Shirley and Johnnie walk away toward Woodlawn, slow and close to each other. She loved to see them together, the way they liked being close to each other. (174-175)

Unlike the families on Vincent's street, Shirley and her family do not concern themselves with their neighbors. Shirley's husband is the sole breadwinner and Shirley is appropriately attentive and affectionate with both her son and husband. Although she maintains contact with her mother, Shirley actively resists any influence she might try to exert on child rearing. And for Vincent, Shirley's family represents ideals of American democratic choice. Vincent learns from Clara Jackson that when Clara's ancestors were freed from slavery they chose to become Catholic. Inspired by this story, Vincent compares Clara's family's Catholicism with that of her

nephew's and begins to incorporate this ability to choose into her own life. As a Jew, Vincent is not allowed to wear the St. Anthony medal that Clara offers but she accepts it anyway and as a way to mediate the differences between their religious backgrounds offers to keep it in her treasure box (133). Later, after much deliberation, Vincent writes Johnnie's name in her family's bible. Vincent is slowly breaking away from the restrictions of her family's religion, choosing to incorporate elements of Catholicism into her own spiritual foundation and choosing to include non-Jewish family members into the spiritual record of her family's history (318).

Shirley married a Catholic police officer, which also has symbolic importance with respect to antiracism. Between the years 1922-1927, 17 films depicting marriages between individuals from Jewish and Irish Catholic American immigrant families were released. In one of the most popular films, *The Cohens and the Kellys* (1926), a young Jewish woman marries an Irish Catholic police officer. In reality, there were not many interfaith marriages. The films were an attempt to advocate overcoming cultural and ethnic differences and Shirley and Johnny are symbolic of that gesture (Prell 72). This is consistent with Sinclair's insistence toward, not only overcoming the psychological anxieties at the source of racial prejudice, but also fostering a sense of identification with individuals outside of one's racial and ethnic communities.

That marriage should symbolize a gesture toward tolerance, again, illustrates the novel's acceptance of family and the domestic space as a primary arena for fostering democratic ideals—although experts did not specifically advocate interfaith and interracial marriage as a means of maintaining democratic values and

compelling social change. Shirley's "maternal moderation" (Feldstein 48) is one of the ways in which Sinclair demonstrates some acceptance of some of the period's gender roles. However, although *The Changelings* accepts the psychological reasons for racial prejudice, it repeatedly resists pathological motherhood and ideal male citizenship as the cause and solution to the problem of racism. Sinclair consistently depicts anxiety over masculinity, ethnic identity, and assimilation as sources of racial prejudice and links these, in part, to dysfunctional family life and pressures within and throughout the community to maintain Jewish ethnic identity at all costs. Vincent's resistance to conventional femininity and her role as a changeling actively resist the notion that women must conform to narrow gender roles in order to instill and advocate antiracist democratic ideals.[3]

Vincent's rebellion inspires her father to close the schism between him and Shirley and begins the process of healing their family. Vincent's rebellious nature, however, eventually penetrates the neighborhood and implicates both Jules and Dave. Racial tensions in the community come to a breaking point when a neighbor, Ross Valenti, attacks and beats a black man who comes to inquire about an empty apartment. As the neighbors observe in silence, Jules, who is too weak to help the man, implores them to help, but no one responds in time to prevent the attack. Vincent is unable to "look away from Clara's father-brother-uncle being beaten to a bleeding pulp" (232). In the man, she sees her friend and recognizes the "anguish of

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[3] The association of masculinity and citizenship in the novel is still somewhat contradictory. Although it resists conventional gender expectations, the novel associates masculine qualities with antiracism. Femininity and domesticity are portrayed positively but are not entirely conducive to the larger antiracist goals of the novel. Nevertheless, the novel challenges the sexism inherent in the time period's psychological antiracism. The broader problems posed by its construction of masculinity and femininity are best discussed in a future project.

the other" (Ozick 45). Indeed, Vincent is not the only member of the community who is able to identify with the plight of the man being beaten. The scene brings Ruth Miller back to her and her brother's experiences of violence in their Hungarian village. This will be discussed shortly.

When the fight is over, Vincent and Dave (who is inspired to act by Vincent) tend to the man and help him up (233-236). Although they were not able to prevent the violence and protect him, their gesture demonstrates to the community their willingness to help and comfort the man and in doing so, affirm his humanity. The scene emphasizes, again, Sinclair's belief that the motivation for social change is located, not only in individuals, but in individuals of a particular generation—a generation capable of overcoming the racial prejudice within their community and families. Although Vincent and Dave's actions come too late to stop the attack, they illustrate a humanitarian goal of the novel, which is to offer a "sympathetic affirmation of the humanity of every person" and "generate sympathy that leads to action" (Eby 35, 48).

For Dave Zigman, helping Vincent comfort the man is a critical moment in his transformation from bully to changeling. Sinclair introduces him as a troubled young man whose attack on Vincent is motivated by feelings of insecurity at the authority that Vincent, a young woman, wields in their group. However, Sinclair soon reveals that his hostile and violent exterior is simply masking very sensitive and conflicted feelings, particularly with respect to masculinity and femininity. This is made apparent as he struggles with immense feelings of guilt over having led the attack on Vincent:

> Sometimes it seemed to Dave that the world had created a certain way for him to be. He had to act like their conception of Dave Zigman, the big-shot brother of a big-shot crook and a gambler. He was heir to plunder; even if he did not want it he had to steal it—potatoes, a pack of cigarettes. Sure, even the gang—he'd finally stolen that too! (63-64)

This passage indicates, first, Sinclair's engagement with socially constructed ideals of masculinity, and second, that these roles are reinforced within the family. Dave also harbors a great deal of anger toward his father. However, his most complex emotions are reserved for his mother, toward whom he feels a mix of love, admiration, and frustration:

> He wanted to hate those reddish, lumpy, machine-fast hands…he wanted a fragrant, young mother with long beautiful hair and white hands, in a cool green dress; somebody like Ruth Miller as she passed in the street, only older, a mother….In his heart, he loved her as if there were a hole there, burning, filling, and emptying all the time….In their house, his mother was always clean, and the room and floors were clean, the tub shining after her bath every night. It was just that his senses carried her the way she was at the store: a pinched grayish face under the feather-clotted *babushka*, the way her little button nose got redder and redder as she moved so fast, as she smiled and gabbed at customers, the way her apron got bloodier hour by hour and the whole world stank more around her. (66)

The passage indicates that in addition to his struggle with socially constructed ideals of masculinity, Dave also struggles with conflicting expectations of femininity and

motherhood. While Mrs. Zigman is capable of fulfilling her domestic role, she is also obligated to run the family's business, which is taking a toll that Dave finds difficult to witness. The reverence with which the neighborhood holds the grandmother's entrepreneurial success and the acceptance of women like Ruth Miller and Fanny Zigman working in their family's business illustrates how this community viewed women in the public sphere. Rather than being viewed as a violation of strict public and private gendered spaces, women working—particularly in family run businesses—are depicted as an extension of their responsibility to the domestic sphere.

However, Dave's conflict makes sense in the context of that period's popular conception of domesticity and femininity, which tended to focus on women as (idealized) wives and mothers at the expense of their experience as workers (May 54-56, Coontz 28). As Dave struggles with his feelings toward her and his place in their family, Sinclair indicates Dave's inner fears:

> No, he could not show her the boy inside his world's conception of Dave Zigman. There was a gentle dreamer of book life he could not describe. There was a boy scared he would be like his father, his brothers—wounders and hurters of women. Inside the snarling, punching tough guy who was learning how to box, how to slam out the indescribable shame and anger and pity against the sandbag or punching bag, was the Dave who feared the sucking pull toward the dark corners where his brothers waited for him. (67)

Collectively, these passages support the assumption that the domestic space and the family are the locus of identity formation. The Zigman household fails to adhere to mainstream conceptions of ideal domesticity. This would seem to support the time period's notion that working mothers risked raising maladjusted children (who would, of course, be unable to foster democratic values). Indeed, according to Benjamin Spock, "Some mothers have to work to make a living. Usually their children turn out all right because some reasonably good arrangement is made for their chare. But others grow up neglected and maladjusted….You can think of it this way, useful, well-adjusted citizens are the most valuable possession a country has and good mother care during early childhood is the surest way to produce them" (460). However, the details of Dave's family life reveal that the problem is not one of maternal failure, but of paternal.

Throughout the novel, Dave struggles with an immense amount of anguish—anger at his father, fear for his mother, and guilt over his treatment of Vincent. He seeks a way to control his emotions and articulate the disdain he has for the values and expectations being instilled by his family and community. Indeed, as Vincent begins to heal from their confrontation in the club house, she begins to observe Dave's potential to be a changeling, particularly when he helps her assist the African American man who was beaten by Ross Valenti.

When Dave approaches Vincent to apologize, he reveals the source of his anguish and his resistance to his family's values and expectations. Before Dave was born, while his family was still establishing their roots in America as Polish-Jewish immigrants, his father suddenly abandoned Dave's mother and two older brothers

to be with another woman back in Poland. He took with him Mrs. Zigman's beloved diamond bracelet, a gift he bought to symbolize their success and potential in America (255). The family was devastated and Mrs. Zigman was forced to put her young sons in an orphan asylum until she had enough money to take care of them. When Mr. Zigman returned, they had Dave and continued on as if nothing had ever happened. But for Dave's brothers Ziggy and Al, the damage had been done. With Ziggy in jail and Al barely avoiding it, the brothers exemplify the maladjusted children about which the period's psychologists and child experts warned.

The implication here is that the disruption of the domestic space produces men prone to criminal behavior. Abandoned by her husband, Mrs. Zigman is unable to fulfill her role as a mother. Again, Mrs. Zigman does not exemplify "pathological motherhood" as it was defined then. Her inability to properly care for her children is not linked to her personality, but rather to the material conditions brought about by Mr. Zigman's failure as a husband and father. Believing that he can help his mother by stealing a beautiful bracelet for her, Dave is coming close to following his brother's footsteps. However, Vincent offers him an alternative. She indicates to him that he needs to confront his emotions and talk to his mother about his feelings. Her approach is purely psychological and therapeutic, resonating with the humanistic and person-centered psychotherapy developed and popularized during the 1950s by Carl Rogers[4] whose own work advocated personal growth and the

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[4] See, for example, *Client-centered Therapy: Its Current Practice, Implications and Theory*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1951. The novel anticipates the theories of personhood that Rogers will develop in his popular and influential text, *On Becoming a Person: A Therapist's View of Psychotherapy*, Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 1961.

unconditional acceptance of the whole person (however negative her emotional state), further signaling Sinclair's engagement with psychological experts.

According to Ruth Feldstein, psychological "analyses of prejudice expected healthy men…to be emotional, expressive, and able to admit their fears and their fleeting desires for dependence" (49). The masculine ideal made room for moderate amounts of sensitivity, which would be nurtured by good, non-pathological mothers. However, in the novel it is Vincent who nurtures these qualities. In this moment, Vincent becomes a mentor of sorts to Dave, much as Jules is to her, helping to guide him toward becoming a changeling. The path to racial justice continues to be psychological but does not depend on mothers—it is children and their peers who are the agents of social change and who foster democratic values among themselves.

Feldstein also found that a trait shared by pathological mothers within popular writing and psychological studies was that of sexual dysfunction. In her depictions of mothers, Sinclair does not perpetuate the stereotype of the sexually dysfunctional mother. However, she does address the issue of domesticated sexuality. As discussed in my chapter on *The Street*, during this time period women's sexuality was linked, both implicitly and explicitly, to the stability of democratic values and the production of ideal citizens. According to the prevailing logic, sexually fulfilled, heterosexually married couples comprised the domestic space that produced psychologically healthy (nonracist) citizens (who would also uphold American democracy against communism). Women's sexual desire was deemed acceptable as long as it was linked to the desire to become a mother. Farnham and Lundberg maintained that female sexual satisfaction depended

entirely on "wanting and having children…*the strong desire for children or lack of it has a crucial bearing on how much enjoyment [women derive] from the sexual act*" (271). Sinclair affirms women's desire, but refuses to limit the boundaries of appropriate desire to motherhood. This is also one of the ways that Sinclair addresses racism and the problem of stereotypes. Sexuality is a theme within which bonds are created and it is one of the ways that Sinclair asserts the novel's critical goals—positioning children and young adults as agents of change.

Social change is motivated in this text, not by better mothering but by actively recognizing and confronting the real anxieties behind racism and prejudice. Anxieties around masculinity, religious and ethnic identity, and class mobility combine to create psychological dynamics in which the recognition of others' humanity becomes difficult. In these contexts, changelings, individuals who are able to see through and confront the anxieties that plague communities, become necessary. However, with respect to sexuality, the changeling ideal falls somewhat short. While Sinclair offers a critical depiction of sexuality and its accompanying gender politics and uses this depiction to explore anxieties around race, there is no outlet, no mechanism through which sexuality and its expression can be used to enact social change. Eric Sundquist argues that the "daring overture in making adolescent sexuality the arena in which identity and racial beliefs are most strongly formed and challenged…leaves unresolved the most potent threat of assimilation—namely, interracial mixing—but she does so to predict and impasse, a color line, between Jews and blacks in which the paradox of their intimate proximity and repulsive distrust is made all the more prominent" (44). Furthermore, there is no

space created in which conventional sexual mores and their accompanying gender ideals can be challenged. Women remain constrained, their options limited with respect to sexual expression.

The two female characters through which Sinclair negotiates issues of sexual desire are Santina Valenti, a teenaged girl who longs to spend time with her boyfriend, Alex Golden (Jules' teenaged brother), and Ruth Miller, the daughter of a local pawnshop owner who dreams of a middle-class life filled with culture. Santina is an Italian Catholic teenager being raised by her grandmother and older brother who are preparing her for an arranged marriage to Sam, an older man, when she is sixteen. Her grandmother's home functions as an "educational" domestic space. However, rather than focusing on the development of Santina as an individual by the tenets of the democratic family popularized during this time period, her education consists of a strict regimen of religious and domestic training. Santina remains psychologically alienated within this domestic space and from the family members and visitors to whom she served "wine and pastries" under her grandmother's direction (78). Against this description of formal and unemotional domesticity, Sinclair juxtaposes Santina's inner feelings:

> Her heart was a secret room in which lived a dream of delicate exquisite love. The rough words which she spoke to the street, the excited ones to Alex, were not the language she spoke in her heart, nor were the stilted, sparse words she exchanged with Sam and his mother, her own family. The language in her heart, like the dream of love there, was musical, beautifully

> pure. When she was alone, the room in her heart opened. She stared into it with bewitched eyes until she could no longer stand still. (79)

By all definitions (the highly idealized, poetic language, the contrast between the inner and outer self, the resistance to her family's values) Santina is a changeling. Through her relationship with Alex she is able to escape from the confinement and coldness of her home. For Alex as well, whose home life is beset with the strain of his brother's illness, the relationship provides him with comfort. Their relationship compensates for the failure of their respective families to treat them as individuals with their own needs and desires. However, there is no path by which Santina can enact social change, to make her desires appropriate to others—to her family or the community.

Although Sinclair does not explicitly condone their behavior, the novel affirms the reality of teenage intimacy and reveals the psychological need for emotional validation and affection. Further, Sinclair uses a tryst between Santina and Alex as a catalyst for one of the most pivotal scenes in the novel, the aforementioned attack by Ross Valenti. When Alex's sister Heidi overhears them in the gully clubhouse, it is assumed that Santina (who calls Alex by a racialized nickname, Blacky) is with a black man. After Heidi reveals what she believes she heard, panic ensues and the entire neighborhood congregates over this violation of their private space, illustrating the anxiety over racial stereotypes and the collective need to protect white womanhood.

Eventually it is revealed that it was not an African American man, but Alex who was with Santina in the clubhouse. Tensions erupt between the generations

over the appropriate reaction. Among the parents, it is unapologetically excused as an *understandable* mistake. However, several individuals, particularly the adult children of these parents, assert the need to confront the community's anxieties and the enormous cost of the mistake. Ultimately, the consensus of the community is simply to contain the incident. Indeed, the reaction of Santina's family is to contain her even further, placing her in a convent-like Catholic boarding school. Her reaction is revealing: "On Tuesday morning the beautiful, exciting adventure of the world ended for Santina. She walked a few steps behind the Sister. In the long, dusky corridor stood the mysterious looking Christs, tall as men, the stone eyes glinting secrets she could not understand" (270). This illustrates two points: First, that the containment of intimacy in this manner denies the full humanity of young women. It is not clear if Santina's experience is intended to symbolize that of all wives and mothers; nevertheless, the imposition of these sexual mores and conventional gender roles is shown to be detrimental. Second, unlike Vincent who remains free to express and act upon her antiracism, in the realm of sexuality there is little, if any, space for social change and self-expression. Acceptable sexuality remains confined to heterosexual, marital relationships.

Although Sinclair problematizes the constraints imposed by sexual mores, she does not reject them entirely. Ruth Miller, like Shirley Levine, represents the contemporary ideal of domesticated sexuality. She is modest and devoted to the prospect of motherhood. Further, she exercises socially imposed ideals of restraint, controlling the flirting between her and Chip Levin, the man attempting to court her. According to Elaine Tyler May, courtship rituals established that women bear the

responsibility for controlling sexual impulses within relationships. Popular women's magazines provided information for how to attract a man and that "once caught, he was to be held at bay, while she gave all the appropriate signals to promise sexual excitement in marriage" (105). With this context, Chip and Ruth's interactions are fraught with longing and restraint: "It was a game they had to play. The more she winced, the harder he drove at her. The more priggish her voice became and the more she cringed at the idea of lying down with a man, the more she thought of his body and his warmth, his strength" (53). These reflect, not only the expectations placed on women with respect to gender, sexuality, and courtship, but also specific anxieties felt among young Jewish men and women struggling with religious and ethnic identities and how this struggle relates to gender and marriage. For Chip, Ruth is the only woman for whom he would wait until marriage, further indicating the ways in which Ruth exemplifies ideal womanhood. Furthermore, the longing that she expresses is framed by her desire to become a mother, as indicated by her reflections on her niece:

> She was never able to tell Herb how much she loved his daughter, just as she was never able to face herself, in actual words, with her deepest hunger. She had constant, nebulous pictures of herself bending over her own child, opening books for him and singing lovely old songs, while in the background hovered a man who was always gentle, loving, sensitive, and a complete success in all the ways a man could be. (50)

Through her depiction of Ruth, Sinclair engages several of the period's social and sexual mores associated with American citizenship and identity and, in particular,

how these mores were related to Jewish assimilation. According to Riv-Ellen Prell, marriage represented a complex symbol with respect to assimilation. In her analysis, which examines how Jewish gender-based stereotypes reflect ongoing struggles in the Jewish community over issues of assimilation, she argues that the "Young Jewish Woman in Search of Marriage" (which is the type that Ruth Miller most closely resembles) represents a "complex significance within the Jewish community" where

> She was not only a symbol of Americanization gone awry, but she also seemed to complicate and even undermine the very path to Americanization. This stereotype reveals the intragenerational struggle between unmarried Jewish women and men created by a middle-class economy that placed their desires in conflict. It reflected, then, the struggle between nation and outsider, assimilationists and Jewish particularists, and between unmarried Jewish women and men who saw in marriage simultaneously a vulnerable search for love and the avenue to mobility and Americanization. (91)

Ruth is troubled by issues of class and gender and struggles to maintain a persona linked to culture and intellect. Within this struggle, she loses her sense of self: "Sometimes she could not remember the Ruth hidden in the woman who dressed so carefully each day and fussed with her hair and shoes, who spoke slowly with painstaking diction and carried books as part of her princess costume" (55). Ruth is depicted as a dutiful daughter, working in her family's shop on Saturday so that her father can observe the Sabbath. Later, it is revealed that her inability to recognize and acknowledge her desires are linked to her relationship with her father, whose

malevolence and impossible standards have left her traumatized and their family fragmented.

Ruth exists in a state of physical and psychological restraint, perpetuating an illusion of grace and poise. Loving Chip, a working class man, is painful. When he arrives to escort her home and discuss with her the latest dilemma that has befallen the neighborhood, this illusion begins to crack. As Chip reveals the alleged discovery of Santina Valenti in the Gully clubhouse with a black man, a flood of memories rush in and she is momentarily unable to distinguish Chip's voice of comfort from her father's behavior:

> At the few dates she made, those few times she had gone to evening parties while at school, coming back to the house by ten o'clock at the latest; she saw his ugly, livid expression now as he got out of the big chair and came toward her. Why, why had he always called her that awful word? Whore, whore!—but in Yiddish, from the heart, from the ugly gut: kurveh, kurveh! She struggled against his hands on her. First they would clutch her arms, her shoulders, and shake her as that word was slapped against her. Then the embrace, then the tears, the lamenting—"I just want you to be a good girl. Nothing must happen to you. Nothing must happen to my daughter." Then his kiss, his tear-wet beard pressing against her face, the kiss full on the mouth; Ruth struggled to get away from the clinging hands, the heavy body. (166)

This is a powerful passage. The juxtaposition of rage and affection, the accusations of promiscuity paired with rough, uncomfortable affection reveal a family dynamic

characterized by abuse, and abuse that is of a particularly gendered and sexualized nature. It is later revealed that the time spent between her father's immigration to the United States and that of the rest of the family positioned her brother, Herb, as her primary father figure and her father as a complete stranger. Her relationship with Herb is characterized by genuine and mutual affection and respect, but her father remains a stranger to whom she is bound by convention and family loyalty but with whom she experienced only confusion and condemnation. Once again, the home and the family are the primary site within which anxieties and insecurities develop. And again, fathers bear some responsibility. However, Sinclair avoids simply transferring blame from one parent to another by indicating influences of other interpersonal relationships.

It is through her relationship with these three men, her father, her brother, and her admirer, that Ruth negotiates her need for validation, security, and intimacy. Herb pressures her to recognize their father's pretense and shallow values. With his encouragement, Ruth begins to recognize that her unquestioning acceptance of her father's authority and values is merely a cloak she uses to protect herself from her own desires. Using the example of his own life, Herb warns against living according to the standards of others. He relays the story of his revelation to her, "At suppertime, when I came home, I knew I had to get out of the store, out of my marriage. That I was a dead man in both places. My daughter? I didn't even know her—she didn't know me" (208). It is this sense of completeness, of prioritizing individual needs over the standards imposed by others (particularly those with questionable ethics) that characterizes the divide between the

generations (and the subsequent need to move away from the older generations) with which the novel is concerned.

Ruth's disillusion with her father's values and her acceptance of Chip's affection is inspired by her reaction to the attack on the African American man, which is a painful combination of fear, repulsion, and alienation. As she stares at the individuals in her community she does not see her neighbors; she sees the village of Jews from her childhood in Hungary:

> In that instant Ruth was back inside the day Herb had been attacked by a group of the village peasants. There had been rocks and heavy chunks of wood in their hands that hot, sunny afternoon. Herb's face had been boyish and smiling one minute, gushing blood a second later. (234)

In that moment Ruth achieves the ability to recognize the suffering in others. However, her path is not one of racial justice but of individual fulfillment and choice, which still demonstrates a dedication to American democratic values as opposed to the ideals of group identity to which her parents and their generation cling. Further, her deep emotional reaction, which triggers anxieties and fears buried deep inside her, continues to illustrate the psychological themes of the novel.

Ruth's brother Herb is integral to her transformation. Although not positioned as a changeling, Herb Miller is emblematic of those Jews who actively accepted the liberal ideals of individualism and pluralism and his perspective offers a precise and sophisticated exploration of the psychological character of the community's racism. Further, Herb resists the expectations and values imposed on him by his father and the community. As mentioned above, he left his marriage, one

that, although sanctioned by his family and socially beneficial, was ultimately devastating to his personal happiness. Herb's feelings toward his family are complex and varied. Toward his daughter, he is loving and attentive and toward his siblings and mother he feels protective. However, toward his father, he is bitter and resentful. Sinclair illustrates a moment of profound personal growth and change for Herb, a change he attributes to the *Schwartze*.

Herb is one of the few individuals in the text to observe and point out the contradiction with respect to economics and the community's racism. For years, African Americans had been among his father's most numerous customers and it was on their patronage that the Millers had built and maintained their business and homes (51, 200). Herb is perplexed at the sudden fear and disdain on the part of the community for the customers that had helped them lived comfortably. However, these brief observations are as close as Sinclair comes to offering an economic or structural assessment of racism. Otherwise, Herb's explanations remain squarely within the realm of the psychological.

Herb is highly critical of the older generation of Jews in the community. The community's response to the Santina incident appalls him, as does the community's idealization of Palestine. For Herb, Jewish identity is not about being intellectual and cultured or about having a Homeland. Rather, it's about being "good, decent, compassionate" (202). Herb reveals to Ruth that he is grateful to the *Schwartze* for revealing all the repressed anxieties buried within him, his family, and all the members of the community: "The Schwartze coming into a neighborhood—you know, it can smack you like a psychiatrist's talk-medicine. It has an effect on stuff

that's been there all along—hidden. All that poison starts bouncing up to the surface" (205-206). This comment makes explicit the psychological foundations of racism and establishes a method by which Herb is able to unlearn his family and community's expectations and values.

Following the incident between Ross Valenti and the African American man, a confrontation between Herb and Mr. Miller in front of Ruth reveals the former's infidelity to their mother. For Herb, this moment illustrates the degree to which their father's malevolence toward his family and his racial prejudice is merely a cover for the anxiety and inadequacy he feels about his personal failures as a husband, father, businessman, and community leader. For Herb, the arrival of the *Schwartze* to their neighborhood was the impetus to stand up and hold their father accountable for his hypocrisy and cruelty. For Ruth, this is the moment that compels her to reject her father's standards and finally accept Chip as the one who can provide her the comfort, safety, and intimacy for which she has longed. Herb and Ruth Miller break from their family's and community's expectations and become more accepting of American identity and associated liberal values—particularly with respect to the needs of the individual. However, they are not characterized as changelings—they are positioned as agents of individual change but not social change.

The novel ends on both an optimistic and sobering tone. Jules has passed away and Vincent gains possession of the notebooks in which he wrote his poetry. Dave's transformation into a changeling is complete—after taking Vincent's advice and resolving his fear and sadness over his mother, Vincent decides to introduce

him to Clara. Her father continues to mend the schism between him and Shirley by spending time with Manny. However, as Vincent looks through her basement she discovers that her father has set the furnace up so that it will burn the house down. This is a desperate attempt on his part to collect insurance money so that they can move away without having to sell their home to someone outside the community—either an African American or someone willing to rent to African Americans. The older generation's prejudice is as strong as ever and I believe this sobering conclusion is intended to illustrate the enormity of the problem and the ongoing need to remain assertive.

At the time *The Changelings* was published, antiracist liberalism had almost completely transformed from Depression/New Deal era economic and structural explanations of social problems to ones that focused primarily on individual psychology and identified the domestic space as the site in which ideal citizens were produced. *The Changelings* affirms this ideology in important ways. Throughout the novel, domestic and other private spaces are the ones in which young citizens are educated and community values and expectations instilled. However, rather than limiting the scope of this educational experience to the nuclear family and individual domestic spaces, education takes place amongst peers and within other private spaces. Within this context, children and young adults need not depend on their parents, but can rely on peers to challenge their family's antiquated ideas and work to resolve the anxieties that produce racial prejudice. In doing so, Sinclair sustains society's emphasis on childhood but accords far more autonomy and independence to children than many antiracist liberals did. Further, Sinclair advocates an ideal of

citizenship that is more idealistic and assertive than the even-tempered ideal advocated during this time period.

Sinclair continuously returns to the family and the domestic sphere as sources of anxiety and her focus on the Jewish American community illustrates how conflicts between assimilation and maintaining ethnic identity and the struggle to achieve economic mobility in pursuit of the American dream help to perpetuate the anxieties that produce racism. Ultimately, *The Changelings* advocates individual, psychological change over structural change and a colorblind approach to race. It indicates that in order to see others who are different as essentially the same, individuals must deal with "inside stuff" and confront the anxieties that compromise their psychological well being and hinder their ability to accept and motivate social change.

Epilogue

This dissertation began with several broad intellectual interests in mind: First, the proliferation of feminist political analyses that examined liberalism and its failure to deliver on the promise of gender equality; second, the relevance of this theory to feminist literary studies; and finally, my interest in the work of Ann Petry, which was expanded to include other writers publishing in the early cold war period. Eventually these interests consolidated around the theme of American citizenship. I selected *The Street* by Petry, *The Dollmaker* by Harriette Arnow, and *The Changelings* by Jo Sinclair and treated each as a case study through which I could examine their engagement with the politics of citizenship, paying particular attention to gender, race, ethnicity, and class. From these I generated the following questions: Do these novels offer any insight into the politics of citizenship? Do they illuminate or challenge conventional knowledge regarding the political context of the 1940s and 1950s? Can contemporary political analyses—particularly those concerned with autonomy, individualism, and liberalism be useful in interpreting midcentury literary texts?

Thematically, these novels are linked through their depictions of private life, intimate domestic relations, and domesticity and motherhood, and their engagement with dominant discourses of American citizenship in the years following World War II. Collectively, the novels embrace a range of critical approaches: antiracist protest, psychological realism, and humanitarian, among others. The novels indicate the contradictory nature of dominant discourse and the degrees to which many individuals are excluded from attaining ideals of citizenship

as a result of both structural inequality and individual psychology. Chronologically, they reflect changes within political liberalism and popular culture in which social problems (such as racism and poverty) became increasingly linked, not to economics, but to individual psychology and interpersonal relationships. It is not clear, at this point, if this is indicative of broader changes in the time period's literary culture with respect to protest narratives and other socially conscious novels. Further research is warranted on this question.

Using the work of contemporary feminist scholars and post World War II psychologists and sociologists, I developed a framework for approaching the gender politics of the 1940s and 1950s. My approach to citizenship does not rely on formal definitions of civil citizenship (the type most associated with the United States and America's democratic culture) or of social citizenship (Fraser and Gordon 90-91). Instead, I use a broad and informal definition that focuses on the everyday lives of individuals and their families. This is supported by contemporary feminist scholarship, particularly those who argue that the oppression of women cannot be understood apart from the private sphere, family, and personal relationships. Furthermore, during the 1940s and 1950s the ideals of citizenship and the preservation of American democracy were argued to depend, not on economic equality (as it had been during The Great Depression and New Deal), but on the conduct of individuals in the private sphere. Within this context, motherhood and the domestic sphere were politicized in specific ways to help secure democratic values. My dissertation examines how these novels reflect and resist the

expectations of femininity, domesticity, and sexuality that were connected to American citizenship.

The ideals of citizenship defined during this time period were complex and varied. Furthermore, much of my analysis focuses on liberalism (in addition to citizenship) and this warrants some clarification. My framework relies on Carole Pateman's analysis of political philosophy and Martha Fineman's elaboration of political and economic autonomy. Pateman's analysis of the failure of liberalism to secure liberation for women examines the basic tenets of liberal philosophy. At its root liberalism cannot secure liberation because its entire premise is predicated on the subjugation of the private sphere to that of the public. Following this, Fineman argues that autonomy, the status by which individuals are able to assume full citizenship (and reap its rewards), is an unattainable ideal. It is not a natural stage into which individuals are born; it is a status that is achieved through the acquisition of income and depends on the unpaid, caretaking labor of women. Motherhood is both ideologically and functionally incompatible with autonomy and prevents substantial claims to citizenship.

The depiction of the public and private spheres and the novels' treatment of motherhood and domesticity are integral to my analysis. However, the treatment of these spheres in classical philosophical philosophy cannot account for liberalism's failure to deliver on the promise of equality in any given time period. This also cannot adequately explain how the novels I have chosen engage the politics of citizenship in so far as they engage issues of equality and other liberal tenets. In order to bridge the gap between liberal political philosophy and the political culture

of the 1940s and 1950s and address the approaches to liberalism that my dissertation engages, some explanation is required.

It is impossible to understand American liberalism using only abstract political philosophy. In so far as it characterizes American political culture, liberalism is a discipline that is subject to the historical context and material conditions in which its principles emerge and are applied. Many contemporary political philosophers and historians, feminist and otherwise, are careful not to adhere to a rigid set of parameters when outlining liberalism. Instead, they indicate both specific philosophical principles as well as historically specific and highly contested political ideals and practices. Following this, I assume that political liberalism and American citizenship are, at best, loosely connected, and that their relationship depends on which individuals and institutions were articulating and disseminating ideals of citizenship at a particular time. According to Cheryl Lynn Greenberg,

> By the 1940s American liberalism had taken on a new character, chastened by Nazi racism, emboldened by the triumph of democracy, energized by anticolonialism but fearful of communism—or anything that looked like communism. This postwar liberalism had at its root four basic assumptions. First, rights accrue to the individual, not to groups. Second, although achievement depends on the individual, the state has a role to play in guaranteeing equality of opportunity (but not equality of outcome). Third, in a capitalistic democracy, liberalism stresses reform rather than revolution, compromise rather than confrontation. Finally, as its goal for civil society,

> liberalism enthrones pluralism, the championing of difference within a broadly agreed-upon framework of what constitutes socially acceptable behavior. (9)

Within the context of my analysis, liberals and liberalism are indicated by activism and scholarship that is committed to addressing racial inequality; they are also indicated by democratic politicians and a presidential administration committed to making the benefits of the new, postwar economy accessible to everyone and to broadening the scope of democratic participation to include families and children. Finally, an immigrant community struggling with conflicts that emerge over assimilation and ethnic identity weighs the values of individualism and pluralism as well as their role in social change.

My analysis focuses on several dominant notions of American citizenship that were circulated within political rhetoric and reinforced by popular culture and academic scholarship during the time period. Using contemporary historical scholarship (feminist and otherwise) and psychological and sociological studies of race, ethnicity, and economics conducted in the postwar period, I outline three discursive contexts that perpetuated the expectations of femininity, motherhood, and domesticity that were said to be integral to the maintenance of democratic values and production of ideal citizens. These were sexual containment, the democratic family, and psychologically informed antiracist liberalism.

Contained sexuality refers to the ways in which “containment” came to define American national identity. In the postwar years, American society was characterized by cold war security fears and a revival of domestic ideology. In this

context, containment of so-called subversive forces, both internal and external, was an important goal of political and industrial leaders. Accordingly, communism and Soviet aggression and female sexuality needed to be contained. National strength depended on strong, masculine men to stand up against communist threats; strict gender norms secured through heterosexual marriage became linked to American citizenship and national duty. The democratic family model gained mainstream attention in the early 1940s when President Franklin Roosevelt indicated that, given children's integral role in democratic society, the entire nation should be invested in their physical, intellectual, emotional, and moral development. Following this, child psychologists and other experts on domestic and family arrangements advocated using the domestic space as a "cultural workshop" that would be modeled upon (and would therefore foster) democratic individualist values. Meanwhile, antiracist liberals began to move away from Great Depression and New Deal era economic approaches to racial prejudice and poverty to psychological explanations of these issues. In doing so, they looked to mothers as both the cause of and solution to racial prejudice. Racism was argued to be anti-American and served to weaken American masculinity. The eradication of racism depended on the ability of white mothers and black mothers to raise ideal citizens: even tempered men with healthy self esteems who would be able to function as productive individuals and uphold democratic values.

The novels engage the politics of citizenship in several ways. First, they undermine the strict division between the public sphere and the private sphere that was said to be crucial for securing democracy. The novels do not refute the

importance of the domestic sphere and its role in socializing individuals and perpetuating social values. However, they demonstrate how the ideal domestic space, characterized by an insular nuclear family, is one that is unattainable by some and not conducive to fostering democratic values for others. Second, they address specific social expectations and mores regarding behavior and relationships—especially with respect to sexuality and motherhood—and indicate the ways in which these expectations are, again, unattainable or contradictory to the goal of upholding democracy. Finally, they reveal the contradictions that inhere in the dominant discourses of American citizenship and illustrate the economic and psychological conditions that render citizenship and its promises difficult, if not impossible, to attain.

In each novel the functions and expectations of the domestic sphere—to fulfill all of society's recreational and socializing needs cannot be contained in the home and cannot be limited to the nuclear family, whether for reasons of economic inequality or psychological anxiety. Lutie, the protagonist of *The Street*, for example, exhibits a steadfast commitment to dominant discourses of domesticity and sexuality in an attempt to provide a safe home for her son so that she can raise him "fine and strong," a phrase often repeated in the text and which resonates strongly with characteristics of ideal citizenship. The failure of the domestic sphere to provide a space for socialization and comfort are continually linked to economics and leave children vulnerable to crime and violence. In this respect, the novel anticipates the emerging shift in politics that links racism (and other social

problems) to psychological dynamics and insists that those dynamics cannot be separated from the economic structures in which they are embedded.

On the other hand, *The Dollmaker* and *The Changelings* also illustrate how social roles within the domestic sphere cannot be contained in the home, but with different results. In the urban setting of Detroit, for example, *The Dollmaker* demonstrates how the "multi-ethnic community of women" replaced rural kinship networks in the urban setting and, rather than hinder individual progress, it was vital to the survival of poor and working class urban families. *The Changelings* accepts the basic premise of psychologically informed antiracist liberalism and that education and socialization in the domestic sphere were key to producing antiracist American citizens and securing democratic values. However, the characteristics of that sphere defied the expectations of the nuclear democratic family. In this respect community and peer relationships are linked to antiracist education and organization. While parents were perpetuating racial prejudice, a younger generation began to embrace more liberal democratic values of equality and engage in advocacy and consciousness raising.

Sexuality and the expectations of sexual containment are explored in two of the novels, *The Street* and *The Changelings*. In *The Street*, Lutie adheres strongly to the conventions of contained sexuality but her ability to reap its rewards are continuously thwarted by her economic circumstances. In *The Changelings*, rather than accept prevailing notions of women's sexual desire—that desire was acceptable within heterosexual marriage and as long as it was linked with motherhood—the novel affirms women's desire and refuses to limit the boundaries

of appropriate desire to motherhood. The novel uses sexuality as a way to navigate expectations of femininity and marriage by affirming the reality of adolescent sexuality. However, the novel also reveals the limits of sexuality and sexual expression, which, although potentially liberating for individuals, is not appropriate as a vehicle for social change.

In all these novels, citizenship and its rewards remain difficult to attain for the poor and working class, for individuals and families of color, and immigrants. With respect to the shift from economics to psychology as a means of assessing American citizenship and its attending ideals, the novels seem to form a trajectory, from *The Street*, which insists that economics remain central to understanding the problem of inequality and the failures of individuals to attain full citizenship, to *The Changelings*, which accepts the focus on psychology to understand and resolve racial prejudice (but rejects the Freudian explanations that link racism to pathological mothering). The anxiety that is the source of racism is linked primarily to a Jewish community's struggle with assimilation, maintaining ethnic identity, and attaining upward economic mobility.

Because it does not deal specifically with race, it is difficult to relate *The Dollmaker* to these texts. Nevertheless, *The Dollmaker* reveals, first, contradictions that inhere in institutions intended to maintain American democracy and second, individual conflicts over domesticity and motherhood. In doing so, it assesses both institutional and individual hindrances to citizenship. Furthermore, *The Dollmaker* engages sociological and psychological constructions of Appalachian culture and its relationship to American identity. *The Dollmaker* challenges stereotypes that

position Appalachia as something "other" to America by illustrating a range of perspective within an Appalachian family. Where some sociologists believed that rural culture and values were resistant to and incompatible with the industrial, consumer based culture that was coming to define American identity, *The Dollmaker* illustrates otherwise.

With respect to the goals of Women's Studies and feminist scholarship, I suggest that this dissertation follows certain academic traditions, particularly those of recovery and identification of a little studied novel and of a critical tradition, respectively. Although not a lost text, there is little research on *The Changelings* and the novel seems marginalized from the feminist literary "canon" despite praise from scholars such as Nellie McKay, Johnetta B. Cole, and Elizabeth H. Oakes. It is my hope that this novel is recognized for its contribution to feminist literature and literary history. Furthermore, I believe that the critical labor that the novels perform is consistent with the goals of and themes found in contemporary feminist scholarship, although it is not my intention to impose a contemporary feminist label on these texts. Instead, I argue that in order to understand and appreciate the strength of the novels' social criticism with respect to gender, it is imperative to examine their treatment of inequality along several axes of power including class, race, and ethnicity. The strength of their criticism is best understood by way of intersectionality, which remains an ongoing (albeit elusive) goal of contemporary feminist scholarship.

Historically, feminist scholarship on literature depended on historical, sociological, psychological, and philosophical studies of gender. As the discipline

moves forward, more attention is being paid to the methods and methodology of interdisciplinary scholarship. In addition to offering an example, I hope that this work also contributes to a better understanding of the process of producing interdisciplinary scholarship that is both thorough in its execution and also embraces the feminist political goals of challenging inequality and advancing social change.

Finally, feminist scholarship on motherhood and domesticity, while not monolithic, has generally focused on society's treatment of motherhood as a biological destination and the lack of respect and value accorded to women's unpaid, reproductive labor. These studies have been challenged for their failure to consider the ways in which race, class, and sexual orientation influence motherhood. For example, Patricia Hill Collins argues that "placing the experiences of women of color in the center of feminist theorizing about motherhood demonstrates how emphasizing the issue of father as patriarch in a decontextualized nuclear family distorts the experiences of women in alternative family structures with quite different political economies" (46). Although the mothers and families in the novels are linked, to some extent, by their class status, I have not prioritized any one group's experience. Rather, I look at motherhood (and domesticity) as a socially constructed idea on which the stability of a political structure (in this case, American democracy) is said to depend. In doing so, I hope to align my work with scholarship that looks at motherhood as social construction,[5]

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[5] For example, Martha Fineman's *The Neutered Mother, the Sexual Family, and Other Twentieth Century Tragedies* (1995), Sharon Hays' *The Cultural Contradictions of Motherhood* (1998), and Rebecca Jo Plant's *Mom: The Transformation of Motherhood in Modern America* (2010).

one that must be understood as a product of the historical context in which it is experienced and which cannot be studied apart from race, class, ethnicity, sexuality, disability, and so forth.

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