INFORMATION TO USERS

This manuscript has been reproduced from the microfilm master. UMI films the text directly from the original or copy submitted. Thus, some thesis and dissertation copies are in typewriter face, while others may be from any type of computer printer.

The quality of this reproduction is dependent upon the quality of the copy submitted. Broken or indistinct print, colored or poor quality illustrations and photographs, print bleedthrough, substandard margins, and improper alignment can adversely affect reproduction.

In the unlikely event that the author did not send UMI a complete manuscript and there are missing pages, these will be noted. Also, if unauthorized copyright material had to be removed, a note will indicate the deletion.

Oversize materials (e.g., maps, drawings, charts) are reproduced by sectioning the original, beginning at the upper left-hand corner and continuing from left to right in equal sections with small overlaps.

Photographs included in the original manuscript have been reproduced xerographically in this copy. Higher quality 6" x 9" black and white photographic prints are available for any photographs or illustrations appearing in this copy for an additional charge. Contact UMI directly to order.

ProQuest Information and Learning
300 North Zeeb Road, Ann Arbor, MI 48106-1346 USA
800-521-0600

UMI®
RICE UNIVERSITY

America Out of Place: The Gothic Relation between the South and the Nation

by

Chuck Jackson

A THESIS SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF THE REQUIREMENTS
FOR THE DEGREE

Doctor of Philosophy

APPROVED, THESIS COMMITTEE

Scott Derrick, Associate Professor, Chair
Department of English

Susan Lurie, Associate Professor
Department of English

Deborah Harter, Associate Professor
Department of French Studies

HOUSTON, TEXAS
APRIL 2001
Copyright

Chuck Jackson

2001
ABSTRACT

America Out of Place: The Gothic Relation between the South and the Nation

by

Chuck Jackson

A study of twentieth-century U.S. literature must take into consideration the way in which the South has been posited as a distinct, gothic region within or, at times, outside of the nation as a whole. Unlike other regions of the U.S., which might signify progress and freedom (the North and Northeast) or expansion and hope (the West), the South always signifies either the horrors of slavery and its legacy or, at best, a place of comic backwardness. But what happens when the constructed divide between the South and the nation collapses? When essential differences between the South and the nation are difficult to "tell"? My dissertation is not about a traditional split between the American North and South, but rather interrogates the ideological distinctions between the South and the nation itself. By focusing on how bodies absorb or expel extreme and everyday forms of violence and impurity in literary, cultural, and historical texts, my dissertation works to blur the border between the nation and what stands as its abject, internal other. From narratives of eugenics to narratives of lynching, agrarian manhood to the function of the National Guard, I articulate how stories about paranoia, physical injury, and bodily interiors interfere with the smooth functioning of "America" as an imagined community. In my analyses of works by Erskine Caldwell, Zora Neale Hurston, William Faulkner, Flannery O'Connor, James Dickey, Richard Wright, Jean Toomer, and Toni Morrison (among others), I closely read moments of corporeal and categorical indeterminacy to
show how the relation between the South and the nation is always a gothic one, one that can never fully be "told."
# Table of Contents

Acknowledgments

Introduction: The Horror of Region and Nation or,

The Gothic Inability to "Tell"  1

Blood Fictions

1  Eugenics, Whiteness, and National Pollution  31
2  An Angel Mired in Shit (Hurston)  50

Seed(s)

3  Agrarianism and the Violence of Sexual Difference (Faulkner and March)  82
4  Modernity, Masculinity, and Same-Sex Rape (O'Connor and Dickey)  113

On Guard(s)

5  Lynching Narratives and the Year 1919  156
6  National Suicide and the Black One-Man
Militia (Morrison, Toomer, and Wright) 164

7 How to Read the National Guard (Faulkner and Wright) 202

Notes 211

Works Cited 237
Acknowledgments

I would like to thank Susan Lurie for encouraging me to be unafraid of exploring my interests in race and class in unconventional ways. Her sustained interest in this project from its very inception emboldened me to develop my ideas even further. My deepest thanks go to Scott Derrick, who not only provided me with detailed comments and feedback on multiple drafts of each chapter, but whose daring, intellect, sensitivity, and creativity validated my own desire to work with and through difficult materials in imaginative ways.

Shannon T Leonard has provided me with endless intellectual and emotional support. I thank her for not only sharing ideas about this project at every stage, but for working with me as a dissertation writing partner, and for joining me in the struggle to work past personal insecurities and to forge ahead with newly found strength and determination.

Other faculty and graduate students from the English Department have influenced my thinking about this work, especially Jose Aranda, Yvonne Bruce, Krista Comer, Helena Michie, David Minter, and Michelle Taylor. Portions of the third section of this project benefited from feedback provided by the members of the 2000 Futures of American Studies Institute at Dartmouth College. Many thanks and much respect goes to Robyn Wiegman, who continues to be a source of inspiration.

Finally, I acknowledge the love and respect of my family (Mary Anne and Charles R. Jackson, Jr., Kathleen Jackson, and Mary Anne Choma) and Melanie Simone Schlossberg, who have provided me with a tremendous amount of support (especially
when things have seemed most horrifically out of place), and without whom this project would not be possible.
Introduction: The Horror of Region and Nation, or The Gothic Inability to "Tell"

If horror involves trembling, repulsion, and the production of an unwanted element, then to posit a "horror" of region and nation is to take what are often thought of as benign categories of geography (and, sometimes, culture and/or politics) and reframe them in terms of the body and its manifestation of phobic symptoms. A fear of geographical categories might seem a bit strange, but it is not only a single fear or phobia upon which I will be dwelling in this study. Horror, as Julia Kristeva has argued, assumes a particular kind of power because it attracts us just as much as it repels us. Kristeva argues that horror stems from abjection, that which "simultaneously beseeches and pulverizes the subject" or that which results when "'subject' and 'object' push each other away, confront each other, collapse, and start again -- inseparable, contaminated, condemned, at the boundary of what is assimilable, thinkable: abject" (5, 18). The subject, in the pages that follow, is that which transpires when the nation and the South "confront each other, collapse, and start again" in the twentieth century.

The horror of not being able to "tell" the difference between a nation and its most abject region, the South, stems from my own rigorous reading of literary texts that have ties to the South (as a geographic entity, as an ideological construct, or as an authorial identity), alongside narratives that describe the historical conditions that affect how stories of abjection and embodiment are told. Abjection appears in all of the texts I deal with as the horrors of blood, excrement, excess, murder, rape, and death. I begin, then, by
confessing, up front, that the borders that are constructed and dismantled in the names of regionalism and nationalism -- and more importantly, in the name of U.S.-South -- frighten me as much as the literary bodies that endlessly fall apart, ooze vital fluids, or endure relentless suffering.

Mary Douglas argues that dirt is "matter out of place..." Dirt is the by-product of a systematic ordering and classification of matter, in so far as ordering involves rejecting inappropriate elements" (36, emphasis mine). My study assumes that the matter of America can be "out of place" and that purity is fundamental to geographical divides. Is the South out of place in the nation, a kind of national dirt? Is the nation out of place in the South, a kind of regional dirt? Can we draw "America" out of the place of the South and back into the space of the nation, in an attempt to cleanse or keep both pure? In posing each of these questions, I seek to unsettle any stable notion of place in thinking about America and the South while also insisting that in the failure to put the South and the nation in some kind of "order," dirtiness results. For to put America in its proper place means that -- symbolically -- the South (and all its most immediate significations as the historical site of slavery, Reconstruction, and Jim Crow laws as well as sites of rural backwater towns, white trash dislocation, Christian fundamentalism, and an ideologically retrograde understanding of the relation between gender and sexuality) must be kept out of the official nation. The logical impossibility of such a move, then, assures one that America is always out of place, always has embedded within it that which it needs to expel in order to keep dirt-free. To posit "America" as that which is "out of place," moreover, is also to refuse "America" as a sign of the good, clean home.

"Uncanny" is the word Freud draws upon to name the psychic effects of the
unfamiliar within the familiar: "the uncanny would always be that in which one does not know where one is" (370). Tracing its etymology, Freud notices how unheimlich (in the German) ends up signifying both the home-like and the un-home-like; the word is ambivalent, "the word heimlich exhibits one [meaning] which is identical with its opposite, unheimlich" (375). The horror of not being able to tell the difference between the familiar and the unfamiliar, home and not-home, the nation and the South, is what the following pages will explicate.

Un-defining "America"

Within the last two decades, at least, studies that question the logic of "America," as it is discursively produced both within and outside the material and symbolic borders of the United States, have contributed to the de-centering of nationalist narratives -- narratives that situate "America" as an impermeable category resistant to critique. Feminist, racial, ethnic, postcolonial, queer, class-based, and comparativist studies that critique, reverse, refuse, or subvert a patriotic canon of nationally recognized writers (usually white, male, and northeastern) continue to question how national literature is formed in the U.S., pushing the limits of dominant cultural paradigms. In light of identity politics, the fantasy of national coherence has been shattered, exposing such a fantasy as that which only ever produces a self-abstracted, disembodied subject -- what Lauren Berlant calls the "bodiless citizen" of the white male ("National" 112). As Berlant argues, national bodies are "ideally" imaginary, constructed as prostheses "that . . . replace the body of pain with the projected image of safety and satisfaction" (114). Since my work centers precisely on "the body in pain" -- the body as it is torn between the prosthetic
comfort of national belonging and the material conditions of localized abjection, deprecation, and beleaguerment, it is with the problem of how to think outside the nation while being fully lodged within it that this Introduction begins.

How is a regional body or a regional subject different from a national body or national subject? Robert Maria Dainotto's work on geocultural differences and regionalism argues that, in the humanities, a critical shift occurred at the end of the twentieth century in which intellectuals desired to "speak from a place" in order to challenge nationalist discourses of cultural and political unity (486).\(^1\) Identity politics, in other words, not only holds critics accountable for how they treat or elide variables of race, class, gender, ethnicity, and sexuality, but also insists that scholars locate their own overlapping and contradictory subject position(s).\(^2\) "Speaking from a place," then, extends a spatial metaphor into the realm of identity politics. To locate the subject in terms of race, gender, class, and sexuality is to suggest that there is a correlation between the body and its categorical markers and the particularities of spatial organization. The mapping of identities for the sake of opening up the universal category of Man thus parallels the regionalist's desire to map "place" as a local, distinctive site that resists the universalizing power of the nation.

**Regionalism**

Judith Fetterley and Marjorie Pryse, for example, argue that, just as "regionalism" stands as a generic "third term" between nineteenth-century "realism" and "naturalism," so, too, can U.S. regionalism signify a middle term between nationalism and imperialism.\(^3\) At the 2000 Dartmouth Institute for the Futures of American Studies,
Fetterley and Pryse argued that American regionalism functions as a "transvestite" and "queer" literary and critical category, one that crosses the borders of gender and racial binaries, presenting androgynous and/or biracial figures saturated by the poetics of detail. Thus, the feminist/queer/multi-ethnic regionalisms of Dunbar-Nelson, Zitkala-Sa, and Edith Maud Eaton, for example, stand in opposition to the patriarchal nationalisms of Melville, Hawthorne, or James. An alternative narrative mode which incorporates minority and queer female voices, U.S. regionalism, for Fetterley and Pryse, stands as a critique of the oppressive forces of global capitalism because its conventional plot structures are anti-imperialist; the marginal status of regionalism locates it as somewhere beyond the binary of American/Un-American.

Dainotto, however, challenges the claims of critics like Fetterley and Pryse, arguing that new turns towards regionalism "revive some peculiarly nationalist ideas by passing them off as 'new' regional ones" (488). "After all," Dainotto asks, "is regionalism really trying to liberate marginal cultures from the political impositions of nationalism? Or is it trying to imagine yet again a . . . 'Spirit of Place' whose boundaries protect a community from the political and cultural negotiations imposed by differences of 'economics, gender, race, creed'"? (488). Dainotto observes that while a new focus on regionality assumes it challenges nationalism as the appropriate frame for thinking about geography, history, culture, and literature, in the end, "new" studies in regionalism end up being at odds with the important kind of work being done by postcolonial scholars and in critical race theory. Regionalism restores place "without historical or geographic reference;" the trope of region often functions to serve as an "unadulterated version" of the nation -- a "trope of 'purer' value" (Dainotto 493, 500, 502). Dainotto's critique serves
as a critical reminder of the possibly disabling ways that ahistorical regionalism might reproduce "region" as a utopic site within the nation, a pure site in need of protection. The protection of these uncontaminated literatures (uncontaminated by nationalist patriarchy or global politics) winds up, in the end, recapitulating the classic, pure values of American literature that regionalism sought to displace in the first place.  

In the wake of Dainotto's critique of new regionalism, how, then, might one proceed with an analysis of literature with ties to a specific region? If a literature cannot (or should not) be absorbed by regionalist or nationalist paradigms, how does a literary critic deal with matters of place, especially if a critic works with literature tied to the U.S. South, a region that, in the twentieth century, has already been marked as "new" (the New South 1880-1920), predating the "new regionalism" that Dainotto takes to task? Does the South function as the American region par excellence, the region that allows the emergence of "nation" everywhere else? In this dissertation, I will be working with the assumption that, indeed, in the twentieth century -- after the Civil War, after the Reconstruction, and halfway into the formation of the New South -- the South stands not only in a traditional or classical opposition to the North but, crucially, as a site of the nation's own internal difference from itself.

The South

Southern literary studies have often been associated with a conservative project that sought, since roughly the 1930s, to reclaim the South as a site of anti-industrial, pro-agrarian, patriarchal, and implicitly (when not explicitly) white supremacist culture. John Crowe Ransom, Alan Tate, David Davidson, and Robert Penn Warren, along with other
Southern Agrarians working in the 1930s, sought to renew the ideals and aesthetics of the Old South, while simultaneously calling for a New Criticism in the interpretation of literature, especially poetry. Both intellectual projects prioritized a return to a naturalized belief in organic wholeness and aesthetic purity. The Southern Agrarian tradition sought to separate and protect itself from the larger project of national progress, urbanization, and industrial expansion, thus representing the kind of regional purity described above by Dainotto. The overt whiteness and maleness that marked the "beginnings" of southern literary study, therefore, also created a racial and gendered paradigm that held sway over southern literary canon building until at least the 1980s.

In an often-times interesting but, in the end, somewhat stodgy essay entitled "The State of Southern Literary Scholarship" (1988), Lewis P. Simpson, for example, articulates a crisis in Southern literary studies because new generations of critics and creative writers will "find out about Gettysburg from a textbook rather than from an uncle, though of course he might have found out from an uncle who remembered what an uncle had told him" (252). The "real" referent of History, then, is gone, lost as successive "he's" move further and further in time away from "Gettysburg." Even in 1988, Simpson thinks of knowledge formation as a singularly masculine activity: uncles tell other uncles who finally tell "him." (Women don't ask or tell about "Gettysburg" in 1988?) The anxiety over a potentially tainted, impure knowledge of the South suggests both an explicit resistance to modernization (the mass production of the South in textbook or, for that matter, televisual, cinematic, or hypertext form) and the tacit resistance to postmodern critical theory (academics who are not "uncles," who are outside the southern family). Simpson's essay laments and then reluctantly allows for the contamination of an
otherwise pure historical southern essence, an essence that can only be known by "a Faulkner, a Warren, a Lytle, a Caroline Gordon, a Richard Wright" because of their own historical proximity to "the closed society of the Old South, or . . . the semi-closed society of the Reconstruction and later" (251).

All this is to say that the legacy of southern regional pride and purity cannot be ignored. Simpson's essay implies that the Civil War and the Reconstruction era are the South and that it is sad that scholars and writers cannot know the pains of this era in the same way as those who lived through them did, a claim that I don't quite understand and one that I want to resist. Simpson's argument suggests to me the following re-phrasing of his article in a contemporary context: Given late-twentieth-century formations of marginalized identity-based critiques, scholars still invested in traditional or purist southern historical and literary paradigms might argue that the South and the southern white male must take its/his place alongside identity categories that have been done injury by the nation at large; the right to exclude and discriminate would thereby take on a minority status similar to the kind claimed by racial, ethnic, sexual, and gendered others.

I have no interest, here, in revitalizing a narrative of injured southern white male identity. Rather, I am drawn to twentieth-century literary and cultural texts with ties to the U.S. South because I am interested in the signification of national extremes. Unlike those regionalist critics who wish to preserve regions as an "unadulterated" geographical alternative to the larger nation, I turn to texts with ties to southern regions precisely because I am interested in how national excesses and impurities emerge -- with stunning clarity and force -- within a place which traditionally has had a strong investment in its own purity and difference.
But, again, rather than making claims about how to re-configure a southern literary canon or how to think about more inclusive or diverse ways of looking at the South, I examine the dynamic tension *between* the South and the nation from an anti-regionalist, anti-nationalist point of view. I am not looking neither to expand a southern literary canon, nor to claim what might have once been considered "southern" for the larger canon of "American" literature. My work does not dis-place the South with the nation, and it does not re-place the nation with the South. I am interested instead in the very possibility that such a dis- or re-placing could occur at all. I do not have an investment in denying that "the South" exists, nor do I look to affirm the realness of "America." This project examines the powerful contradictions involved in thinking that any kind of real divide exists at all between the South and the nation, and that these contradictions are spatially and ideologically separated so they might *never* be resolved. I argue that the South exists both within *and* outside of the nation in the twentieth century, pushing the limits of the nation's non-identical relation to itself ("America" does not equal America).^5

*America as Nation/The National Body*

The nation matters, then, when thinking about the South, since "America" carries as much ideological baggage as "the South" does, especially in the contemporary context of globalization and the transnational flow of capital. "America," to return to my earlier point, functions as an ideology, the cultural fiction of the U.S. as a geo-political entity. The nation-ness of America turns around America's inability ever to see itself as what Benedict Anderson calls "an imagined political community . . . both inherently limited
and sovereign" (6). Anderson explains that nations are "imagined because the members of even the smallest nation will never know most of their fellow-members, meet them, or even hear of them, yet in the minds of each lives the image of their communion" (6). Thus it makes sense that Anderson argues that it was the rise of mass publication (and, I would add, in the twentieth century, the broadcast of events through televisual and electronic and digital media) that allowed citizens to secure a sense of national identity by effecting a sense of temporal simultaneity and spatial unity, a "deep, horizontal comradeship" (7).

As I set forth at the beginning of this Introduction, the critique of America as an ideology (one imaginatively generated through and secured by the seemingly ceaseless appeal to American individualism, American freedom, the American mind, and/or the American way of life in everything from popular culture to Presidential political speeches) pervades late-twentieth-century critical studies of U.S. literary and cultural productions. Robyn Wiegman, for one, explains how "America" functions as an ideological narrative that in turn assures citizens of a common national identity. Wiegman describes "the story of 'America'" as "that infinitely rhetorical figure that secures itself through multiple historicizing narratives of geopolitical destiny and chosen peoples," a "mythological text that functions to weld disparities together" (115). This "mythological text" also "offers the singularity of identity as its triumphant resolution, a resolution that incorporates the fragmented excesses of social scripting into a narrative of continuity and unification" and, as a result, "fragmentation is transformed into fusion, and 'America' emerges as the integrating sign for a more encompassing identification" (Wiegman 174). The guarantee of a united community under the sign of "America," then,
always returns internal national divisions to the (false) promise of resolution, incorporation, continuity, fusion, and integration.

While thinking about the ways in which the textual sign of "America" functions to absorb and/or erase embodied and political differences in the name of national sameness, I want to return to Lauren Berlant's work on "the national body" to explain more fully how it functions as a trope of purity embedded in the story of America. In "National Brands/National Body," Berlant argues that "white male privilege has been veiled by the rhetoric of the bodiless citizen, the generic 'person' whose political identity is a priori precisely because it is, in theory, non-corporeal" (112). Berlant explains:

The Constitution's framers constructed the 'person' as the unit of political membership in the American nation; in so doing, they did not simply set up the public standard of abstract legitimation on behalf of an implicit standard of white male embodiment -- technically, in the beginning, property ownership was as much a factor in citizenship as any corporeal schema. Nonetheless, we can see a real attraction of abstract citizenship in the way the citizen conventionally acquires a new body by participation in the political public sphere. The American subject is privileged to suppress the fact of his historical situation in the abstract 'person:' but then, in return, the nation provides a kind of prophylaxis for the person, as it promises to protect his privileges and his local body in return for loyalty to the state. (112-3)

Occupying a site of privilege, the national body appears as the unencumbered public citizen, sheathed in the nation's guarantee that this body is the same as everyone else's body; its privacies are protected and its corporeality absolutely whole and seamless,
which is to say normative. In the same vein, Thomas Yingling has argued, "national identity requires an ideal conception of the body and a rejection of accomodation to Otherness" (25). The "story of America" -- the story of a singular imagined community and its featured trope of an idealized body and generic person -- thus trades on the promise of the same in exchange for a body marked as different, an incomplete gesture towards an "accomodation to Otherness" that, in the end, always shores up differences in the name of national unity. (A good, concrete example of this would be the text that appears on the Statue of Liberty, "Give me your tired, your poor, your huddled masses yearning to be free." A promise that no one's body will never again be tired, poor, or huddled together with others is, of course, impossible. But, metaphorically, this bit of text promises a national body, a replacement, in the public sphere, of the encumbered body with the prophylaxis of abstract citizenship.)

The shuttling I have performed above; back and forth between theories of the nation, regionalism, identity politics, embodiment, and “America,” shows how purity and its effects emerge as an overarching sign in the contemporary debate about the classification of literary and cultural objects. Wiegman, Berlant, and Yingling take issue with the construction of “America” as singular, abstract, and disembodied; as a sign of the nation’s purity -- a pure nation without impure bodies. Similarly, Dainotto’s critique of regionalism (as deployed by critics such as Fetterley and Pryse) worries about the repetition of nationalist purity in studies that privilege “place” over nation. And, surely, the concerns of the Southern Agrarians and, more currently, Simpson, serve as an example of how pro-regionalist ideologies might, in fact, ignore local differences for the sake of constructing non-national forms of (white male) purity. (The irony of the
Southern Agrarian notion that the South is “different” from the nation is that, even as the Agrarians rejected national progress and industrial capitalism, the implicit appeal to a disembodied, abstract, white masculine subject remains the same as in the national public sphere.) The crossing or mixing of the national with the regional, the public body with the private body, and the abstract with the material lends itself to the desecration of any of these categories as pure, fixed, or limited by binary oppositions. It is within the dialectical relation between supposed opposites, specifically between the South and the nation, that I situate the approach to my work in the rest of this dissertation.

*The Gothic as a Relation (A Return to Horror)*

My usage of the word “relation” in the preceding sentence suggests that it is in the act of telling -- of narration or the “relating” of one story to another -- that meaning unfolds as possibly beyond categorical oppositions, as multiple and often times contradictory. By staking a claim in the *relation* between the South and the nation, I enable a critical reading practice that situates itself as decidedly anti-regionalist and anti-nationalist, concerned instead with the disruption of insides and outsides. The relation I am describing can thus be categorized as a *gothic* relation.

The term “gothic” carries considerable weight in recent literary and cultural criticism, categorizing everything from genre (late-eighteenth-century and fin-de-siecle novels in England, and early-nineteenth-century American novels, to name the most familiar) to the monstrous bodies which appear in twentieth-century U.S. horror films. For the purposes of my own work -- a study of the relation between the South and the nation -- the term “gothic” seems appropriate because, as Judith Halberstam argues,
“[g]othic . . . is the breakdown of genre and the crisis occasioned by the inability to ‘tell,’ meaning both the inability to narrate and the inability to categorize. Gothic . . . marks a peculiarly modern preoccupation with boundaries and their collapse” (23). Expanding upon Eve Sedgwick’s notion that the Gothic manifests “the trope of ‘live burial,’” out from which springs a narrative of paranoia and homophobia, Halberstam claims, “The sexual outsider in Gothic . . . is always also a racial pariah, a national outcast, a class outlaw” (20). For Halberstam, the gothic (which, one notes, she capitalizes without a qualifying article) assists in making sense of the relation between categories, and not of categories themselves: the disruption of insides and outsides, the collapsing of borders. The textual effect of categorical indeterminacy (the burial of one category within another and its subsequent “live” resurrection) thus produces subjects marked as Other to norms of race, gender, class, and sexuality.

Following Halberstam, I reference the gothic to describe the uncanny doubling at work in twentieth-century U.S. literature and culture with ties to the South. If commonsense suggests that the South represents that which is “buried” within the nation -- a kind of national undead that always signifies, most immediately, the horrors of slavery and its legacy -- then a more critical reading of such a configuration would also want to suggest that the nation is “buried” in the South. The South, in other words, can never be fully divorced from the nation just as the nation can never be fully divorced from the South. Each is buried inside the other to the point where one can no longer tell in whose backyard -- or in whose graveyard -- one is digging.

What I am calling the “gothic relation” between the South and the nation should be distinguished from traditional understandings of the Southern Gothic. While I have
yet to find any full length study of the Southern Gothic, several critics have investigated what Flannery O’Connor referred to as “a [southern] image of Gothic monstrosities and the idea of a [southern] preoccupation with everything deformed and grotesque” (“The Fiction,” 28). (I will return to “the grotesque” later.) In a 1985 Introduction to 3 by 3: Masterworks of the Southern Gothic, Lewis P. Simpson asserts that “the Southern Gothic mode had its inception in Thomas Jefferson, specifically in the nineteenth Query of his Notes on the State of Virginia (1785), in which the man of letters and slave master who composed the Declaration of Independence invokes a powerful vision of Virginia masters corrupted in intellect and spirit by their psychic bondage to their own slaves” (xi). While it might seem at first that Simpson argues for an indeterminate relation between the South and the nation, he instead delimits Gothic qualities as an inherent expression of the South as a region and, in the end, an essential quality of the human condition:

    Southern literary Gothicism . . . is ultimately emblematic of the deformation of the soul in its displacement from the culture that conceived the architecture of Chartres or Westminster Abbey to be the witness to generation after generation of the conjunction of time and eternity, the mortal and the immortal. The drama of the estrangement of the soul from the tradition of faith in this conjunction and the soul’s transformation into the alien entity of the ‘self,’ isolated in the modern society of science and history, composes the underlying subject of modern literature. (Introduction xiii)

Simpson’s analysis of the gothic as an essential alienation of the “soul” from “modern society” (so effortlessly characterized here as completely European, harkening back to the essay discussed earlier, in which all scholars and writers are referred to as male)
exemplifies the problem at hand. The dialectical tension between the South and the nation evaporates in Simpson's analysis of the Southern Gothic, replaced by the generic category of "modern literature." Simpson does little, then, to push the limits of one's thinking about national dividedness and the inability, as Halberstam would have it, to "tell" the difference between the South and the nation. Or, perhaps more accurately, Simpson's own inability to "tell" the difference between the South and the nation without telling it as a story about "modern literature" embodies the very problem of thinking about the South and the nation both separately and together.

In an intriguing re-imagining of the gothic in America as an oppositional literary strategy, Teresa A. Goddu observes that

There was no founding period of gothic literature in America, and given the critical preference for the term romance, few authors were designated as gothicists. Even when such authors as Edgar Allan Poe or periods such as the twentieth-century Southern Renaissance are associated with the gothic, they reveal the difficulty of defining the genre in national terms: the American gothic is most recognizable as a regional form. Identified with gothic gloom and doom, the American South serves as the nation's 'other,' becoming the repository for everything from which the nation wants to disassociate itself. (4)

Goddu points out, rightly, I think, that the critical desire to fix the gothic as a genre -- as something tangible that can be pointed to in literary texts -- always ends up detaching the gothic from the nation and reattaching it to the South. Goddu continues:

The gothic, like race, seems to become most visible in a southern locale. Indeed, the South's 'peculiar' identity has not only been defined by its particular racial
history, but has also often been depicted in gothic terms: the South is a benighted landscape, heavy with history and haunted by the ghosts of slavery. The South’s oppositional image -- its gothic excesses and social transgressions -- has served as the nation’s safety valve: as the repository for everything the nation is not, the South purges contrary impulses. More perceived idea than social reality, the imaginary South functions as the nation’s dark other. By so closely associating the gothic with the South, the American literary tradition neutralizes the gothic’s threat to national identity. As merely a regional strategy, the gothic’s horrifying hauntings, especially those dealing with race, can be contained. (76)

With critical acuity, Goddu perceives that the gothic materializes as national excess in the figure of the South. The South, in this formulation, literalizes the gothic in order to guarantee that the nation remains, as it were, in light. It is this equation that Goddu seeks to subvert in her chapter on the Southern Gothic, by asserting “Instead of sleeping with comforting illusions of race as only a regional specter, we must remain awake to the nightmares of race that haunt our national literature” (93). Rather than locating the gothic in the slippage between the South and the nation, Goddu concludes that the gothic must be returned to the nation proper, that the South must be absorbed back into the nation as a whole. The gothic, Goddu seems to insist, is a narrative strategy, one that officially belongs not to the South (an easy out), but to America itself.

Recent studies of the gothic therefore suggest that a critic will have to choose between a nationalized form of the gothic or a regionalized one. Paradigmatically, the gothic has belonged to a place one can finally know and describe as inherently haunted by an Other. Once again, I am unsure about the usefulness of tying the gothic to a literature
exclusively defined as American or southern. Perhaps one of the reasons for my hesitation to ascribe the gothic to geopolitical literary categories (American or southern) stems from an anxiety about the kinds of texts under examination in the following chapters. While my work involves the study of novels and short stories (some belonging simultaneously to the literary fields of American Literature, African American literature, Southern Literature, and Women's Literature), I also work with a variety of other narrative to make my argument. Anthropological, social scientific, historical, and political texts receive the same kind of scrutiny, in the pages that follow, as any fictional representation of the body, violence, or impurity. And although I am not trained as an anthropologist, sociologist, historian, physiologist, or political scientist, I do work with texts produced within these fields and treat them as narrative, as part of the relation between the South and the nation. If the "gothic" attaches itself to genre, as a categorical marker of a particular kind of fiction, then it loses its hold once it is deployed outside the realm of literary criticism. Thus if all the fiction I work with might, for the sake of convenience, fall into the gothic genre, then so, too, do all the other narratives with which I work: the gothic eugenic study, the gothic charting of physical types, the gothic political manifesto, the gothic social history of masculinity, the gothic history of the military, and the gothic documentation of lynching (as well as the gothic theories of nation, person, region, identity, and the body). It is my argument that each of these narrative forms overlaps with stories written by Zora Neale Hurston, Erskine Caldwell, William Faulkner, William March, Flannery O'Connor, James Dickey, Toni Morrison, Jean Toomer, and Richard Wright to give rise to "the gothic relation," the inability to "tell" the difference between the South and the nation from any singular point of view.
If interdisciplinarity signals the gothic breakdown of "literary criticism," then perhaps the tropological interests that accompany my analyses of the aforementioned narratives can assist, temporarily at least, in securing some kind of foothold in gothic markings. As perhaps is already apparent, synecdoche is the dominant trope of the literary and non-literary texts with ties to the twentieth-century U.S./South. While synecdoche has traditionally been thought of as a trope that describes how a part stands in for a whole, I am influenced by more recent studies that question what, exactly, characterizes the relation between part and whole. In the twentieth century, the South is always encoded as the part of the nation that jeopardizes its wholeness; the South turns, as a result, into a kind of "hole" itself, an American "hole" that disrupts the smooth functioning of an imagined community either because it is a site into which all American ideals will irretrievably fall or because it is from out of this hole that unwanted meaning will emerge. The unstable relation of part to whole surfaces in various forms in all of the texts with which this dissertation is concerned. Blood, excrement, and seed, for example, function throughout my dissertation as tropes for the instability of national, regional, racial, gender, class, and sexual categories as each is embedded within narratives of pollution, contamination, violence, purity, and uniformity. The partial or fluid body, therefore, metonymically represents the gothic relation between the South and the nation: a spatialized, slippery subject who cannot be divorced either from the abstracting imperatives of the national public sphere or the corporeal weightiness of the nation's internal, private other.

*The Grotesque (Interior Matters of the Gothic)*
The above invocation of partial bodies and their fluids invites a critical reading that prioritizes "the grotesque." While "the grotesque" harkens back to my earlier glossing of "abjection" and "the uncanny," I also make use of the grotesque, here, to invoke a privileged term in traditional studies of southern literature (most often used to describe the work of Flannery O'Connor and Carson McCullers).\textsuperscript{10} The grotesque materializes, perhaps obviously, in the textualization of the gothic and, in recent years, has been articulated in conjunction with studies of gender and race in U.S. literature and culture. Mary Russo's \textit{The Female Grotesque: Risk, Excess, and Modernity} (1994) and Leonard Cassuto's \textit{The Inhuman Race: The Racial Grotesque in American Literature and Culture} (1997) examine and extend Mikhail Bakhtin's theory that bodily openness, incoherence, and incompletion work to subvert hegemonic cultural and political ideologies. Bakhtin's \textit{Rabelais and his World} champions the grotesque body and its subversion of the political culture of the European Renaissance.\textsuperscript{11} (More on Russo and Cassuto in a minute, but first, Bakhtin.)

Bakhtin delineates two kinds of bodies that emerged in the culture of the Renaissance: the classical body (whole, smooth, closed, clean, and singular) and the grotesque body (partial, rugged, open, dirty, and multiple). Bakhtin associates the classical body with bourgeois sensibilities; it is individualistic, concerned only with the mind. The grotesque body, on the other hand, is the body-out-of-control, a body that emphasizes its orifices (mouth, nose, and anus), its protuberances (tongue, genitals), and its fluids (tears, drool, regurgitation, mucous, urine, feces, blood, semen, milk). As Bakhtin puts it, "the grotesque ignores the impenetrable surface that closes and limits the body as a separate and completed phenomenon. The grotesque image displays not only
the outward but also the inner features of the body: blood, bowels, heart and other organs. The outward and inward features are often merged into one” (318). For Bakhtin, the grotesque body is always about the body's interiors, the body-in-transition, the body-in-process; it always has a material link to its historical and political condition.¹²

The Bakhtinian grotesque has a strong appeal, for he asserts, in more ways than one, that the material conditions of history and politics can be subverted by the body’s own ability to expose how systems are never complete. However, the universal qualities Bakhtin attributes to the grotesque body (all bodies in all political cultures throughout history) seem weak in light of the historical specificity of oppression, both within and outside of the United States.

Mary Russo, for example, scrutinizes the “senile and pregnant hag” that Bakhtin makes central to his argument. Russo critiques Bakhtin’s universalism, but still argues for a feminist politics of the grotesque, one that involves “a reconfigured body politic which recognizes similarity and coincidence, not as the basis of a new universalism, but as an uncanny connection characteristic of discourses of the grotesque” (14). Discursive grotesquery circles around “[t]he reintroduction of the body and categories of the body . . . into the realm of what is called the ‘political’” (Russo 54). This requires, for Russo, the politicization of the static image of the grotesque female body as it appears not only in the work of Bakhtin, but also in literary and cultural productions by and about women.

Relatedly, Leonard Cassuto borrows from Bakhtin’s understanding of the grotesque body to theoretically trace how Puritan-era captivity narratives, slave narratives, and, finally, Herman Melville’s Typee and Moby Dick all involve a racial “grotesquification” of the human body.¹³ Whereas Russo’s work challenges the reader to
think critically about the potential of the grotesque to simultaneously subvert and support sexist ideologies in contemporary culture, Cassuto fixes the grotesque body as representative of "a process in which a person is made to enter into the liminal space between human and thing, a grotesque space where the person's essential humanness is questioned but not altogether denied" (16). Cassuto's appeal to the "essential" category in the above sentence clues the reader into how the grotesque can, at times, replace rigorous political critique, a critique which privileges historical and cultural specificities over the essential category of the human body. In Cassuto's formulation, the grotesque collapses the inability to tell the difference between part and whole back into the whole itself -- the generic, essential human body. In other words, for Cassutto, the grotesque re-maps the gothic relation (the inability to "tell") as that which can, finally, be told as the story of the human.

I use the grotesque, therefore, not in the way the Cassutto understands it but, instead, in a way that demands, once again, the indeterminacy between part and whole. In doing so, I propose a theory of the grotesque in which partial, deformed, wounded, or oozing bodies can neither be reabsorbed into some essential whole (such as the human or, for that matter, the nation) nor re-imagined as completely outside the whole, which only ends up re-creating the grotesquity of excess as a complete form in and of itself (yet another whole, a regional or partial whole). I read the grotesque as that which emerges out of the gothic inability to tell, a horrific state of in-between-ness, only further complicating the relation between the body and its parts, self and other, and the nation and the South. For this reason, my work resists the grotesque body as something to celebrate or champion or, for that matter, criticize and deplore. Rather, the grotesque
indicates how narrative attempts to control or fix the nation/South binary always fails in the twentieth century, jarring the reader out of any secure knowledge of places, bodies, genres, and identities.

The stories under examination in this dissertation are not, finally, about figuring out how the gothic or the grotesque has changed over time. I do not point to the grotesque or gothic and watch as it slowly transforms from the beginning of the century to its end. Nor do I argue that we can witness the direct representation of the South and the nation as each moves from geographical to ideological categories and back again. Instead, all of these categories are subtly explored and sometimes implicitly critiqued as each section and chapter unfolds.

Three Parts and Seven Chapters

Ironically enough, I have divided this study into three parts in order to demarcate how the relation between the South and the nation in the twentieth century appears in the various forms. Part One, "Blood Fictions," explores how blood works as a synecdoche of race and, concomitantly, of racial purity as it is fractured by class and regional differences. The "fictions" of blood that this section addresses are multiple. In Chapter One, "Eugenics, Whiteness, and National Pollution," I analyze how early-twentieth-century ideologies of white blood and American racial purity take shape in eugenic writings. An ideology that combines the logic of sanitation and hygiene with blood purity, eugenic thought produced family studies that documented how racial whiteness became subject to particular "problems," problems that could be directly read upon the body as symptomatic of a naturally inherited, interior blood pollution. Eugenic narratives
resignify blood as a potentially hazardous -- but naturally occurring -- interior substance, at odds with the white body that it deforms, retards, or impoverishes. More broadly, bad blood prevents the body from sustaining an un-re-markable white purity, a racial whiteness that does not, so to speak, "tell" of its own embodiment. White bodies, according to eugenic narratives, can and should conform to an abstract, bourgeois norm -- a national body, as Berlant and Yingling have described it. The narratives generated by eugenic anthropologists tell stories about rural areas of the U.S. where impoverished families do not have access to capital, information, or material goods and services -- the life-blood that circulated throughout the rest of the nation as it was more fully born into the Progressive era. Eugenic narratives, therefore, develop a theory in which the pollution of blood produces the place in which contaminated bodies dwell, places signified as stagnant regions of the nation. In other words, since blood functions as the primary signifier of racial pollution in contaminated American regions, then "blood" also functions as a metonymy for the infrastructural flow of the nation itself, polluting the nation if vital materials never arrive (or, if they do arrive, cease to re-circulate) in regions out of the mainstream. Various regions of the South, I argue, exemplify just such pollution in the national imaginary.

Chapter 2, "An Angel Mired in Shit (Hurston)," shows how Zora Neale Hurston's Seraph on the Suwanee imagines the split between the lure of national identification and the horror of localized abjection. Hurston's novel tells how the rural South, traditionally, houses the kinds of white trash bodies under surveillance in eugenic narratives, yet Hurston's telling also involves several twists that turn around the inability to tell. In the story of Arvay Meserve's ascension from white trash pariah to bourgeois maternal angel
in the house, class, gender, and regional differences fracture white racial purity, questioning the logic of blood as a signifier of racial truth. Hurston critiques an ideology of American whiteness that seeks to keep itself both physically and economically pure and that seeks to differentiate itself from its uncanny, Southern, white trash double. As a result, *Seraph* pokes fun at the way in which the synecdoche of blood all too easily collapses into a synecdoche of excrement. The novel interrogates what it means that race can be thought of as a national achievement, a perfectable form hovering over the muck of Southern Florida swamplands.

Just as Part One deals with how texts inscribe southern and national forms of belonging as a matter of blood cleanliness and the perfection of whiteness, Part Two addresses how the relation between the South and the nation sullies the purity of masculine identity. Part Two, "Seed(s)," explores the sexual and agrarian connotations of seed. This section's primary concern is with how industrial modernism and national progress impose upon the purity of American manhood as it attempts to sprout, bud, and blossom in the South's Gulf Coastal Lowlands and in the Upland South's Appalachian Mountains. Chapter 3, "Agrarianism and the Violence of Sexual Difference (Faulkner and March)," begins by combining John Crowe Ransom's essay from *I'll Take My Stand* (1930), "Reconstructed but Unregenerate," with theoretical work that draws from what G.J. Barker-Benfield has called a "spermatic economy." I argue that, given the Agrarian lament that the South has been feminized by national progress and industrial modernism, Southern Renaissance representations of male sexual fluids split into a binary: the healthy, agrarian seed of productivity (seed that "works") and the wasted, sexual seed of ejaculate (seed that does not "work," but is associated with pleasure). In each text in this
chapter, the negative side of this binary is gendered as feminine, wasteful, and detrimental to the constitution of agrarian manhood. Since "seed" connotes the sexual (semen, sperm) it signifies the male body out of control; and, since the agrarian South already stands in a feminized relation to national progress and industry, the feminine or female body ends up as the abjected site of male violence. This chapter pairs William Faulkner's *Light in August* (1932) and *As I Lay Dying* (1930) with William March's novel *The Bad Seed* (1955), arguing that the particularities of an agrarian spermatic economy produce an anxiety about the fluidity of the male body. As a result, fluidity and waste becomes fully projected onto "Woman," as is the case in Faulkner, or onto the body of a little girl, a "bad seed," as in the case of March.

Chapter Four, "Modernity, Masculinity, and Same-Sex Rape (O'Connor and Dickey)" extends my analysis of violence and masculine identity, but examines how the displacement of male anxieties about the body onto the female changes after the official Southern Renaissance. The spermatic economy described in the last chapter continues into this chapter, only in an economy without women. O'Connor's *The Violent Bear It Away* follows Francis Tarwater as he emerges from out of the hills of Powderhead, Tennessee and into a small, modern town, trying all the while to "tell" which ideology he will accept and which he will reject: the national modern secularism of his Uncle Rayber or the backwoods, deep South Christianity of his Great-Uncle Mason Tarwater. The horrific detailing of male bodies as they are hacked, twisted, writhing, engorged, or blown to pieces signifies the inability of Tarwater to tell how he will make sense of himself as a national or regional subject. In the end, O'Connor upsets the binary opposition by inserting a scene of same-sex rape by a "lavender colored stranger," who plants a different
kind of seed in young Tarwater altogether, finally allowing him to hear his call as a new prophet of the world.

The scene of same-sex rape in O'Connor's novel is repeated in James Dickey's *Deliverance* (1970), only instead of a young man on a quest to "choose" between the national and the regional, Dickey's novel further blurs the lines between nation and region in his distinction between rural, urban, and suburban areas of the South. *Deliverance* is a novel about four southern, suburban white men (at least one of whom holds a job in an urban environment) who take off into Appalachia for a vacation, to escape the quotidian of their middling lives and to test how their bodies naturally endure the elements. The pleasurable adventure of male-bonding is horrifically interrupted with a scene of same-sex rape, a rape which is specifically encoded as one of region and class: two white trash mountain men (who speak in dialect and who are encoded as grotesque) both rape and threaten to rape two of the four bourgeois white men from the suburbs. The narrative management of pain and pleasure (from the moment of rape to moments of ejaculatory liberation) depends not only upon the limits of homosocial bonding but also, I argue, upon the ways in which the narrator views himself as alternatively an essential part of the landscape (an Appalachian native) or as he who is radically different from it (as a national citizen in need of help).

The first two parts of this study provide an intense scrutiny of racial whiteness as it is imagined as grotesquely embodied and torn between the nation and the South. Part Three, "On Guard(s)" maintains a focus upon the nation and the South as categories of analysis, but turns from its interrogation of racial whiteness as a site of national and regional insecurity to whiteness as a form of legal and extra-legal state power over
African American bodies. The symbolic power of historical and literary representations of the white lynch mob, the white police, and the National Guard further calls into question how the security of "the national" fails for those wishing to leave behind the local horrors of the southern. All three chapters in this section pay close attention to the years that fall between the first and second World Wars, and examine stories that feature African American men, military uniforms and military fantasies, and the horrifying possibility of a public lynching. Chapter Five, "Lynching Narratives and the Year 1919" historicizes how black men wearing the national military uniform not only caught the nation off guard upon their return to the U.S., but also had to be on guard themselves against lynchings. Chapter Six, "National Suicide and the Black One-Man Militia (Morrison, Toomer, Wright)" enfolds the aforementioned symbolic reading of African American soldiers and their unstable signification as both national bodies and national excesses into an analysis of Toni Morrison's *Sula*, Jean Toomer's *Cane*, and Richard Wright's *Uncle Tom's Children*. Each of these texts, I argue, can be read in conjunction with the history of lynching, the return of black male soldiers from World War I, the Red Summer of 1919, and the Great Migration (away from the South and into the rest of the nation). The "guards" under critical scrutiny in this chapter are multiple: parental guardianship; the guardianship of personal space and property; the psychic notion of being on guard or being caught off guard; the banality of every day guards from train conductors to policemen; and the formation of a new guard, an *avant garde* or vanguard militant, black, masculine identity, one that reacts violently to the threat of a white lynch mob. Chapter Seven, "How to Read the National Guard," closes this section with a reading of how Richard Wright's *Native Son* and William Faulkner's *Light in August*
represent the National Guard as that which always guards the abstracted national body, but never the corporeal excesses it purports to.

*

The bodies that materialize in the interstices between the South and the nation challenge the national production of the generic person as described by Berlant as well as the celebration of the regional "queer" figure as theorized by Fetterley and Pryse. The narratives that appear in this dissertation are nothing to celebrate, but they are important for thinking about how to make sense of the twentieth-century nation's internal difference from itself. Aligned with death, violence, excrement, stagnancy, pollution, white supremacy, and militancy, the textual bodies that emerge between the South and the nation are always horrifying, over-embodied, grotesque. In the pages that follow, I trace how these bodies disrupt the paradigmatic story of "America" and, in the midst of this disruption, throw into crisis narratives that imagine America as a secure place, home to every body. These are bodies that do not find a home in either the South or the nation. While these bodies and stories do not "subvert" dominant national or southern paradigms, they do leave in their wakes the unassimilable fragments of an America that is dreadfully out of place.
Part One: Blood Fictions
1 Eugenics, Whiteness, and National Pollution

Uncleanliness or dirt is that which must not be included if a pattern is to be maintained. To recognize this is the first step towards insight into pollution. (Mary Douglas, Purity and Danger 41.)

The televised October 11, 2000 Presidential Debate found both Texas Governor George W. Bush and Vice President Al Gore struggling to articulate an ethical relation to environmentalism, to be able to talk about cleaning up a polluted nation without alienating those corporations that not only fund political campaigns, but that also damage environmental conditions both in the United States and around the globe.¹ Bush claimed that "people at the local levels" should determine their own environmental policies, and that "we don't know the solution to global warming yet." Bush continued, "And I don't think we've got all the facts before we make decisions. I tell you one thing I'm not going to do is I'm not going to let the United States carry the burden for cleaning the world's air." Gore pointed out that he and Bush "differ on whether or not pollution controls ought to be voluntary" and eventually countered, "I disagree that we don't know the cause of global warming. I think that we do. It's pollution, carbon dioxide, and other chemicals that are even more potent, but in smaller quantities that cause this."² That one candidate does not seem to know that pollution causes global warming (or, at least, is convinced that some other factors must be involved) and that the other is willing to admit that pollution is a problem in the United States (slyly pointing out that Houston was recently named the smoggiest city in the nation, and that Texas is "number one in industrial pollution") demonstrates the political weight the term "pollution" carries when paired
with America itself. (In fact, Gore at one point deflected critical attention away from U.S. pollution by reminding viewers that in "[s]ome of these other countries, particularly in the developing world, their pollution is much worse than anywhere else and their people want higher standards of living.") To recognize or misrecognize how America's pollution contributes to global warming is to struggle with how one's understanding of the nation ("our humble nation" as Bush would have it at the beginning of the debates) changes when thought of alongside ideas like contamination, emissions, warming, dumping, filling, wasting, leaking, and poisoning. How can a nation be secure when its pollution cannot be controlled, when there seems to exist a conflicted understanding of what, exactly, "pollution" even means? As the presidential debates briefly staged, the late-twentieth-century "nation" requires knowing how to talk about the effective management of nuclear, industrial, and consumer wastes as well as how to reduce the potential harm each kind of pollutant poses for the bodies of U.S. citizens.

In the contemporary discourse of pollution, the metonymic linkage between the private body of the citizen, the projected ideal of a national body and its corollary, the global body, enables the transposition of corporeal and geopolitical metaphors. The healthy production, flow, and consumption of materials, information, and capital across borders and hemispheres mirrors the corporeal health of citizens. Exorbitant amounts of excess and the inability to manage or contain waste remind the embodied citizen that the national body's health might be in danger. Eve Sedgwick provides an example of how late-twentieth century obsessions about the pollution of the person, nation, and globe overlap in the discourses of ecology and disease:

In a late-capitalist world economy of consumption, the problematics of waste and
residue, hitherto economically marginal, tend increasingly to assume an uncanny centrality. The concept of 'ecology' itself, with its profoundly, permanently destabilizing anthropomorphization of the planet as a single living body, emerged in the 1970s much less from the question of how to feed its inhabitants than from that of how to contain or innocuously to recirculate their wastes. At the level of the disciplines surrounding the supposed individual body, the recent strange career of cholesterol in the medical and public imagination suggests that to the conflict between virological and immunological body models, dramatized in discourses around cancer and AIDS, there must be added a muted but potent third term involving not just cardiovascular medicine but the discipline that has come to be called garbology. *(Tendencies 235)*

Following Sedgwick's logic, the language of garbage (how to talk about pollution and trash), not only concerns the nation and the globe, but also that which organically pumps and cellularly cleanses the private body's liquid interior: blood. Sedgwick makes an important theoretical link between maintaining and/or controlling pollution levels in the environment and the maintenance and control of the body, its desires, and its diseases. A common epistemological frame, therefore, governs late-twentieth-century American conceptualizations of the world and the nation as bodies and one's own private body as a world/nation unto itself. Tropes of pollution, trash, and blood form a crucial conduit through which national anxieties get expressed through the body, and bodily anxieties get expressed through national and global politics. As Sedgwick explains, in at least the last two decades of the twentieth century, having clean and healthy blood means having a low cholesterol count and remaining HIV-negative or, to borrow from 1970s
environmentalism, it means personally managing one's own, private ecological system.\textsuperscript{3}

Blood, then, functions as a crucial synecdoche in pollution narratives, from the blood of the private citizen to the more abstract "blood" of the nation. Blood is not only a potential pollutant (outside the body, a substance that taints or stains), but also is scripted as a substance that must remain clean (inside the body, a substance that should remain untainted by poisons, diseases, or even racial/ethnic mixings). Blood must circulate in order to keep the body healthy; blood-stasis endangers the body's vitality, resulting in stagnation, clotting, coagulation, numbness, and even death. If blood serves as a corporeal metaphor for liquid capital, then national pollution, by default, occurs not when nuclear and industrial wastes infiltrate drinking water and soil but, rather, when a steady stream of national capital meets with a regional dam, a backwater place of stagnation where blood-capital becomes immobile, stuck in its own rut. In the pages that follow, I examine how, in early-twentieth-century narratives, this form of national pollution (the inability of capital, information, and infrastructure to move and stimulate or nationalize the bodies of regionalized citizens) generates a myth of blood-pollution, a naturally-occurring tainting of blood as it runs through impoverished bodies that inhabit rural areas of the U.S. I follow my reading of eugenics and blood pollution by arguing that the South functions as the representative site of blood pollution in the twentieth century, that representations of the South as a backwards region within the nation disrupt the smooth functioning of the imagined community of a larger America.

\textit{The Nation and Pollution: 1900-1940}

Whereas late-twentieth-century fears about blood, pollution, and the national body
stem from contagious viruses or toxicity levels in water, soil, and air (pollution of blood), some early-twentieth-century ideas about where pollution comes from were grounded in a theory that suggested the possibility that bodies themselves could carry polluted blood quite naturally (pollution in blood). Eugenics posits just such a theory. Stemming from Enlightenment theories regarding nature and population improvement (the Godwin-Malthus debate) and a nineteenth-century belief in phrenology, eugenics brought together early-twentieth-century ideas about the inheritance of acquired characteristics, natural selection, racial purity, and the fitness of blood and human stock (Hasian 14-24). During the first quarter of the twentieth century, eugenics, along with other social issues such as sanitation and hygiene, became a part of a national conversation among researchers and social workers, schoolchildren, civic leaders, judges, members of the National Education Association, the boy scouts, health workers, women's clubs, philosophical societies, medical associations, and the YMCA (Hasian 37). As Marouf A. Hasian, Jr. reminds us, eugenic thinking had as much to do with keeping oneself "fit" as it did with the right to use birth control, enforce sterilization, or place restrictions on immigration and interracial marriages. Hard-line eugenics, therefore, participated in the formation of a particular kind of white supremacy, one which had a hygienic investment in racial whiteness. A bizarre combination of genetics and sanitation, hard-line eugenics espoused that racial whiteness was subject to contamination, and should be kept clean and pure.

Nicole Hahn Rafter outlines how a eugenic form of white supremacy not only depends upon the abjection of racial others, but also upon class- and regionally-based intra-racial differences, which eugenicists codified as bad blood, a degeneration of good, solid, white racial stock. Rafter describes eugenic studies thusly,
Combining genealogical techniques with those of a primitive social science, [eugenic family] studies identified tribes whose inferior heredity was considered the source of alcoholism, crime, feeble-mindedness, harlotry, hyperactivity, laziness, loquacity, poverty, and a host of other ills. The eugenic implications seemed obvious: if those afflicted with 'bad germ plasm' could be prevented from 'breeding,' society would be cleansed of social problems. (1)

The publication of narratives about eugenically unfit, white trash families living in rural squalor -- the Kallikaks, the Jukes, the Dacks, the Pineys -- exemplifies late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century paranoias about the pollution of the nation's white blood, and therefore the pollution of America itself. (I will to return to several of these eugenic narratives later.)

Eugenics, therefore, is crucial as a category of analysis for several reasons. Eugenics makes use of "blood" as a catch-all signifier for intra-racial, economic, and regional differences; it explains that there exists such a thing as polluted blood, and that polluted blood is hereditary and should not be mixed with the blood of those deemed "fit." Eugenics asserts that differences in (white) character are an internal, natural phenomenon. Eugenics explains pollution not as urban-industrial excess, but instead as the failure of capital and information to circulate in what can only be describe as regional elsewherees, ideologically belonging to neither nation or region: swamps, pine woods, mountain ravines, backwater areas, and hill country. Eugenics imagines the nation as a body that must keep its blood pure. When racial whiteness crosses with rural poverty, physical disability, and poor sanitation, then it is no longer the kind of whiteness that signifies American purity, but rather a degraded form of whiteness, an internal blood
problem that should be sterilized and/or institutionalized to keep from breeding, reentering the national bloodstream, and overpopulating the nation.

One of the most notorious of the eugenic studies conducted in the early-twentieth century was the investigation of the polluted blood line of Carrie Buck, which led to the infamous Supreme Court ruling in 1924, Buck v. Bell. Carrie Buck was a poor, southern, white, seventeen-year old woman, who, in 1924, was enduring a pregnancy that was the result of rape (Smith and Nelson 5). Her mother was a prostitute, committed to an asylum for the feeble-minded of the state of Virginia (Smith and Nelson 2). Both mother and daughter were declared eugenically unfit to live in American public life, and so were sequestered into the Virginia Colony for the Epileptic and the Feebleminded near Lynchburg. Because she was pregnant when she arrived at the Colony, and because she was diagnosed as a "moron" who was born of bad blood, Carrie Buck was to be sterilized as well. Buck's case made it all the way to the Supreme Court, thus focusing national attention upon the eugenic problem of southern poor white trash.¹ The impact of Buck's sterilization was profound. According to J. David Smith:

The precedent it set would influence social policy around the world and would change the lives of tens of thousands of people. Within ten years more than 27,000 compulsory sterilizations had been performed in the United States. Also within that decade [the 1920s] thirty state governments had passed sterilization laws, many of them based on Virginia's model. Following Carrie's sterilization more than 4000 people were sterilized at the State Colony which is now known as the Central Virginia Training Center. The practice there continued until 1972. A total of 8000 people were involuntarily sterilized in Virginia during those years
and nationally more than 60,000 people underwent the same procedure. (6) Harry Laughlin from the Eugenics Records Office in Long Island wrote the eugenic report that served as evidence against Buck in the Circuit Court of Amherst County.\(^5\) Laughlin wrote, "These people belong to the shiftless, ignorant, worthless class of anti-social whites of the South . . . (they are an) ignorant and moving class of people, and it is impossible to get intelligent and satisfactory data" (Laughlin qtd. in Smith and Nelson 171). The Supreme Court ruled in favor of Dr. Bell and, on October 19, 1927, Carrie Buck, a synecdoche of the South, was sterilized, thus eugenically protecting and helping to purify, indeed sterilize, the whiteness of America.


* 

Since at least the mid-1990s, a market has opened for critical studies on racial whiteness in the humanities. The most familiar arguments (those by Toni Morrison, bell hooks, and Richard Dyer) foreground the common-sense connection of racial whiteness and aesthetic pleasure, critiquing the way in which whiteness is easily collapsed into the clean, the pure, and the racially unmarked.\(^6\) Toni Morrison, among others, calls for the "examin[ation of] the impact of notions of racial hierarchy, racial exclusion, and racial vulnerability and availability on nonblacks who held, resisted, explored, or altered [the effect of racist inflection on the subject]" (11). Many critics ask, along with Morrison, "What parts do the invention and development of whiteness play in the construction of what is loosely described as 'American'?" (9). A good question.

In her study of race and motherhood, Laura Doyle reminds us that "[t]he era of the Harlem Renaissance and of modernism was also the era of eugenics" (10). Particularly
from 1900-1940, eugenics had a broad impact on U.S. political culture, igniting debates about race and racism, national purity and national progress. A cultural paranoia over defective American germ-plasm helped to shape a national conversation about how good and bad marriages and selective breeding might effect the strength of a (white) American future. Early-twentieth-century uneasiness about lower-class whites over-populating the nation led to a panicked organization of public and private research that could eugenically chart lines of white families. Eugenic reports on white rural poor -- including maps, tables, diagrams, and their analyses -- advanced an ideology of wasteful or weak human stock; the cultural moment of American eugenics influenced and was influenced by a common-sense racial logic that associated "whiteness" with the cleanliness, abstraction, and national perfection.

Although eugenics, as a discourse, shifts from "negative" to "positive" poles, family studies and bulletin reports from the Eugenics Records Office in the early-twentieth century conceptualize social eugenics as a progressive, American, racial uplift project. In the ERO's 1914 Report of the Committee to Study and to Report on the Best Practical means of Cutting off the Defective Germ-Plasm in the American Population (Bulletin No. 10A), Harry H. Laughlin summarizes, "the committee will point out what appears as the result of study to be 'the best practical means,' so far as innate traits are a factor, of purging the blood of the American people of the handicapping and deteriorating influences of [defective] anti-social classes" (6). In other words, the purging of blood from (pure) white America means eliminating deteriorating influences, influences that can be spotted (by eugenic experts) on the deteriorating white body itself. In most cases, this includes deformity, feeble-mindedness, albinism, alcoholism, miscegenation, and
criminality. The interpretation of white grotesquery as a signifier of an inherited interior pollution produces what Nicole Hahn Rafter calls a "White Trash myth" (30). Again, this myth is linked to the rural geographic areas where an overabundance of white trash communities thrived: mountains, pine-lands, swamps, woods, hills, ravines (Rafter 7).

Social-scientific measurings of these populations -- from the obsessive detailing of bodies, vitalities, and diseases to the charting of occupations, feelings, intelligences, and sexualities -- sought to block their reproduction in order to ensure a pure white race for the future of America. In so much as it considers itself a science, eugenic field work relies heavily on the reading and interpretation of the badly-gened ("cacogenic") body. Expert eugenicists were trained to map a narrative of degeneracy onto the white body whose health was impaired or failing, thereby establishing an imaginary equation between the disfigured body and the inbred body, the impoverished body and the licentious body, and so on. For eugenicists, economic and emotional disenfranchisement conflate, marking the body of the "weak" or "feeble-minded" poor white as always already polluted, nonproductive, and genetically unfit. In "The Family of Sam Sixty" (1916), eugenic researcher Mary Storer Kostir traces the criminal lineage of one rural Ohio "moron." (Kostir uses the pseudonym "Sixty" to re-name her subject; "Sixty" is named after the subject's IQ.) After much labeling and observation, Kostir concludes that "we have striking evidence of the inheritance of low mentality. Feeble-minded parents have feeble-minded children" (Rafter 207-8). Some of the "striking evidence" includes a description of Jim, Sam Sixty's brother, who "looks brutal and degenerate. His neck is as wide as his head. His right eye is deeper set than his left. His nose and mouth deviate to the right. He is said to
be feeble-minded" (191). Sam Sixty's wife, Pearl, "comes of bad stock. She is said to be slovenly and untidy" (193). Their first child, a daughter, was trained in immorality by her [incestuous] relations with her father, and, by the example of her mother, she began a life of prostitution. Taken from this and placed in a good family, she soon became pregnant, and accused a married man in the neighborhood of being responsible for her condition. The man had always borne a good reputation. (193)

Contemporary readers might balk at this eugenic family tree with its reliance on the grotesquity of deeply set eyeballs and natural decrepitude; however, it is precisely from these particularities that eugenics maintains its ideological force.

Notice the attention given to the grotesque body in a description of two of Sam Sixty's paternal cousins: "The second boy was placed in a good home, but as he grew older, he became ugly to his benefactor, and finally left him . . . The third boy has been placed with good people. He, too, is ugly and undependable. He is unquestionably feeble-minded" (197). Another Sixty relative "is subject to fits (epilepsy?) as are several of her relatives" (200). Accounts of inherited shiftlessness, violence, hysterical fits, deformities and feeble-mindedness recur throughout this narrative, which Kostir chalks up to "brains incapable of growing up like those of ordinary people. With this handicap, it is impossible to instill into them self-control" (207). The solution?

If the community deals intelligently with such people . . . it will recognize the fundamental deficiency in intelligence and will provide permanent custody for such person. In custody they will produce more and be much happier, and at the same time, will not be producing broods of feeble-minded dependents . . .
Preventive medicine must come to the aid of courts and schools in this work of saving the social waste . . . [G]enealogical charts as these, with the mental facts and social data which accompany them, are arguments which convince the fair-minded that, some control by society of the increase of the human family is imperative . . . [S]ociety has the right to take measures to prevent some individuals from becoming parents, because society pays taxes. (207-9)

To paraphrase, the "social waste" of the (white) race must be cleaned up, washed out, or flushed from the system in order to preserve a healthy, orderly nation of white tax-payers. In this economy of whiteness, the whiteness of whites cannot be made white enough and, as a result, must be purged and sterilized until everyone who makes a mess of it has been eliminated.

_Public Body, Private Abjection_

To posit the body as a metaphor for socio-political or psychological systems is nothing new. However, the articulation of white class differences in the language of waste and blood pollution is symptomatic of modernist anxieties about the what the white (European) body means in twentieth century America. Eugenics produces the specter of white trash precisely because bourgeois whites can only figure intra-racial class differences as an abject horror. Julia Kristeva's _Powers of Horror: An Essay on Abjection_ theorizes the way in which the not-so-simple binaries of clean/dirty, pure/impure, and self/other circle around the theoretical phenomenon of "abjection." Just as the self's relation to the other depends upon the dizzying effects of abjection, so, too, do the relations between eugenic whiteness and white trash and the nation's relation to the
South function in an abject political and psychological economy.\textsuperscript{10}

Kristeva articulates the difficulty of securing a meaningful identity in a mess of interior organs, bodily tissues, and open orifices: "There looms, within abjection, one of those violent, dark revolts of being, directed against a threat that seems to emanate from an exorbitant outside or inside, ejected beyond the scope of the possible, the tolerable, the thinkable ... [W]hat is abject ... is radically excluded and draws me toward the place where meaning collapses" (1, 2). How and where does this sense of exclusion, this collapse of meaning manifest itself?

Loathing an item of food, a piece of filth, waste, or dung. The spasms and vomiting that protects me. The repugnance, the retching that thrusts me to the side and turns me away from defilement, sewage, and muck ... These bodily fluids, this defilement, this shit are what life withstands, hardly and with difficulty, on the part of death. There, I am at the border of my condition as a living being (2-3).

Any object that threatens the stability of what Kristeva calls "my own and clean self" points toward abjection. That which jeopardizes the security of the dualistic nature of the "I" (speaking subject) and the body (spoken subject) signifies a horror of not-knowing, a blurring of the body's borders: where do(es) "I" stop and "the world" begin? For Kristeva, disgust and repulsion wrack the body only so that a more coherent ego can exist, so that the body can say "I" fully knowing that which it is not (not corpse, not waste, not shit, not a horrifying mess of incoherency). The very private signifiers of abjection (bodily fluids, filth) bleed over into the public realm for Kristeva, who imagines that "[i]t is thus not lack of cleanliness or health that causes abjection but what disturbs
identity, system, order. What does not respect borders, positions, rules. The in-between, the ambiguous, the composite" (4).

We saw in Kostir’s conclusions about Sam Sixty that eugenic writings posit unfit white bodies as a "social waste," a phantasmagoric public horror that must be controlled. The bodies of white trash populations emerge in eugenic family studies as a way of literalizing the collapse of the private body (and its mutations and excesses) with the public body’s wasted Other. Kristeva turns to Mary Douglas’ anthropological studies to strengthen the connection between private and public abjection.11

[R]eligious rites are purification rites whose function is to separate this or that social, sexual, or age group from one another, by means of prohibiting a filthy, defiling element . . . Defilement is what is jettisoned from the 'symbolic system.' It is what escapes rationality, that logical order on which asocial aggregate is based, which then becomes differentiated from a temporary agglomeration of individuals and, in short, constitutes a classification system or a structure. (65)

What one learns from Kristeva and Douglas, then, is the way in which eugenics worries the relation between the private white body and the national body of whiteness. Anthropological eugenics signifies white trash as the defiling element of white America, polluting not only genetically, but structurally as well. That is, under the eugenic gaze, the cacogenic family blocks biological and intellectual progress while simultaneously threatening to taint the purity of racial and economic categories. A normalized white body functions as an icon for the white race, which must keep itself clean, avoid abjection, and, to be blunt, get rid of its shit.12
Erskine Caldwell's Grotesques: A Critique of Eugenic Representation

The ideology of polluted blood stems from a mapping of the private body onto the nation and locating specific regions where national blood (capital, goods, information) does not circulate (thus producing a festering cess-pool of polluted idiots). In the national imaginary, rural areas of the South serve as the mythic site of white trash bodies run amok. In all of the novels and short stories dealt with throughout this project, a the figure of southern poor white trash exists, from Arvay Henson in Zora Neale Hurston's Seraph on the Suwanee to the anonymous mountain men in James Dickey's Deliverance. In a region obsessed with the purity and maintenance of its own white aristocracy, the figure of the white trash sharecropper, mill worker, bootlegger, or grifter looms as not only opposed to the national body, but also as opposed to the proud and genteel blood purity of the Southern white body. However, some early-twentieth-century writers concerned about the class politics involved in representing the southern rural poor took issue with eugenic writing and its impact on how the nation could ever “know” the South differently.

Erskine Caldwell's Tobacco Road (1932), for example, embeds the kinds of family degeneracy and white grotesquery found in eugenic reports of the rural poor, but grants that socio-economic factors have as much to do with the production of a brood of poor white trash as do natural inheritances.\textsuperscript{13} As a result, Tobacco Road tells the story of the Lester family's obscene impoverishment and untenable desire for basic nutrition and goods with a mix of social consciousness and white bodies under duress. In Tobacco
Road, poor white female bodies living in rural Georgia look like this:

Ellie May's [Ada and Jeeter Lester's daughter] upper lip had an opening a quarter of an inch wide that divided one side of her mouth into unequal parts; the slit came to an abrupt end almost under her left nostril. The upper gum was low, and because her gums were always fiery red, the opening in her lip made her look as if her mouth were bleeding profusely, (21)

or are described like this:

Ada [Ellie May's mother] believed she would die almost any day. She was usually surprised to wake up in the morning and discover that she was alive. The pellegra that was slowly squeezing the life from her emaciated body was a lingering death. The old grandmother had pellegra, too, but somehow she would not die. Her frail body struggled day after day with the disease; but except for the slow withering of her skin and flesh no one was able to say when she would die. She weighed only seventy-two pounds now; once she had been a large woman, and she had weighed two hundred pounds twenty years before. (71)

But instead of chalking these kinds of physical wastings or deformities to eugenic family trees with bad blood, Caldwell inserts a narrative voice that provides a critique of the material conditions under which poor share-croppers live:

Jeeter [the novel's main character, the white trash patriarch] could never think of the loss of his land and goods as anything but a man-made calamity. He sometimes said it was partly his own fault, but he believed steadfastly that his position had been brought about by other people. He did not blame Captain John [land-owner] to the same extent that he blamed others, however . . . When Jeeter
had over-bought at the stores in Fuller, Captain John let him continue, and he never put a limit to the credit allowed. But the end soon came . . . Rather than attempt to show his tenants how to conform to the newer and more economical methods of modern agriculture, which he thought would have been an impossible task from the start, [Captain John] sold the stock and implements and moved away. An intelligent employment of his land, stocks, and implements would have enabled Jeeter, and scores of others who had become dependent upon Captain John, to raise crops for food, and crops to be sold at a profit. Co-operative and corporate farming would have saved them all. (62-3)

Tobacco Road goes on to chart the ultimate destruction of the Lester's family home, which gets burned to the ground on the last several pages of the novel. Both Jeeter and Ada die in this fire, but not before the reader is scandalized by accounts of family members watching other family members have sex; the decay of homes and bodies; the inability of anyone to take care of a brand new car; the constant reminder that each character is desperately hungry; and the horrifying death of the grandmother, who is run over by the car and left to die in the dirt in front of the Lester's property. The Lesters typify the kind of "social waste" described in eugenic reports, only Caldwell's narrative refuses to locate the wasting of such a family in terms of naturally occurring polluted blood. Instead, Tobacco Road identifies how it is the inability of national ideals and national progress to circulate effectively in the rural South that pollutes the bodies in question.

The grotesque bodies in Caldwell's novel do not exist, as they do in the later work of Flannery O'Connor and Carson McCullers, as "mysteries," but rather are linked to
malnutrition, starvation, improper health care, poor housing, exposure, and physical or mental disability. Caldwell's interest in a socially conscious representation of southern poor whites can be traced, ironically, through a family line, back to his father, Ira Caldwell, who published a 1930 study of southern white trash in the journal *Eugenics* (Mixon 15). Wayne Mixon's literary biography of Caldwell stresses the influence his father's studies of southern rural poverty had on the novelist: "Of all of Ira Caldwell's writings, the one that had the greatest impact on his son was an extended, five-part essay published in the science journal *Eugenics* in 1930" (15). According to Mixon, Ira Caldwell's essay, "The Bunglers: A Narrative Study in Five Parts," resists the usual eugenic diagnosis of white trash as a polluting element of the national body. Instead, the elder Caldwell critiques the lack of church and state involvement in helping to improve conditions for citizens like the Bungler family. Mixon writes, "'The Bunglers' was much more than a disinterested scientific discourse. It was an impassioned indictment of a callous society" (17). How ironic, in this context, that a concern for the critique of naturally inherited bad blood was something that was passed along from one generation to the next, from father to son. But whereas Ira Caldwell's writing of "The Bunglers" was a kind of social-scientific fiction (in much the same way a study like the "Kallikak," "Sixty," or "Jukes" families were), Erskine Caldwell's writing of the Lester (and later, in *God's Little Acre* [1933], the Walden) family was a novelistic intervention in the construction of a social fiction about the rural South and its relation to the nation.

In *Tobacco Road*, it is the dysfunction of the state itself that pollutes the idea of a perfect, indeed classless, American nation, and not the naturally occurring forces of interior pollutions, hidden in the defective bloodstream of families living in rural
Georgia. The class-conscious critique of bodily, regional, and national pollution found in Caldwell's novel (and others like it) paved the way for further exploration of the idea of racial and regional pollution of the nation in the work of writers like Zora Neale Hurston, whose writing complexly considers the constructed divide between purity and impurity, and its effect on racial, gender, and class politics among those living in the most rural areas of the state of Florida. Hurston's last novel, *Seraph on the Suwanee* (1948), which will serve as the focus of the next chapter, is a story about the abjection and class-ascendancy of rural white trash living in Florida swampland, and the struggle of one woman, Arvay Meserve, to make the transition from poor white trash to a more nationally recognized form of American whiteness: the good white mother who is an angel in the house, or, in this case, a "seraph" on the Suwanee River. Hurston's novel not only deals with eugenic blood pollution and a desire for national belonging, but also unsettles any easy reading of racial, class, and regional differences. *Seraph* is a novel written by a black woman, but is about a white woman, one who is caught in the struggle between her sense of white superiority over blacks and her eugenic anxieties over her class and gender status as an unfit white trash woman. In *Seraph on the Suwanee*, I argue, Hurston inverts early-twentieth-century American conceptualizations of the nation’s purity by bringing racial whiteness to the fore of the conversation about “race” (always encoded as “black” and never as a problem for whites). Hurston’s novel deploys the trope of polluted white blood as it takes shape in rural Florida, and examines how the purity of whiteness exists as a fiction, and, through a variety of techniques, drags the national (white) body through the regional mud and swamps of southern territories.
Readings of Zora Neale Hurston's *Seraph on the Suwanee* have often focused on the novel's racial and gender problems. Critics usually ask why this novel fails to measure up to the racial consciousness and feminism evident in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* (1937), or invert this critique by claiming that *Seraph's* power lies in the struggle of its protagonist, Arvay Meserve.⁷ Janet St. Clair observes that "*Seraph on the Suwanee* has been virtually ignored by all but authors of full-length studies of Hurston, and even they generally scurry across its surface in consternation" (39). Scholars scurry across the following: the white characters, the construction of rape, the fact that Arvay is not a "feminist" heroine (or even "likable"), and the often times stagnant narrative which accompanies Arvay's psychic turmoil. But critical consternation has recently been given a jolt, and this chapter seeks to intervene in the debate.¹⁸ Critics have long been aware of the non-conformity of Hurston as both an author and a public persona during the Harlem Renaissance.¹⁹ Does it come as any surprise that *Seraph on the Suwanee* throws a wrench into the works? If *Seraph*messes up or, say, white washes what might otherwise be a rather clean record for Hurston's writing of complex, black folk characters, then perhaps it is with the notions of "mess" and "wash" with which we should approach not only Hurston's most disregarded work, but her other writings as well.

*Washing and Dirt*
*Jonah's Gourd Vine*, for example, begins with the image of washing on a large scale, and suggests its double meaning as it relates to domestic work and spiritual purging: "Ole Massa gwinter scrub floors tuhday" remarks Amy Crittenden, as she spies rain clouds and senses an impending storm (3). This observation is followed by the argument between Amy and her husband Ned, which leads to the casting out of Amy's first born, (bastard) mulatto son, John (Buddy Crittenden) Pearson, around whom the novel revolves. Hurston spins a narrative of John's personal, spiritual purity (both marital and sexual) and leads us through the way that John's community first welcomes, then rejects, and finally re-integrates him. Just before John's much noted (spiritually cleansing) Sermon in chapter twenty-six, rot and purgation find poignant expression: "He felt inside as if he had been taking calomel. The world had suddenly turned cold. It was not new and shiny and full of laughter. Mouldy, maggoty, full of suckholes -- one had to watch out for one's feet" (144). Such imagery typifies the way in which Hurston delves into the interrelated abjections of the body, the psyche, and the world in which her characters move.

Similarly, "The Gilded Six-Bits" opens with Missie May "bathing herself in the galvanized washtub in the bedroom" (985). In "Six-Bits" it is the female character who negotiates her sexual and spiritual purity and her emotional abjection after her husband Joe catches Missie May in the act of adultery with Slemmons. The overlapping themes of value (both personal and economic) and cleanliness (both domestic and spiritual) again point to the way in which Hurston frames some of her best stories with the resolution of radical oppositions, and how the narrative middles dwell in the mess and tension of binary breakdowns.
The phallic images that appear in the short story "Sweat" provide a deeper intertext for reading Hurston's textual "messes." In "Sweat," Delia's husband, Sykes, is not only associated with the whip and the snake, but also with making white things dirty. As in *Jonah* and "The Gilded Six-Bits," "Sweat" begins with a scene of washing: Delia Jones, a "washwoman," "squat[s] in the kitchen floor beside the great pile of clothes, sorting them into great heaps according to color" (955). We are told later that these are specifically "white folks' clothes" and that Sykes (Delia's cheating, abusive husband) reacts violently to her bringing white folks' laundry into their home (956). Hurston introduces Sykes as he who dangles "something long, round, limp and black" that "slither[s] to the floor beside [Delia]" (955):

A great terror took hold of her. It softened her knees and dried her mouth so that it was a full minute before she could cry out of move. Then she saw it was the big bull whip her husband liked to carry when he drove. She lifted her eyes to the door and saw him standing there bent over with laughter at her fright. She screamed at him.

'Sykes, what you throw dat whip on me like dat? You know it would skeer me -- looks just like a snake, an' you knows how skeered Ah is of snakes.' (955)

Here, Sykes does not use the whip as a whip -- he does not whip Delia with it. Instead, Sykes dangles the whip limply over Delia's shoulder. The whip is terrifying not because Sykes will beat Delia with it, but rather because it suggests something else: a snake.

The snake-like whip which Sykes uses to terrorize the laboring Delia accrues meaning as the scene continues: "He stepped roughly upon the whitest pile of things, kicking them helter-skelter as he crossed the room. His wife gave a little scream of
dismay, and quickly gathered them together again (956, emphasis added). The story goes on to detail the difficult relationship between Delia and Sykes, incorporating a narrative of sexual infidelity (as in "The Gilded Six-Bits," only with a reversal of genders). In the mix of dirt, whiteness, snakes, whips, and, of course, sweat, a gesture towards a racial-psychoanalytic paradigm is made. Although racial whiteness does not exist in corporeal form in the story, its abstraction into metonymy (white folks' dirty laundry) complicates the meaning of phallic power, whiteness, cleanliness, and the threatening whip. Sykes' whip, of course, carries with it the historical weight of slavery (corporeal, economic, and regional), and Delia's fear of snakes (but not, apparently, of whips) is both a displacement of historical memory and a foreshadowing of events to come. Delia finds the actual snake (hidden by Sykes) in a soap box. To reduce the snake to a phallic symbol would be to miss Hurston's critique of racial whiteness alongside of her critique of patriarchal control. The brutal irony of the story lies in the twist at its close. The snake in the soap box bites and kills Sykes, not Delia. The end of Sykes is not merely the cleansing away of oppressive male violence, but also a commentary on the way in which working as a domestic for white families can, indeed, lead to the kind of intolerable resentment felt by Sykes. What is "Sykes" but a clever troping off of the word "psyche?" Just as Hurston plays with the variable construction of the black male "psyche" and the black man "Sykes," she also resists a traditional ("pure" or "white") psychoanalytic paradigm of sexuality and the body, insisting on the way in which differing constructions of race and gender change (or misspell?) the meanings of each.

Trash and Trashing
As Hurston's final novel, *Seraph on the Suwanee*, was not a book that was very well received. Although *Seraph* experiments with how washing, cleanliness, disgust, and shame contribute to the telling of a story (as do those mentioned above), the novel fails to hold a place in American, African American, Southern, or Women's Literary Canons. Annette Trefzer explains why *Seraph* generally remains unread or uncommented upon or, if commented upon, why these comments often suggest that readers throw this book in the trash. Trefzer posits that "[the novel's] racial and gender strategies refuse to be 'useful' for any explicitly ethnocentric canon which privileges certain 'major' works to represent its ideology" (51-2). *Seraph*'s status as a "minor" or "useless" work of Hurston's thus marks it, in contemporary criticism, as the problematically "bad" text in the Hurston oeuvre. Such an evaluation not only relates to the text thematically (what I argue the text is about), but also recapitulates the historical events which surround its publication. In Hazel V. Carby's 1991 Foreword to the novel, one learns that while the initial sales of the book "were good," a particular event "created controversy around the novel and shattered Hurston's optimism . . . On September 13 [1948], Hurston had been arrested on charges rising from allegations of sexual misconduct with a ten-year-old boy" (xiii). Carby reports that the media mis-used Hurston's novel as "a tool in the publicity that was eventually generated against her" (xiii). While Hurston was cleared of these charges, the text was marked by the media as evidence of "sexual aggressiveness in women" and used to show "evidence of the author's immorality" (xiii). *Seraph*, therefore, moved from a "good" text which received reviews which were "favorable if not overly enthusiastic" to a "bad" text which incriminated its author by generating a narrative of culpability and "perversion" (xii-xiii). *Seraph* was a novel used to trash Hurston's
character, a trashing from which Hurston took a long time to recover.  

The trashing of Hurston and *Seraph* by the media in 1948, as well more recent indifference to the novel, provides a polluted history of the novel, one in which this chapter seeks to intervene. Given the way in which “pollution” cuts across eugenics, the nation, the South, and the symbolic representation of white trash, this chapter looks at moments in the novel in which the local body of Arvay Henson both strives for and resists the allure of the “abstract person” (the angelic or seraphic citizen) that comprises the national body. Arvay’s white trash identity (both who she thinks she is and who others understand her to be) depends upon a logic of waste: she understands her body to be a carrier of polluted blood and irredeemably full of shit. In order to get out of the regional shit in which her white body is mired, Arvay must recognize her potential angelic qualities -- that her whiteness can be a luminosity that helps her to float above the stagnating category of class and her place of origin. *Seraph*’s representations of destitution, maternal bloodlines, class mobilization, and excretion show how racial categories always intersect with national, regional, gender, and economic categories, and that the fluidity of the body always messes up any clean and proper understanding one’s overlapping identities.

*Hurston’s Excremental Subjects/Objects*

1. Sawley/Arvay

 Hurston’s attention to cleaning the body and the laundering of whites in the aforementioned fiction takes an interesting turn in her final novel. *Seraph*, too, embeds
signifiers of cleanliness, dirt, and purging. Only unlike all of her other writings, *Seraph* is specifically about poor whites. Hurston uses racial whiteness as a main-frame for this story so that she can treat dirt and trash as they correspond with differences between (white) economic classes and between (white) genders. The iconicity of a eugenically perfect white body -- a Bakhtinian "classical" body which shows no ruptures or orifices, which is smooth and whole -- transforms in Hurston's *Seraph* into a more grotesque, white trash body; one which eats, copulates, gives birth, defecates, and is melancholic.\(^{22}\) Grotesquery surfaces in *Seraph* not only as a public abjection of poor whites, but also, as we shall see, in the private abjection of Arvay's body. In order to understand Arvay's position within the community more fully, one can turn to the novel's beginning and its description of Sawley's southern white folks.

The impoverished community of Sawley, Florida closely resembles descriptions of white trash populations found in eugenic reports, right down to the "[t]he haunts of the cacogenic [which] become outer manifestations of their inner decay" (Rafter 27).

The life of Sawley streamed out from the sawmill and the 'teppentine' still. Then, too, there was ignorance and poverty, and the ever-present hookworm. The farms and the scanty flowers in front yards and in tin cans and buckets looked like the people . . . Brock Henson [Arvay's father] was a Cracker from way back. [He] had never made as much as a hundred dollars in any month of his life. The family lived in a clapboard house more than two miles east of the heart of Sawley . . . [The house] was now a rusty, splotchy gray-brown. Only one room in the house, the parlor, was ceilinged overhead. In the two bedrooms and the kitchen, the rafters were bare and skinny (1, 6, 8, 9).
The "scanty flowers in tin cans" that resemble the people of Sawley calls attention to how economic and corporeal abjection will overlap in this story. The white folks in Sawley match their surroundings, serving as a kind of "local color." However, Hurston writes out the kind of white trash myth described in Chapter 1 in order to more fully explore how this myth evolves, delving into how metonymies of impoverishment are embedded in descriptions of rural white communities.

The first chapter situates Arvay as Other to a community which is already marked as Other itself. Arvay "was pretty, if you liked delicate-made girls. He shape was not exactly in style in those parts" (4). She is "timid from feeling unsafe inside" (9). The church community knows her as a "queer" girl who is given to throwing fits and spasms (6). This strange girl, timid yet out of control, has a terrible crush on the Reverend Carl Middleton, who shows some interest in her, but quickly takes up with her "more robust and aggressive sister," Lorraine (9). Arvay is plagued with rage towards and lust for Carl, and feels extreme guilt to boot. In the midst of harboring these horrifying "secret" feelings, Arvay is subject to what she thinks of as a public humiliation, a humiliation of which only the reader -- and not the community at large -- knows intimately (11). When the brash and handsome Jim Meserve blows into town and immediately fauns on the fragile Arvay, it is not with timidity or shyness with which Arvay responds, but with shock and outrage. Thus, Arvay is not escorted, but "scorched" to Sunday services by the newly-arrived Jim (24). The public spectacle that is her body-in-courtship sets her apart from the rest of the town -- a community represented as tightly-knit and busy-bodied, "a big red ants' nest that had been ploughed up" (3). This crawling, underground, biting community likes to gossip about Arvay, who, even within the "other" community of rural
poor whites, gets figured as Other herself, one who is "a little 'tetched'" (6). Arvay's hostility towards Jim stems from her knowledge that she is, indeed, a public "laughing-stock" (16), the butt of a community joke.

The narrative voice in the first chapter shifts from town historian to tour-guide to gossiping neighbor, but finally approximates a voice close to Arvay herself. So as the reader learns from the narrator details about local architecture, food, and diseases, s/he also gets a personal or chatty sense of what the town thinks of Arvay: "Arvay looked like her mother's folks, even had her mother's ways to a certain extent . . . The old heads recalled that Maria Henson [Arvay's mother] had been given to fits and spasms in her girlhood the same way Arvay was right now" (6). (This connection between Arvay and her mother is a critical one, one to which this essay will return.) A story is told about how Arvay will have one of her seizures if accompanied home by a suitor: "Hardly did she get her hat off before she was sprawled out on the horse-hair sofa, clenching hands and teeth and bobbling around and up and down, and with her mother running in with a small vial of spirits of turpentine and the sugar dish with a teaspoon in it to administer the dose" (6-7). Even though Arvay's inherited fits finally (and dramatically) cease (thanks to Jim), these "queer" spasms and contortions continue as an interior phenomenon. Arvay finally marries Jim with reservations; she is unsure whether he is making fun of her or not. After the marriage, Arvay's body finally gets a hold of itself, but her thoughts still run wild. Even though Jim has helped to "cure" Arvay's seizures with a "joke" (32), her compulsion to convulse will play out as a psychological angst, occasioned by the abjection of her body in the form of excretory anxiety and childbirth.
2. Earl

For all of Arvay's unspoken anxieties, it is the birth of her and Jim's first child, Earl, which lets loose a slew of insecurities about her white trash self -- both her poor white blood and her interior feelings of sexual guilt and shame. Rafter reminds us that, for eugenicists, "[e]ach negative trait was interpreted as a sign of the family's degenerative tendency and evidence that the tendency was hereditary" (8-9). Arvay tells herself that Earl, her deformed and feeble-minded first son, must represent "the punishment for the way I used to be." (69). The delivery of the grotesque baby suggests that Arvay's inherited "degenerative tendencies" and her silent guilt (over Carl Middleton) have become flesh and have been purged from her body. Chapter 5 describes the birth of Earl:

'Dessie! Dessie! What is the matter with my child's hands?'

'Them don't look much like fingers, do they?'

'Good gracious! They look more like strings. And his hands, Dessie. Why they look too little for his body.'

There was practically no forehead nor backhead on her child. The head narrowed like an egg on top . . . The feet were long, and the toes were well formed, but they looked too long for a new-born baby to have. And there was no arch to the tiny feet. They were perfectly flat, with a little lump of flesh huddled under what should have been the instep . . . It certainly did not favor Jim. Who did it remind her of? Finally she knew. He looked like her Uncle Chester, her mother's youngest brother. The one they seldom talked about. The one who was sort of queer in his head. (67-8)
The "way [Arvay] used to be" refers to both Arvay's personal past and economic-cultural heritage. Arvay connects Earl with her "former self" (her Cracker self); Earl's resemblance to "queer" Uncle Chester connects him to a maternal line of bad blood. But Arvay also needs to read Earl as a sign, and oscillates between eugenics and psychology. Just as she wants to link Earl with a maternal uncle and rationalize a eugenic discourse of heredity, Arvay also wants to believe that Earl is punishment for shameful sexual desires for Carl Middleton. For Arvay, Earl stands for both sexual guilt and cacogenicity, an ontogenic and phylogenetic signifier.

Although Arvay reacts in horror upon seeing Earl's body for the first time, she decides, quickly, that "[t]he baby's defects only increased [her] love for it" (69). As Arvay oils and massages the mutated baby's body, molding his head and feet into whatever shape she can, she decides to name the child Earl: "I mean to get ahead of Jim and name the baby my ownself. It's natural for a man to want the first boy named after him, but I always loved the name Earl David . . ." (70). Arvay's power to name Earl suggests Jim's hesitation to accept Earl as his own, clean, first-born son. The name "Earl" is a literal mutation of "Carl," a different spelling or shaping of the first letter of the name ("E" instead of "C"). Since Arvay's body processes her past in the experience of abjection, then it only makes sense that the disabled Earl is an uncanny double of Carl, a figure who Arvay must learn to love and, eventually, of whom Arvay must learn to let go. "Earl," then, suggests both "early" and/or "earn," his naming allows Arvay, for once, to "get ahead of Jim." Earl, as a signifier, embodies that which Arvay must recognize as both terrible and important from her earlier life in the turpentine camps, so that she may earn the privilege of something more healthy and complete.23
Earl's body is a transgressive body, one which symbolically threatens the putative perfection of the bourgeois white family. Although Earl is silent, we do know that he "attack[s] ferociously when put to the breast" (68), and that his first (perhaps only) word is "either 'eat' or 'meat'' (76). Unlike Arvay, the reader might recognize that Earl is not trying to reference a bodily function or a source of protein, but rather he is trying to say his own name. Instead, what comes out is an ambiguous, half-formed desire: not "Earl" or "me," but "eat," "meat." Earl's deformed white body can incorporate food but cannot speak; he consumes voraciously but does not produce.

If Earl hyperbolizes Arvay's inability to orally express her feelings of class inadequacy or sexual shame, then her explosion in the following scene more than makes up for her previous silences. In this scene, Arvay rages against Jim's privileging of their more eugenically sound children, Angeline and Kenny, reading the problematic white family as symptomatic of larger class and racial structures:

You [Jim] come from some big high muck-de-mucks, and we [Arvay and Earl] ain't nothing but piney-woods Crackers and poor white trash. Even niggers is better than we is, according to your kind. . . . Earl is always wrong because he's like my folks. 'Taint never nothing wrong with Angeline and Kenny because they take after your side. (126)

Arvay's emphasis on the hierarchical constructions of race and class demonstrates how the rural poor, "cacogenic" southern white family does not fit neatly into the black/white binary. "Even niggers is better than we is" signifies the racially degraded relationship between what has been constructed in the novel as other: "white trash" and "niggers." Hurston re-presents a racial hierarchy here that can be read as placing "big high"
whiteness at the top, while assuming "niggers" are always already lowly or "trash" and that "white trash" either verges on or entirely falls beneath the construction of this degraded "blackness." So if Earl is "always wrong because he's like [Arvay's] folks," then his "wrong" whiteness ("nothing but piney-woods Crackers and poor white trash") taints the assumed purity of "right" whiteness. Arvay articulates these differences within whiteness itself with a passion the reader has not seen since Jim "scorched" her home from church at the novel's beginning. Her articulation of how economic differences get written on the body paves the way for a more personalized sense of her body as something which falls outside the (white) norm.24

3. Falling Outside of the White Body

As I posited earlier, the way in which metaphors of private abjection ooze over into the public realm often times depends on racial and class-based fantasies that equate personal cleanliness with social perfection. "Cracker" and "white trash" can be thought of as terms which implicate the impure body in systems of racial and class division. The impure body, a white body that must rid itself of trash, speaks to a specific metaphor of bodily fluids and waste. Elizabeth Grosz draws from Julia Kristeva to specify the relation of the excremental object to the excrementalized subject:

Faeces . . . in signifying that the opposition between the clean and the unclean draws on the distinction between the body's inside and its outside. Inside the body, it is the condition of the body's ability to regenerate itself; as expelled and external it is unclean, filthy. The subject is implicated in this waste, for it can never be definitively and permanently externalized; it is the subject; it cannot be
completely expelled. (91)

If one joins Grosz' theory of the fecal with the political semiotics of white trash, then one can see how a particular race and class combination produces an excremental identity category. Whiteness as a whole, unfragmented, self-same cultural body must abject its "trash" to re-establish its cleanliness and coherency. And, yet, in doing so, racial whiteness cannot completely expell its degraded white other because of the sameness that figures race based on a visible economy. That is, in racist social formation, the eugenic "white ideal" can only anxiously conceive of itself as "pure" because the contaminating (white) other will never be eliminated by virtue of its structural (white) similarity. Seraph, too, dares to substitute waste for class, on the one hand, and whiteness for purity, on the other. Chapter twenty-one finds Arvay stuck in the bathroom when her eugenically sound son, Kenny, calls to report that he will not be returning home.

The Meserve's new porch functions as Arvay's special annex so that, spatially and psychologically, she has room to "visit the graveyard of years and dig up dates and examine them cheerfully. It was a long, long way from the turpentine woods to her sleeping-porch" (234). Before the construction of the porch, Arvay's excretory system functions irregularly. The porch serves as a "private space" in which to "lounge around and wait for the event of her day" (235). The following description provides the reader with more information regarding Arvay's body:

For the last year or so, she had been a little too bound for her usual good health.

So her doctor had given her a routine to overcome this . . . He was against laxatives and the castor oil mixed with turpentine that Arvay had been raised to.

Seven in the morning and eight at night had become hours for her vigil. That gave
her a good two hours after supper to enjoy the porch with Jim. (235)

Tranquility acts as a natural laxative for Arvay; it routinizes and orders her day around her body's digestion. Making time for peace on the porch relaxes her body, enabling Arvay to accept the interior "goodness" of excrement. (As Grosz puts it, "Inside the body, [feces] is the condition of the body's ability to regenerate itself" [91].) When Arvay is in repose, the interior rumblings of her body tell her that she can cleanly eliminate her waste, that her waste will leave her body all in good time.

And so the narrator continues with a hushed calm, paying particular attention to fragrances, soothing noises, and the soft glow of muted lightbulbs:

Arvay moved leisurely towards the door into the house. As she went, the perfume from the flowers surged around her. The moon was rising, and some mocking-birds in a tangerine tree began to trill sleepily. The whip-poor-will was still sending out his lonesome call. Arvay paused in the door and looked back on the softly lighted porch. It was to her the most beautiful and perfect scene in all the world. She was as near to complete happiness as she had ever been in her life.

The porch told her that she belonged. Slowly she turned away and went on to the bath. (236-7)

If Arvay finally "belongs" because of her porch (an upper-class affiliation), then the significance of Arvay's heading for the bath reinforces a connection between the proper, upper-class body and its anxious difference from what does not belong, what must be abjected.

Kenny's call arrives at the same time Arvay is seated in the bathroom, interrupting the "beautiful and perfect scene" that might, finally, allow her to shit. The implied
movement of Arvay's excrement from inside to outside increases narrative panic and urgency:

"Jim!" Arvay yelled through the closed door. "Didn't they say New Orleans? Do, My Maker! What's done happened to Kenny?" . . . Arvay leaned back, but she did not relax. Kenny couldn't be too bad off if he was able to come to the phone . . . There was really no need for Jim to call Arvay. She had heard him through the door and was both eager and anxious to get to the phone, but found herself too seriously involved . . . Arvay desperately tried to make it, but the click of the receiver found her scrambling to a standing position with her clothes up around her waist. Jim waited in silence until she came out of the door and told her. (237)

As Arvay sits on the toilet, Kenny telephones with the news that he is leaving Florida to move to New York City. Arvay -- eager, anxious, and too seriously involved -- must remain in the bathroom to finish up her business. Here, the novel provides a twist not only on eugenic representations, but also on how those bodies which remain local are, indeed, encumbered bodies, while those which relocate to cities which signify the nation-at-large (New York) are disembodied, abstract, mediated -- a voice on the telephone. For if Arvay represents the white body that must negotiate its "trash," then she is not, in this scene, the national body purging itself of local pollution, but rather the local body purging itself of the national. The loss of Kenny, the "good" son (the son opposed to Earl), both interrupts and parallels the loss of Arvay's excrement. The good child makes a clean break from the white trash mother to go, as it were, national. Arvay's inability to accept the loss throws her into an abject state, unwilling to let another one go. The porch on which she sits to relax her body might signify class mobility, but it does not, in the end,
provide for Arvay the kind of national identity granted to Kenny. Thus this crucial chapter ends with Arvay retreating to her old bedroom, where she "[goes] forth to face the demon of waste and desert places and take him for her company" (239).

Joe K., his Joke, and the Making of a National Subject

Arvay's function as a corporeal center for the processing of inherited goodness and badness speaks to the problem of "race" as it intersects with eugenic science and physical purity. However, Hurston also presents interracial differences to question the "nature" of inherited properties, to subvert the assumed naturalness of the body as the referent for racial essence. Hurston pulls in and fades out the African American Kelsey family (Joe and Dessie) to call attention to Arvay's whiteness and to amplify the acquisition of cultural traits (rather than natural inheritance) as integral to regional racial identities.

The scene in which Arvay and Joe Kelsey muse over Kenny's musical abilities reinscribes Kenny as the socially productive white subject, but it also gestures towards a split between subject formation as culturally mutable and subject formation as naturally occurring, running in the blood and trapped within the body. How is it that Kenny can become such a vital part of the national big band/jazz scene when he comes from poor Florida white trash? No longer tied to home, Kenny is now a national subject, open to analysis by those left behind. When Joe and Arvay discuss Kenny, it is Joe who insists that Kenny inherits his musical abilities from Arvay. Joe's prospect soothes Arvay, providing a link between Arvay and the good son that Arvay had not yet considered. Yet the broader context in which Joe reassures Arvay that she is the natural source of Kenny's brilliance alerts the reader to the fact that Joe might be pandering to Arvay, and that the
underlying message which Hurston wants to come through exists between the lines. Joe remarks:

'Anyhow, I done raised Kenny and trained him to make a good living. I done done my share.'

Arvay felt the same painful twist that she had felt years ago about Joe and Kenny. Then she took hold of herself. It wasn't right to feel jealous that way. She saw now why she had been so set against the music. It gave Joe a hold over her boy that made her feel excluded.

'Between you and me, Miss Arvie, we sure pulled that boy through, didn't us?'

'You mean you did Joe. You learnt Kenny all that your ownself. I don't know the first pick on a box.'

'That's where you're ever so wrong, Miss Arvie. 'Taint everybody that can learn music like that. Kenny took to it because he brought that talent in the world with him. He got that part from you. He just naturally worried and pestered me to death to teach him . . . What's bred in the bones'll be bound to come out in the flesh. Yeah, that boy come here full of music from you.'

'I always thought about Kenny as taking after Jim,' Arvay said as if she were talking to herself. Joe looked at Jim and gave a great guffaw. 'Mister Jim? Why, Mister Jim couldn't even tote a tune if you put it in a basket for him. Looks, yeah, but that music part he takes right after you.' . . . Arvay sat quietly for a minute and her face lighted timidly. 'Yeah, I guess, I hope, that Kenny did take his music after me.' 'Couldn't be nobody else, Miss Arvay,' Joe said positively. (250-1)

Joe detours from having "raised" Kenny himself, to having co-raised Kenny alongside of
Arvay, to persuading Arvay that her role as biological mother far outweighs his own influence (as cultural father) on the boy. Does Joe's "positive" assertion that Kenny inherited his musical flair from Arvay have a joking quality to it? Is Joe K(elsey) messing with Arvay?

Just before the above exchange, Joe tells a "lie" to entertain Arvay and Jim. In this scene, Arvay prepares breakfast for Joe, Joe's son Jeff, and her husband Jim. As Joe crams his mouth full of eggs and ham, he spiritedly recites a tall tale about swapping his near-bankrupt store for "a dozen hogs" with "a Crack -- I mean a white man from back in the woods" (248). In Joe's story, the Cracker's hogs eat and eat but gain no weight, and so he trades these hogs for a widow's "white narrow-made chickens [that] didn't have no habit of setting [to lay eggs]" (249). In the punchline to the story, Joe tells Arvay and Jim that his chickens, like his hogs, ate with a voracious appetite, but still were not worth the trade, producing little if anything at all. Convinced that more feeding would finally make the chickens useful, Joe dryly states that he took them out to a "nice green patch of grass out in the country" (249) so often that "all [he] had to do was to go out in the yard and they would lay down and cross their legs, making it convenient for [him] to tie 'em up and carry 'em to where [he] done found something for 'em' (250). Joe's "lie" arouses a gale of laughter from Jim, who understands, perhaps, the implications of "white" chickens that consume but never produce, the Cracker, the unlucky black man, and the system of exchange. It is significant that Joe's joke directly precedes his "serious" exchange with Arvay about Kenny. The juxtaposition of these two scenes suggests that Hurston has inserted a black voice into the white trash narrative in order to critique its obsession with racially inherited traits. Joe jokes about the Cracker in his tale in order to call attention to
the way in which property can be exchanged, that properties themselves (like the hungry hogs or lazy chickens or even musical ability) are not owned by black or white, but are swapped and traded, and that the creation of any kind of national subject (like Kenny) does not, necessarily, depend upon racial and cultural purity.27

The Excremental Mother and Other Waste Matters

Although Arvay is consoled by Joe's valorization of her maternal influence over Kenny, she still sinks into depressions, depressions which Hurston often times structures as tedious and torpid. Arvay labors under the weight of how and why her children are or are not like her and, in these states of immobilizing grief and isolation, the narrative reinscribes its peculiar linking of waste, children, and the maternal body:

With Earl dead, Angeline married off and needing nothing, Kenny up there doing so well and not calling on her for a thing, Jim off from home so much with his boats, there was little for [Arvay's] serving hands to do. She felt like a dammed-up creek. Green scum was covering her over. (253)

Arvay's conceptualization of her body as unuseful in its non-reproductive role signals a narrative return to her white trash, non-productive beginnings. We are told that the comfort of Joe "dissipate[s]" (253) almost as soon as he and Jim leave the kitchen, that Arvay feels herself "lost in the edges of the wastes," that the hours which drag past her are "[o]ld, worn out, lifeless marks on time . . . like raw, bony, homeless dogs" (268). Hurston blocks this time as abject time, time which is, literally, wasted. Since Arvay no longer possesses a functioning maternal body, she retreats into an abject realm of dis-use. Even if Arvay can agree with Joe, temporarily, that her function as a (biological) mother
to Kenny validates her existence, her sense of herself as a useless, abandoned body stems from her sense of herself as a non-Mother.

Hurston's narrative connections between mother, child, waste material, and dissolution anticipate crucial components of Kristeva's theory of abjection. For Kristeva, too, abjection entails the mother's body. And yet, unlike Hurston, in Kristeva it is the child's proper separation from the mother (rather than the mother's letting go of the child) that leads to other forms of self-differentiation: of body/waste product, me/not me, "I"/"you," self/other. Kristeva theorizes that the "[e]vocation of the maternal body and childbirth induces the image of birth as a violent act of expulsion through which the nascent body tears itself away from the matter of maternal insides" and that this new born child

gives birth to himself by fantasizing his own bowels as the precious fetus of which he is to be delivered; and yet it is an abject fetus, for even if he calls them his own he has no other idea of the bowels other than one of abomination, which links him to the ab-ject, to that non-introjected mother who is incorporated as devouring, and intolerable. (101-2)²⁸

Here, the (male) child secures a total identity and total body by imagining that "his" body knows its own limits in the metaphor of "self-birth," by imagining that "his" waste products are "abject fetuses" that match his own difference from the Mother: "I" am to "Mother" as my waste products are to me.

In Seraph, however, it is less the problem of the (male) child's psyche with which the reader is concerned, but rather that of Arvay, the Mother. Arvay's wallowing in wasted time and space occurs most strongly after her children are gone. Rather than
pursuing the difficulties of Earl's, Kenny's, or Angeline's Oedipal anxieties, Hurston
details the excremental depths into which the Mother falls. Since Arvay vacillates
between a belief in natural eugenic determinism and personal sexual shame, the reader
has a strong sense of Arvay's guilt. Even if rational thought tells us that Arvay is not
guilty of or for anything, her body is so wracked and marked by guilt that it makes it
difficult for the reader to resist.

The figure of the empty white trash mother (through whom all negative traits take
flesh) surfaces in eugenic field reports, and perhaps inspired Hurston's desire to provide
depth to this flat, inert figure. Hurston carefully crafts Arvay's character by making use of
and resignifying traditional psychoanalytic paradigms in order to provide a complicated
interiority for the shells of "bad" white trash mothers reported in eugenic studies. For
example, Elizabeth S. Kite's study of "Two Brothers" (1912) represents "the first family
study fully to realize the potential of the bad-mother theme" (Rafter 74-5). Kite presents
the exemplary case of two half-brothers "having had the same father but different
mothers" (76):

One of them . . . was a man respected by all who knew him, intelligent, well
married, with children who in themselves or in their descendents would cast
nothing but honor upon the family name. The other, feeble-minded and morally
repulsive, lived on a mountain-side in a hut built of rock fragments . . . For a
quarter of a century this hut existed as a hot bed of vice, the resort of the
debauched youth of the neighborhood, and from its walls has come a race of
degenerates. (76)

While "the mother" is central to the production of difference in each son, the narrative (as
is typical with eugenics reports in general) raises her as a figure only to place blame, to expose her as a carrier of bad traits. Difference between mothers changes everything, both producing and implying a host of binary oppositions (good son/bad son, intelligent/feeble-minded, well-married/morally repulsive, honor/dishonor, homestead/hotbed of vice, culture/nature). Kite's ethnography tells us that "[r]eason will at once decide that [these] difference[s] must be found in the women who became mothers of the respective lines, and in the subtle subjective forces that brought about and accompanied each mating" (78). Interesting that one finds, in this study, a good son/bad son split, much like in Seraph. Kite's readiness to chalk up the qualities of each son "at once" to the good or bad mother seems too easy, especially in light of Seraph's Arvay, whose body produces both "good" (Kenny) and "bad" (Earl) sons. Yet the problem of a mother's defective blood becomes even more complicated in Seraph once Arvay is called home to visit her own mother, Maria. Even if Hurston's reader assumes that bad blood runs through the maternal line of the family, Arvay's final interaction with her mother reconfigures blood, mothers, home, waste, and identity.

During Arvay's preparations for her trip home to visit her dying mother, she mentally transforms her destitute beginnings into a glimmering fantasy:

The corroding poverty of her childhood became a glowing virtue, and a state to be desired . . . Peace, contentment and virtue hung like a rainbow over the turpentine shacks and shanties . . . Even Lorraine and her family stood glorified in this distant light. Arvay felt eager to get back in the atmosphere of her humble beginnings . . . She was going home! Home to the good old times and simple, honest things, where greed after money and power had no place. (272)
Here, Arvay romanticizes the town’s economic disenfranchisement as a wholesome slice of American life, one with which she can proudly and uniquely identify: "Arvay tossed her head defiantly and rhymed out that she was a Cracker bred and a Cracker born, and when she was dead there'd be a Cracker gone" (272). In Arvay's fantasy, home is not only a place of easy-going generosity (which it never was, for Arvay), but also a place where one is "bred" before one is "born." As usual, Arvay's opinions about breeding and birth are erratic; she slides from one confident position to another without ever seeming to realize her contradictions. Is she who she is by virtue of birth? Breeding? A combination of the two? Which comes first? Has she changed? Can she change? All of these questions surface for a final time after Arvay closely watches her mother's body pass over into death.

Just as Kristeva theorizes the body's waste products, she also theorizes the body as the ultimate waste product: the corpse. The psychological significance of the corpse provides a context for unpacking the representational work of Arvay's mother.

A decaying body, lifeless, completely turned into dejection . . . the corpse represents fundamental pollution. A body without soul, a non-body, disquieting matter . . . it must not be displayed but immediately buried so as not to pollute the divine earth. Connected nevertheless with excrement and impure on that account, the corpse is to an even greater degree that by means of which the notion of impurity slips into that of abomination and/or prohibition. In other words, if the corpse is waste, transitional matter, mixture, it is above all the opposite of the spiritual, of the symbolic, and of divine law. (109)

The threat posed by the corpse produces an abjection that reminds the (live) subject of her
or his always unstable border position as a possible corpse, a future corpse-to-be, a body which is at all times near-to-death. As Arvay beholds her dying mother, she risks the pollution of the corpse or an association with death itself: a non-being with the face of the Mother.

Maria sank back down in the depths of her pillows with a look of utter rapture on her sunken face. Her toothless mouth had caved in so deeply that the nose and chin seemed to meet. Arvay saw the thin lips work as if they tasted some delicious morsel as Maria closed her old eyes . . . [T]he thin bony old hand clung to hers and held her back. Arvay sensed that it was some satisfaction at her presence that Maria was trying to express. The muttering and gurgling went on for some minutes, then Maria belched, worked her lips for a moment and was very quiet. Stroking the old hand for a while, Arvay finally looked down and began to look for signs. (281)

The transition of Maria from speaking subject (Mother) to the spoken subject (the Mother's corpse) signifies a simultaneous collapse of Arvay's white trash identity. The representation of Maria as the "toothless mouth [that] had caved in so deeply that the nose and chin seemed to meet" suggests not only a caving in of the Mother's body but also, by association and proximity, a caving in of Arvay's identity, an implosion of the white trash mother within. The imploding body represents the movement of the abject (which "threatens us [all] from the outside" [Kristeva 41]) from that which is marginal to that which is central. Arvay's desire to keep this threat at bay, to dam up her inherited abjection, her innate, inborn, class-affiliated, in-the-genes, southern white trashiness finally fails. In a maternal metonymy, abjection moves from the margins of Arvay's white
identity (what she "used to be") towards its center or "home," a local home represented by both the mother's corpse and the property in which it is housed.

_inherited "Properties"

The final section of the novel considers, once again, the matter of properties -- inherited and acquired. Just as Joe Kelsey called attention to the importance of swapping and trading properties earlier in the novel, Hurston returns to the matter of "property" at the end of the novel to exaggerate the multiple meanings of inheritance and acquisition. From her death-bed, Maria tells Arvay about the "paper fixing things so [she] could come into this place all by yourself without no trouble of any kind" (278). It is Maria's intention to pass her property onto Arvay, to make Arvay a full-owner of the white trash mother's rural Florida home. This intention is met with resistance by Arvay who, after watching her mother's body collapse in the death scene, seems confused about what such an inheritance should mean.

After the removal of Maria's corpse by way of a fancy funeral, Arvay shuffles through several theories of how class-differences affect poor whites. First, Arvay posits that "Not having, and never having things made people do things and act ways that they wouldn't if they ever had anything they wanted" (299). Yet this changes soon after Maria's funeral, when Arvay returns to the Henson property itself. Arvay is horrified to find the house her mother left to her empty, and trash strewn about the yard (thanks to 'Raine and Carl Middleton). It is then that she re-formulates her theory, telling her neighbor

It's just like my husband says. He says folks makes a bad mistake when they call
places slums. He says folks are the slums instead of the places they live in.
Places don't get nasty and dirty and low-down unlessen some folks make 'em like that. Place some folks in what is called slums and they'll soon make things look like a mansion. Place a slum in a mansion and he'll soon have it looking just as bad as he do. It ain't right to blame it on the place. Leave land alone by itself, and it'll grow up into trees and flowers. It sure don't grow up into slouchy people. (304-5)

The switch from what Arvay thinks to a discourse of "what Jim says" clues the reader into the class and gender conflict at work in Arvay. Arvay's status as a rural poor southern white woman demands that she reject a social theory that grounds itself in political and economic determination. In other words, Arvay, once again, changes her mind: rather than stay with a theory that sees economic conditions as that which produces class-subjects, Arvay decides that "slum"-like people produce the poverty in which they live.
At this point in the novel, her psychological and political interests necessitate a turn from her white trash history. Yet the novel constructs this change by gendering it male, "my husband says," rather than re-figuring Arvay as the "author" of this articulation. So is Arvay distancing herself from the position by attributing this stance to Jim? Does she believe what she is saying, or merely repeating what Jim says to enable her own rejection of home?29

Arvay's incineration of the Henson property reflects the passion with which Arvay takes hold of this emerging paradigm. The house takes on abject properties after Arvay's "my husband says" speech.

It was an evil, ill-deformed monstrousous accumulation of time and scum. It had
soaked in so much of doing-without, of soul-starvation, of brutish vacancy of aim, of absent dreams, envy of trifles, ambitions for littleness, smothered cries and trampled love, that it was a sanctuary of tiny and sanctioned vice . . . its fumes and vapors had stuck to her sufficiently to scar Jim and bruise her children. There was no getting away from it . . . The house had caught a distemper from the people who had lived in it, and had then diseased up people. It caught people and twisted the limbs of their minds. What was in its craw gave off bad breath. (306)

In a traditional Southern Gothic convention, references to "scum," "fumes and vapors," "disease," "twisted limbs," and "bad breath" describe the way in which the house has come to embody the nastiness and deformity of Arvay's experience of embodiment. Arvay moves "from room to room . . . gathering up and piling together the trash and rags that had been left behind. There was plenty everywhere" (307). As the house burns, Arvay seats herself under the mulberry tree (the place in which Jim, after his rape of Arvay, "picked a dead leaf and bits of trash out of the back of [Arvay's] head." [53]) and looking at the conflagration, exultation swept over her followed by a peaceful calm. It was the first time that she was conscious of feeling that way . . . [S]he picked herself over inside and recognized why she felt as she did now. She was no longer divided in her mind. The tearing and ripping and useless rending was finished and done. She had made a peace and was in harmony with her life. (308-9)

The all-consuming fire signifies the ecstasy with which Arvay experiences her release from southern rural impoverishment. The "peaceful calm" returns the reader to the scene prior to Arvay's moment in the bathroom, in which "she was as near to complete
happiness as she had ever been in her life" (236-7). Arvay's "tearing, ripping, and useless rending" terminates as she watches the fire. Again, this harkens back to Arvay's toiling in the bathroom, in which she found herself "too seriously involved" to get to the telephone. Arvay's involvement in "tearing, ripping, and useless rending" signifies both corporeal angst over excretion and childbirth as well as her own movement from a southern white trash based identity into a more national form of whiteness, a whiteness untainted by the markings of the rural working class.\textsuperscript{30} The property-burning scene effectively replaces identity-based implosion and death (Arvay's mother) with identity-based explosion and life (fire and bodily peace) and indicates the completion of Arvay's disposal of her "trash."\textsuperscript{31} With this completion the reader sees a "new" Arvay, a changed Arvay, whose worries about eugenic impurities have caught fire and turned to ash, leaving in its place a renewed sense of self, an empty lot, whose possibilities remain open.

\textit{Arvay's New National Body (Peeking in Where the Sun Don't Shine)}

It seems, then, that Arvay has made it. She has torched her bad properties. She has left Sawley behind and taken on a new attitude. She is ready to love Jim. She has risen from the "demon of wastes" to become the luminescent "seraph" of the novel's title. Her whiteness is no longer besmirched by dirt or filth, but rather shines in spiritual communion with other, more brilliant, national whites. She is no longer an angel mired in shit, but one headed for cleaner waters of the Atlantic Ocean. As she sails off the coast of Florida into the ocean, Arvay's white trash body is exchanged for the protective status of a nation whose embrace, in the form of the sea-faring narrative and its manly patriarch (Jim), she finally accepts. But even though we know that Arvay returns to Jim with a
renewed sense of self, we also know that Arvay's sunny disposition stems (disappointingly?) from a newly found obsession with universal motherhood. In the closing section of the novel, Arvay joins Jim and his crew on their boat and, as it sails through rough waters, Arvay takes on the role of mother-to-all. No longer the white trash mother, preoccupied with class differences between her and her husband, the new Arvay feels that "[h]er job [i]s mothering. What more could any woman want and need? ... Jim was hers and it was her privilege to serve him ... She was serving and meant to serve" (351-2). A strange and rather un-Hurston-like ending. What can it mean in light of what we have learned from Hurston's intense examination of race and class, eugenics and abjection? For while the sun finally shines on Arvay, it only does so once she can re-establish herself as the good mother, the benevolent angel in the house. Certainly, this position does not advocate the kind of liberal feminism associated with Hurston. So, what's up?

My guess (and it is a guess, after all of the ambiguities and contradictions in the novel) is that, much like Joe's multi-layered joke in the novel's middle, Hurston constructs an ending to confound the expectations of her readership. Remember that, earlier in the novel, Joe's joke brings an alternative voice to the thematics of natural heredity and psychological/corporeal angst. It loosens narrative tension and introduces a discourse of cultural acquisition. While Hurston's ending is not quite a "joke" (at least, not the easily identifiable joke that Joe makes), perhaps there is a level of facetiousness to it. After all, as I have argued, the novel is about waste and whiteness, a (at times) winking critique of white paranoias about personal and social purity. If Hurston ends the novel with a less than heroic gesture, perhaps she is pointing to something else about national and southern
forms of whiteness. In the last sentence of the novel, Arvay "ma[kes] the sun welcome to
come on in," a sun that "laid [a] rosy path across the crinkling water" (352). The story
ends by letting the sun in where it has, up until this point, not shone -- on Arvay. Is this
an encoded gesture, making a pun out of the (anal) joking command, "Stick it where the
sun don't shine!"? If Hurston's goal was to shed light on folks and attitudes which
normally remain in the dark, and to do so by embedding a plethora of excremental and
anal signifiers, then by the novel's close, perhaps Hurston could not resist the opportunity
to let the sun shine in on Arvay, the synecdochical (white) asshole.32 The point of letting
the sun in, at the novel's end, is to bring to light the way in which a national body of
whiteness will eventually have to contend with that which it seeks to keep covered,
especially if it imagines racial identity as determined by (eugenic) ideals of cleanliness
and purity, perfection and control.
Part Two: Seed(s)
3 Agrarianism and the Violence of Sexual Difference (Faulkner and March)

As I have been arguing thus far, stories about polluted blood, inherited characteristics, and white trash are, finally, not about "America" or "the South," but rather work together to construct an uncanny relation between the South and the nation, a relation comprised of blood and excrement. The kinds of bodies that emerge in eugenic reports, in *Buck v Bell*, in Caldwell's *Tobacco Road*, and Hurston's *Seraph on the Suwanee* pollute not only the nation's white blood stock, but also the purity of southern white gentility. Hurston's ironic representation of a racial whiteness that is always mired in its own geographical shit forces readers to reconsider the idea that a nation is made of something like "pure blood" or that the story of "America" is also always the story of pollution itself. But blood pollution is not the only trope that represents the gothic relation between the South and the nation.

"Pollution" itself, as a signifier, has currency as a term that refers to yet another bodily fluid, specifically male. The *OED* tells us that "pollution" can be traced to "seminal emission apart from coition; self-pollution." In this configuration, "pollution" neither comes from the outside, in the form of invasive toxins, nor does pollution strictly exist as that which is inherently inside, a self-contained, internal blood-poison. Rather pollution occurs when that which is inside spills outside *onto itself*. Here, the relationship between container and contained, body and excess, and masculine and feminine becomes confused.¹ Seed is pure only if it signifies potential growth. Impurity results when the male body emits seminal fluid outside of heterosexual reproduction. Ejaculation outside
the female body signifies waste (the wasting of seed, of male essence), thus creating a crisis of interpretation of the male body's own relationship to itself. Calvin Thomas brings up this point in *Male Matters*, explaining that "within a heterosexual economy of genital finality and imperative reproductivity, the . . . seminal substance, depending on the visibility or invisibility of its production, means either everything or nothing, either means or it does not. Sperm, that is, if it goes where it is 'supposed' to go, is never seen" (54). One of Thomas's arguments is that the cultural value of sperm always comes back to a basic split: seminal fluid has either a positive valence, connected to procreation and life, or a negative valence, connected to dissipation, waste, and loss. Thomas uses the word "sperm" to refer to seminal fluid and, while my own work is indebted to his own, this section considers the multivalence of "seed" rather than "sperm."

Seed, in both sexual and agricultural forms, makes an appearance time and again in the novels I examine in this second part of the dissertation: William Faulkner's *Light In August* (1932) and *As I Lay Dying* (1930), William March's *The Bad Seed* (1954), Flannery O'Connor's *The Violence Bear It Away* (1960), and James Dickey's *Deliverance* (1970). Seed has the potential to signify a self-contained, self-regenerating organism -- a singular seed -- as well as procreative ejaculate -- millions of sperm. Seed thus signifies the agrarian and the sexual, the self-contained and the other-bound, the procreative and the masturbatory, the whole and the part, the life-giving and the life-draining. How can one bring the meaning of seed to bear on the relation between the South and the nation?

This section draws a correlation between the male body that fears its own self-pollution and the relation between the modern-industrial nation and the agrarian South. I argue that stories which prioritize the male body and its sexual ability (or inability) to
reproduce function as allegories for how the South functions as an internal site of self-difference from the nation. By mapping the southern male body onto the nation at large, this section focuses critical attention on how masculine anxieties about seed, growth, and progress mirror anxieties about the South as a site of internal difference -- a strange, seedy growth that inhibits the progress of the nation, a kind of national self-pollution. In this chapter and the next, I show how male negotiations of the South and the nation depend upon the violent blurring of national and regional forms of growth and ruination.

Agrarianism, aristocratic propriety, Biblical morality, and honor; an association with historical or political failure or injury, a connection with white supremacy, and the prioritization of blood relations and family name over the law itself: these are the master tropes of early- to mid-twentieth-century southern white masculinity that distinguish it from what would otherwise be a "national" form of manhood.\(^2\) Whereas "national manhood" refers to "an ideology that has worked powerfully since the Constitution era to link a fraternal articulation of white manhood to civic identity," southern manhood, it seems, finds itself in opposition to such an imagined fraternity and, I would argue, instead finds textual expression in an embodied, gothicized form (Nelson ix).

From 1900-1950, national politics centered around the material effects of progressivism, industrialization, the emergence of the modern corporation, the rise of professionalization and a new middle class, and a desire for more scientific knowledge that would help to maintain and engineer the machinery of society.\(^3\) The 1950s, of course, was a time in which the nation insisted upon restoring the nuclear family as a site of American perfection in the post-war era and, perhaps inevitably, the 1960s followed as a time in which the hypocrisies of such a construct were revealed, and the struggle for
racial and sexual civil rights were brought to the fore of the national imaginary. The twentieth-century South, while undergoing its literary and cultural "Renaissance" from 1929-1955, was often cast as the shadow of American progress, a national nightmare that served as the horrifically racist site of un-American segregation and white supremacy. To point out the South as an abjected socio-political region is neither to bemoan the plight of southern white men, nor to call for an "affirmative action" for the injured southern white male. Instead, I am interested in the way in which writers of the twentieth century narrate masculinity that finds itself at odds with "the national." In other words, if Southern manhood is different from national manhood, what makes it so? How do stories about regional male excess therefore change the way in which we read and interpret the national masculine? In this chapter and the next, I look at mid-twentieth-century stories that combine discourses of gender, agrarianism, and sexual abomination in the figure of "seed." The literary value of "seed," I have found, is multiple: seed not only speaks to the matter of gender and the male body (seed as sperm), but also to the problem of industrial modernization in the South (seed as grain and seed as idea), and the changing nature of the southern family (seed as offspring).

*The Spermatic South?*

While many recent scholars take up the question of male bodies, masculinities, and patriarchy, only recently has intellectual work been done specifically on the way in which these figures and ideologies are reproduced in literature of the modern and postmodern South. When such theoretical work *is* to be found, little is to be found on masculinity and male figures in the work of women writers (such as O'Connor) or in more
popular works (such as March's *The Bad Seed* or Dickey's *Deliverance*). As a result, I will look at some theories of the literary and cultural representations of "seed" and "sperm" (as they appear in recent American and modern critical theory) while keeping in mind the way in which gender and culture differ for the American South before, during, and after the Southern Renaissance.

In the past two decades, theoretical endeavors to historicize national masculinity and the male body have drawn together cultural and literary texts to provide a thick description of normative masculine identity and its connection with ideal citizenship, health, and morality. Studies that focus on American manhood and the representation of male bodily fluids are concerned primarily with the nineteenth century and the poetry of Walt Whitman. Michael Moon's *Disseminating Whitman* (1991) and, even earlier, Harold Aspiz's "Walt Whitman: The Spermatic Imagination" (1984) put the work of Whitman into dialogue with various male conduct, health, and personal hygiene manuals of the antebellum male purity movement; Aspiz in particular demonstrates the way in which Whitman's "spermatic utterances" informed a theory of poetics at least until the high modernism (circa 1921) of Ezra Pound and T.S. Elliot. Moon reminds us that discourses of "health" and the male constitution aligned in more ways than one with ideologies of American-ness and the U.S. Constitution, how the private body of the citizen could be imagined as mirroring the nation as a body itself, and vice versa. Both Moon and Aspiz draw from what G.J. Barker-Benfield calls a "spermatic economy." During the course of the nineteenth century, industrial capitalism changed the relation between citizens, money, and goods and, as Barker-Benfield argues, male sexuality began to take on a different meaning, one bound up with spending and saving sperm. According
to Barker-Benfield, "the ejaculation of sperm was equivalent in some sense to the expenditure of money . . . Men believed their expenditure of sperm had to be governed according to an economic principle. I have called this principle the 'spermatic economy'" (179, 181). Associated with self-control, endurance, energy, and vigor, sperm, in nineteenth-century hygienic and moral texts, was to be retained by the male body to increase vitality. Retention equaled strength; what one man wasted was immediately absorbed by another (competitor's) gain. Spent seed was the same as spent money -- it had to be wisely invested in productive, and not wasteful, fashion.

Restating G. J. Barker-Benfield's work on nineteenth-century sexuality, Moon writes that "[Barker-Benfield] relates nineteenth-century American males' anxieties about the catastrophic consequences of 'losing' semen to a simple, closed, early capitalist model of male sexuality in which 'seed,' the basic form of human 'capital,' must be hoarded, accumulated, saved, and withheld, rather than spent or squandered" (24-5). Moon theorizes that the connection between "seed" and America's status as a "young" or adolescent nation (a seedling) "became reified in the nineteenth century into a national preoccupation with the 'waste' of America's 'seed,' meaning both the country's promise and potential and the 'reproductive secretions' of its male citizens" (18). Contrasting Thomas Paine and Walt Whitman, Moon elaborates

Paine and Whitman, one might say, stand at the beginning and end of a period during which two kinds of political anxieties culminated in a prolonged crisis. The first anxiety was over the question of whether (on the national-political level) the United States had not emerged from its first youth -- its 'seedtime' -- dissipated and doomed, possessing a 'ruined constitution.' The second was over the question
of whether (on the sexual-political level) American youths were not dissipating
what the culture represented as being their respective shares of the nation's
'potential' or 'energy' in a self-induced epidemic of wanton semination. (18)

Moon's work articulates a connection between the sexual, poetic, and national ideologies
of waste and seed, purity and sexual control. Aspiz and Moon both show how
nineteenth-century discourses of reproduction and constitution were challenged and
subverted in Whitman's poetry, where spermatic fluidity, abundance, spirit, and dispersal
healthily correspond with ideas, bodies, and democratic politics (Moon 77). Given his
canonical status, Moon does not, it seems, need to regionalize Whitman; placing
Whitman in the context of the national (the youth of the nation as well as national youth)
makes sense. But when dealing with authors who have ties to the South, the relation to
"the national" and the spermatic does, indeed, change. All of the authors I deal with in
this chapter and the next (Faulkner and March, O'Connor and Dickey) have an investment
in what Moon and Aspiz call "the spermatic," and yet, unlike Whitman's nineteenth-
century, free-floating, national form of spermatic pleasure, the novels I examine in this
chapter have a southern investment in the spermatic as something that is "seedy," a
polluted form of masculine desire which is at odds with national progress, growth, and
health.

The connection between the spermatic and cultural production finds a double
articulation in the notion of a "Southern Renaissance" during the 1930s -- a re-birthing of
the region's literature and culture, a birth that historically has insisted it has taken place,
ironically, among (white) men. Much like the new Jacksonian nation during the early-
nineteenth century, one might argue that writers of the "New South" (1880-1940) turned
to the metaphor of the seed to reflect the region's relative "youth" as it is born more fully into the modern industrial culture of the nation at large. And yet, in the 1930 Southern cultural-political manifesto *I'll Take My Stand*, the tropes of an agrarian culture (soil, seed, aesthetics, religion, family) specifically stand in opposition to official national culture. The "Introduction: A Statement of Principles," which claims to unite the essays, argues "The theory of agrarianism is that the *culture of the soil* is the best and most sensitive of vocations, and that therefore it should have the economic preference and enlist the maximum number of workers (xlvii, emphasis mine)." The essays in *I'll Take My Stand* are peppered with full-on critiques of national progress and industrialism: "All the articles bear in the same sense upon the book's title-subject: all tend to support a Southern way of life against what may be called the American or prevailing way; and all as much as agree that the best terms in which to represent the distinction are contained in the phrase, *Agrarian versus Industrial*" (xxxvii). The radical privileging of a southern, agrarian culture sought to reclaim the naturalness of agriculture in opposition to national industry, associating industrial capitalism with a form of cultural death that, far from driving America forward, was actually killing or, figuratively, castrating (or at least inhibiting the growth or erection of), what could be a more natural nation: "If a community, or a section, or a race, or an age, is groaning under industrialism, and well aware that it is an evil dispensation, it must find the way to throw it off. To think that this cannot be done is pusillanimous. And if the whole community, section, race, or age thinks it cannot be done, then it has simply lost its political genius and doomed itself to impotence" (xlviii, emphasis mine).

*I'll Take My Stand* is a collection of essays that contains a variety of perspectives
on the South's relation to the nation and industrial progress, including valorizations of Southern religion, art, agrarian culture, food, economics, and even temporality. The above-mentioned worry about "impotence," however, brings a sexual metaphor to the southern white male anxiety about national failure. John Crowe Ransom's essay, "Reconstructed but Unregenerate," foregrounds the gender politics at stake in the southern refusal to "regenerate" along national lines. For Ransom and others who contribute to I'll Take My Stand, the 1930s return to agrarianism meant a "look backwards" to the plantation system of the Old South and the reconstitution of southern white manhood that would restore the white male patriarch to the full benefits of the planter-aristocrat. The Southern Agrarian's romantic view of land finds a concomitant investment in the mystique of the yeoman-farmer: his earthiness, his gut-level instincts and natural connection to the soil. The intellectual "backwards glance" thus maintains a twin fantasy of white masculinity: the aristocratic plantation owner and the hearty yeoman-farmer. As Ransom puts it,

The masculine form is hallowed by Americans . . . under the name of Progress. The concept of Progress is the concept of man's increasing command, and eventually perfect command, over the forces of nature; a concept which enhances too readily our conceit, and brutalizes our life. (9-10)

This specifically industrial masculine form degrades the small farmer:

Unregenerate Southerners were trying to live the good life on shabby equipment, and they were grotesque in their effort to make an art out of living when they were not decently making the living . . . It is their defect that they have driven a too easy, an unmanly bargain with nature, and that their aestheticism is based on
insufficient labor.

But there is something heroic, and there may prove to be something very valuable to the Union, in their extreme attachment to a certain theory of life. They have kept up a faith which was on the point of perishing from this continent. (16)

Thus, the 1930s South contends with the loss of the white patriarchal hero, but his figure is visible in the oppressed share-cropper, who adamantly retains his values while projecting a kind of earthen masculinity -- defensive, proud, and historic. National masculinity, for Ransom, has been displaced into the machinery of industrial culture. It is Ransom's grievance that the southern culture of the soil ends up in the position of the feminine or feminized.

Thus, unlike Whitman, who revels in the orgasmic potential of the nineteenth-century nation, the 1930s pro-agrarian, southern white male must settle for the "unmanly bargain with nature," lamenting his fall from patriarchal ("heroic") privilege by issuing a warning to those industrialists who continue to threaten his soil-based manhood: do not think the southern way of living has nothing to do with the nation itself. What Moon and Aspiz observe in a national literary figure like Whitman, then, turns, in another time and, certainly, in another place, from the orgasmic to the anxious, from the joyous to the paranoid, from the national to the southern. Both during and after the flowering of the Southern Renaissance, the white patriarchal South must still reckon with its relation to the nation, reconfiguring not only interracial and cross-gender conflicts, but also intraracial and same-sex relations as they differ along lines of region and nation, growth and progress. The spermatic economy developed in the transition from an agrarian to an industrial South involved not simply the saving or spending of seminal fluids, but the
characterization of seminal fluid itself as either healthy and agrarian (seed to be planted and grown in spite of national pressures to choke) or as fluid, feminine, and abject (seed that does nothing but waste itself before the nation). In Faulkner and March, the violence that results from such an economy is always directed upon the female body, she who is figured as the Other of solid southern manhood.

In the fiction of William Faulkner, men always know where the final destination of their seed should be, but have serious anxieties over the production of seed to begin with, and become confused, to say the least, when it comes to imagining seed mixing with what is always figured as the abject female body. In both *Light in August* and *As I Lay Dying*, any positive valence attributed to seed is negated through narrative reversals and displacements. Although it was written two years after *As I Lay Dying*, it will be useful to look at how *Light in August* treats seed and the construction of male purity, then turn to *As I Lay Dying* to compare this earlier novel's displacement of male seed onto the figure of "Woman."

**Something in Him Trying to Get Out: Faulkner’s *Light in August***

Perhaps the thoughts of the Reverend Hightower from Faulkner's *Light in August* (1932) best express the southern value of seed as it relates to gender, sexuality, and purity: "Woman (not the seminary, as he had once believed): the Passive and Anonymous whom God had created to be not alone the recipient and receptacle of the seed of his body but of his spirit too, which is truth or as near truth as he dare approach" (467). Hightower establishes an important split between the seed of the male body and the seed of masculine spirit: on the one hand seed is a material substance (seminal fluid)
and, on the other, seed is semen's imaginary corollary (masculine vitality).

One of Hightower's problems in *Light in August* is his theonomous inability to reconcile his position as a preacher, a Man of God, with his marriage to a sexually licentious, unnamed wife. In opposition to this "Woman" stands not Man, but the "seminary," a church-sanctioned space of spiritualized, Christian homosociality, a place where men (and men alone) can meditate upon Christian doctrine. The chain of associations here are not to be missed: seminary, seminar, seminal, semen; the seminary as a seedbed, where ideas are generated in and of themselves; the self-same, all-male, masturbatory yet creative, homospiritual. As Hightower puts it, "That was what the word seminary meant: quiet and safe walls within which the hampered and garmentworried spirit could learn anew serenity to contemplate without horror or alarm its own nakedness" (478). The usual association of procreative seed with the affirmative, the healthy, and the life-giving (male-female genitality) transforms in Hightower's narrative as that which brings both "horror and alarm" to what would otherwise be a pleasurable contemplation of his naked spirit. For Hightower, it is seed spent inside the seminary (and not inside the Woman) that has a positive valence. The narrator tells us, parenthetically, that Hightower "once believed" that the seminary was what "God had created to be not only the recipient and receptacle of the seed of his body but of his spirit too." Hightower grieves that it is "Woman" who has come to replace the seminary as proper recipient and receptacle for his seed. Without "Woman," Hightower can study his own naked spirit and seed "without horror or alarm." In *Light in August*, "woman," or, more accurately, the female body (as the Other that replaces the same), is what time and time again brings horror and alarm to the self-same southern male constitution.
Whereas Reverend Hightower can, indeed, attribute a positive value to seed (albeit a putatively confused [that is to say non-heteronormative] one), Joe Christmas, the novel's protagonist, finds it difficult to ascribe positivity to seed at all. For Christmas, masculine identity is bound up with gendered narratives in which he is either the object of violence (in same-sex relations) or the agent of violence (in male-female relations). Seed appears in the midst of Christmas's violent development from boy to man, although in abstract terms -- not directly named as seed or sperm, but as "something." (I will return to this "something" shortly.) The maturation of Joe Christmas occurs in four sections of Chapter 7, which begins with the declarative, "And memory knows this; twenty years later memory is still to believe  *On this day I became a man*" (146). The "day" referred to in this introductory statement is ambiguous, since the chapter strings together at least three different, nonsequential "days," each of which could be the day Joe remembers as his official coming of age. (Notice here that I begin to refer to the young Joe Christmas as "Joe" and not "Christmas," thus keeping in tact a traditional naming strategy that uses first names to designate youth and last names to designate maturity.)

The first day takes place when Joe is eight. In this section, the spiritual-homosocial valued by Hightower reappears in the domestic sphere. Joe's foster home is a cross between family, farm, church, and state. When Joe fails to learn a Presbyterian catechism, McEachern, Joe's foster father, punishes Joe by whipping him (in a stable) with a leather strap which "smelled like the man smelled: an odor of clean hard virile living leather" (148-9). Out in the stable, McEachern commands young Joe, "Take down your pants . . . We'll not soil them" (149).

Then the boy stood, his trousers collapsed about his feet, his legs revealed beneath
his brief shirt. He stood, slight and erect. When the strap fell he did not flinch, no quiver passed over his face. He was looking straight ahead, with a rapt calm, expression like a monk in a picture. McEachern began to strike methodically, with slow and deliberate force, still without heat or anger. It would have been hard to say which face was the more rapt, more calm, more convinced. (149-50)

McEachern beats Joe one more time and Joe, hungry and sick, eventually collapses. Later that same Sunday night, Mrs. McEachern arrives with food, which Joe refuses. Instead he "took the tray and carried it to the corner and turned it upside down, dumping the dishes and food and all onto the floor" (155). An hour later, the reader finds Joe "above the outraged food kneeling, with his hands [eating,] like a savage, like a dog" (155). In this scene, humiliation combines with intergenerational religious training and the rejection of the maternal, securing Joe's male-identified, violent relation with a father provided by the state.

Immediately following this particular day is another, some seven years later. This is a Saturday, and Joe is fifteen. On this day, Joe is hanging out with four other boys of the same age:

The five of them were gathered quietly in the dusk about the sagging doorway of a deserted sawmill shed where, waiting a hundred yards away, they had watched the negro girl enter and look back once and then vanish. One of the older boys had arranged it and he went in first. The others, boys in identical overalls, who lived within a three mile radius, who, like Joe McEachern, could at fourteen and fifteen plow and milk and chop wood like grown men, drew straws for turns. Perhaps he did not even think of it as a sin until he thought of the man who would be waiting
for him at home, since to fourteen the paramount sin would be to be publicly
convicted of virginity. (156)

If Joe's manhood in the prior scene depended upon being beaten by an older male, as well
as refusing the kindness of an older female, this scene further develops Joe's manhood
inside a structure of agrarian, fraternal relations. Each "identical" (white) teenage boy
will, to say the very least, lose his virginity to the "negro girl," thus matching his ability to
perform masculine, agrarian labor (plowing, milking, and chopping wood) with his ability
to perform (hetero)sexually. However, instead of losing his virginity, Joe becomes aware
of his own difference, or perhaps of Difference itself, and flies into a rage once inside the
sawmill shed.

His turn came. He entered the shed. It was dark. At once he was overcome by a
terrible haste. There was something in him trying to get out, like when he had
used to think of toothpaste. But he could not move at once, standing there,
smelling the woman smelling the negro all at once; enclosed by the
woman black and the haste, driven, having to wait until she spoke: a guiding
sound that was no particular word and completely unaware. Then it seemed to
him that he could see her -- something, prone, abject; her eyes perhaps . . . He was
moving because his foot touched her. Then it touched her again because he
kicked her. He kicked her hard, kicking into and through a choked wail of
surprise and fear. She began to scream, he jerking her up, clutching her by the
arm, hitting at her with wide, wild blows, striking at the voice perhaps, feeling her
flesh anyway, enclosed by the woman black and the haste. (156-7)

Once again, violence accompanies Joe's masculinization. But rather than having Joe as
the subject of punishment, it is Joe himself who feels authorized to beat that which he sees as "prone, abject." Black femininity is conflated with sexuality, then abjection. The narrative voice explains that the overlap of race, gender, and sexuality -- womanshenegro -- is what suffocates Joe and finally incites him to violence. Binary oppositions here could not be more clear cut. But because the black female body can never signify pure alterity or pure difference, she transforms, as a result of the beatings, into the "she" that signifies Joe's panicked (mis)recognition of himself as a sexualized white, male subject.

Concomitantly, one should also take note of how the narrative describes Joe's awareness of his body as a sexual body. Upon Joe's awareness of semen in his body, the "haste" or "something" in him trying to get out," he remembers the childhood moment in which he eats and regurgitates the pink toothpaste of the dietician in the orphanage. In the sawmill shed scene, just as in the orphanage scene, sexuality and impurity combine. The sawmill narrative harkens back to the toothpaste narrative to mix the fluids of Joe's adolescent male body with those of his pre-Oedipal body -- sperm and vomit. And yet, unlike the toothpaste scene, when Joe is able to regurgitate, here in the sawmill Joe does not let the "something" in him out. Instead of ejaculating, Joe kicks and hits the body before him. The "negro girl," then, signifies, for Joe, a nauseous displacement of memory, desire, and his own corporeality. Joe does not feel "clean" until the female body is gone from the shed, and is, instead, replaced by the bodies of the four other, again, "identical" adolescent boys:

Then it was male he smelled, they smelled; somewhere beneath it the She scuttling, screaming . . . There was no She at all now. They just fought; it was as if a wind had blown among them, hard and clean . . . They had completely forgot
about the girl, why they had fought, if they had ever known. On the part of the
other four it had been purely automatic and reflex: that spontaneous compulsion
of the male to fight with or because of or over the partner with which he has
recently or is about to copulate. (157)

For Joe, southern manhood can only be known in the abjection of the "black" and
"feminine," and the coming together of (white) male bodies to "just fight," as "pure
reflex," "hard and clean."

The final "day" included in this chapter revolves around McEachern's discovery
that Joe has sold the cow that McEachern gave to him to raise, "to teach [him] the
responsibility of possessing, owning, ownership" (163). On this day, Joe is seventeen,
and it is revealed that McEachern has also stumbled across a "new suit hidden in the loft"
which is no doubt an outfit worn while Joe is out "whoring" (164). Joe's private
acquisition of a new suit marks his transition from agrarian purity to a contaminated
sexual identity, from boy to man. The narrator tells the reader that Joe and McEachern
stand face to face, and that McEachern, at this moment, finally "acknowledge[s] that the
child whom he had adopted twelve years ago was a man," at which point McEachern
"str[i]k[es] at Joe with his fist" (164). The remainder of this section details how both Joe
and McEachern reject the feminine secrecy of Mrs. McEachern, she who is always
"getting in the way," who Joe sees as exuding a "soft kindness which he believed himself
doomed to be forever victim of and which he hated worse than he did the hard and
ruthless justice of men" (169). It is after this portion of the novel that Joe meets up with
Bobbie, the white waitress-whore with "a man's name" (179).

The point of delineating the "day" on which Joe becomes a man is to see how,
much like in the case of Hightower, masculinity depends upon the ability to abject the feminine, to displace anxieties about male embodiment onto the female body. In *Light in August*, masculine identity, for both Joe Christmas and Reverend Hightower, is connected to purity and the always imperfect sense of knowing what to do, specifically, with the body's production of seed. Yet both Joe and Hightower occupy positions of alterity in the town of Jefferson; both men are outsiders, scapegoats. Neither healthy nor productive, seed and manhood come together in the narratives of Joe and Hightower to call attention to how each character occupies a troubled relation to masculinity. Seed is never narrated as an orgasmic release, but rather a troubling fluid whose value is governed by social pressures that dictate its designation as Woman, a violent marker of masculine self-difference, a "something in [them] trying to get out."

*Wet Seed Wild: Faulkner's As I Lay Dying*

In *As I Lay Dying* (1930), the figure of seed emerges in the absence of a male body altogether, but its meaning still depends upon the split between good and bad seed. *As I Lay Dying* fully transposes the trope of seed onto the body of the newly pregnant "Woman," Dewey Dell. As we shall see, Dewey Dell's pregnancy is not a celebratory moment of successfully planted seed, but instead signifies a nervous negotiation of how to gain access to a particular kind of reproductive freedom: abortion. The Bundren family's journey away from an agrarian setting, the family farm and towards "town," with its promise of modern goods and services, works in tandem with Dewey Dell's desire to uproot the seed planted inside of her.

Dewey Dell travels with her brothers, her father, and the quickly-spoiling corpse
of her mother to Jefferson, where she hopes to purchase "something at the drug store" in order to terminate her pregnancy (243). Dewey Dell's body carries the usual signs of Faulknerian femininity: fecundity, heat, bovine animalism, visceral intensity. These signs are made clear from the beginning of the novel, before Dewey Dell embarks upon her journey into town. In the second Dewey Dell narration of the novel, the reader follows her from the kitchen and out to the barn:

The cow breathes upon my hips and back, her breath warm, sweet, stertorous, moaning. The sky lies flat down the slope, upon the secret clumps. Beyond the hill sheet-lightening stains upward and fades. The dead air shapes the dead earth in the dead darkness, further away than seeing shapes the dead earth. It lies dead and warm upon me, touching me naked through my clothes. I said You don't know what worry is. I don't know what it is. I don't know whether I am worrying or not. Whether I can or not. I don't know whether I can cry or not. I don't know whether I have tried or not. I feel like a wet seed wild in the hot blind earth. (63-4)

In spite of all of her epistemological and ontological uncertainties, Dewey Dell is sure of one thing: "I feel like a wet seed wild in the hot blind earth." This strange simile makes quite an impression, for it contrasts with the repeated images of heat and dryness, death and wind, giving us, instead, something liquid and live.

I find the use of "seed" to describe the pregnant female body (especially a wet seed, and a wild seed, a "wet seed wild") both appropriate and confusing. There seem to be two possible readings of this last line. The first would understand Dewey Dell as the "hot blind earth" into which the "wet seed wild" has been planted. This understanding fits
with Hightower’s "recipient and receptacle" analogy from *Light in August*: Dewey Dell functions as a heated receptacle into which Lafe has deposited his sperm; she is a sack which Lafe fills (27). However, it is possible to read the text another way. Dewey Dell's body is the wet seed wild, a feral fluidity struggling to survive in the hot, dry, blind atmosphere in which she is living. This second reading switches the gendered meaning of "seed" as a traditionally masculine trope, connected to the life-giving sperm of the male body. Seed, as a simile, stands for the pregnant female body, and its potential for sprouting, budding, and a final flowering. It is this blossoming which Dewey Dell wishes to cut short, but cannot.

In *As I Lay Dying*, town signifies modernity as it is different from the rural "country" where the Bundrens live. The town of Jefferson is not a large, bustling industrial city, but a site of modern commerce and exchange, a place where Anse can get new teeth (plus a new wife with a graphophone), where Vardaman can look at a toy train in a store window, and a place where Dewey Dell can, supposedly, get an abortion. We know, for example, that, back in Frenchman's Bend, Dewey Dell cannot ask Dr. Peabody to give her an abortion, that his status as a rural doctor also qualifies him as morally opposed to performing such a progressive task. "He could do so much for me if he just would. He could do everything for me" (58). Peabody could, but he won't. Dewey Dell knows this and knows that to get what she wants she must go into town, just as Lafe has told her.

Unfortunately, town, for all of its promise of being a site of modern medicine and reproductive freedom, is not as progressive as Lafe promises Dewey Dell it will be. MacGowan is the name of the pharmacist who tells the story of Dewey Dell's arrival at
the drug store. MacGowan poses as a doctor, hoping to make time with Dewey Dell who "looks like a pretty hot mamma, for a country girl" (242). (MacGowan and Jody, his co-worker, both assume they will be able to have sex with Dewey Dell: "Aint you going to give me no seconds on it?" [243].) MacGowan and Dewey Dell have the following exchange:

'You aint the doctor,' she says.

'Sure I am,' I says. She watches me. 'Is it because I look too young, or am I too handsome?' I says. We used to have a bunch of old water-jointed doctors here,' I says; 'Jefferson used to be a kind of Old Doctors' Home for them. But business started falling off and folks stayed so well until one day they found out that the women wouldn't never get sick at all. So they run all the old doctors out and got us young good-looking ones that the women would like and then the women begun to get sick again and so business picked up. They're doing it all over the country. Hadn't you heard about it? Maybe it's because you aint never needed a doctor.'

'I need one now,' she says. (245)

This appeal to the national can't fail. If young, goodlooking doctors are replacing old ones "all over the country" then, surely, this guy must be a doctor. Plus, Dewey Dell is desperate, and MacGowan knows that he can take advantage, especially since Dewey Dell doesn't seem to know how, exactly, an abortion is performed: medicine or operation? MacGowan then makes a bargain with Dewey Dell. He will give her the medicine she needs for the abortion only if she agrees to another kind of "operation."

'Gimme the medicine first,' she says.
So I took a graduated glass and kind of turned my back to her and picked out a bottle that looked all right... It smelled like turpentine. I poured some of it into the glass and give it to her. She smelled it, looking at me across the glass. 'Hit smells like turpentine,' she says.

'Sure,' I says. 'That's just the beginning of the treatment. You come back at ten o'clock tonight and I'll give you the rest of it and perform the operation.'

'Operation?' she says.

'It won't hurt you. You've had the same operation before. Ever hear about the hair of the dog?'

She looks at me. 'Will it work?' she says.

'Sure it'll work. If you come back and get it.' (247)

The "same operation" that Dewey Dell has had before is, of course, sex. When MacGowan speaks of "the hair of the dog" it does not refer to the morning-after booze taken to ease a hang-over, but, in the somewhat the same vein, the taking of more semen inside of Dewey Dell. Following MacGowan's logic, if Dewey Dell drinks the turpentine he gives her and returns later for her "operation," the two combined will remove the unwanted "acorn inside her" (243). This, for Dewey Dell, is modern medicine.

I [MacGowan] went back and put some talcum powder into six capsules and kind of cleared up the cellar and then I was all ready.

She come in just at ten, before the clock had done striking... I locked the door and turned off the light and went on back. She was waiting. She didn't look at me now.

'Where is it?' she said.
I gave her the box of capsules. She held the box in her hand, looking at the capsules.

'Are you sure it'll work?' she says.

'Sure,' I say. 'When you take the rest of the treatment.'

'Where do I take it?' she says.

'Down in the cellar,' I say. (248)

As soon as the treatment is over, Dewey Dell realizes she has been tricked. "It aint going to work,' she says, 'that son of a bitch" (251).

Dewey Dell's desire to dig out the "wet seed wild" which has a claim on her body ends up doubling back on her at the novel's close. Instead of removing the "seed," only more seed is placed inside of her body, further characterizing her as the novel's chthonian woman. In *As I Lay Dying*, seminal fluid functions as currency (MacGowan reduces the amount of her payment if she agrees to have sex with him) and as medicine (the abortion can only happen if Dewey Dell completes the treatment: she must drink the turpentine, swallow the casules, and go with MacGowan down into the cellar for her "operation").

The textual management of seed in *As I Lay Dying* conforms to Faulkner's later writing (in *Light in August*) of Woman as recipient and receptacle (as I have already discussed). However, in *As I Lay Dying*, Faulkner attempts to grant some form of agency to Dewey Dell. Her subject position (that of a poor, country woman with just a shred of knowledge about the abortion procedure) finally denies her any agency over the seed her body has become and, instead, grants power to the men who not only fill her with lies about how to control her own body, but also fill her with their seedy substances as well.

The writing of the female body as seed re-emerges during the mid-twentieth
century, but in this textual manifestation, the female body as seed transforms into an unmanageable monster. This is the case of William March's 1954 gothic best-seller, The Bad Seed. In March's novel, the female body is no longer a passive receptacle into which male characters deposit their seed, but rather seed takes shape in the figure of a pre-pubescent girl, deemed "seed" because of the eugenically unsound marriage that produces her. The seed represented in March's novel terrifies the reader specifically because, as a little girl, she is not associated with healthy growth or progress, but with artifice, performativity, and death.

*Seed as Little Girl: William March's The Bad Seed*

In the 1991 Introduction to *The Bad Seed* (1954), Elaine Showalter traces the text's development from national best-selling novel to Broadway theater smash to Academy Award winning horror film. The popularity and notoriety of the story -- in all of its productions -- suggests that the ideological investment in eugenic heredity, gender, southern-ness, and seed is still pervasive in mid-century American culture. *The Bad Seed* takes place in a suburban southern town (not specified in the novel, but implied in its narrative and also suggested in March's biography to be his hometown of Mobile, Alabama). The seed in the title immediately refers not to sperm or agricultural grains, but to a murderous eight-year-old child, Rhoda Penmark, whose performance of girlhood innocence starkly contrasts with her cold-blooded killings. The horror of March's story stems from the mismatching of Southern codes of feminine girlhood with conscienceless violence: Rhoda's white, mannered, refined, bourgeois, little-lady performances charm her mother's friends. She is "quaint," "modest," and "old-fashioned" (6). However,
through the eyes of Christine Penmark (Rhoda's mother), the reader slowly gains knowledge of Rhoda's asocial relations with her classmates, and we eventually come to understand that she has walloped a boy in the head with her tap shoes, and has drowned him in a lake.

In a final act of violence, the reader watches through the Mother's eyes as Rhoda locks Leroy, the white trash grounds keeper, in the basement and lights him on fire, all the while calmly lapping at a stick of ice cream. The following exemplifies the contrast as Rhoda watches her victim, screaming for his life, burn to death: "Rhoda's pink darting tongue touched her [ice cream] treat for a final time; then lifting her head, pressing her palms together, she laughed the lovely, tinkling laugh of childhood and said, "You're silly"" (194). This fusion of opposites into the character of Rhoda (plus the murder of two males, one boy and one older man, by a little girl who is a seed) provides much of the story's gothic terror: no one can "tell" that Rhoda is not who she appears to be.

Rhoda's behavior (and, by extension, everyone else's) is subject to several theories espoused by different characters. March's novel reflects various social-scientific discourses in national circulation, suggesting that subject formation along the lines of environmental conditioning, psychoanalytic paradigms, or genetic inheritance are distinct, competing truths of human existence. Mrs. Monica Breedlove, town socialite and upstairs neighbor to the Penmarks, articulates a traditional Freudian psychoanalysis. She spins her theories of taboo sexuality and desire (from "larvated homosexuality" [39] to incestual repression) to provide an unconscious connective tissue for seemingly disparate elements. Reginald Tasker, writer of crime and mystery novels, provides Christine with criminological analyses of famous serial killers. It is Christine who conjures up a theory
of inheritance, that Rhoda's evil stems from the original "bad seed" -- Rhoda's biological grandmother, the serial killer Bessie Denker. Christine's repressed memories of her childhood emerge as she shuffles through case studies on serial killers, bringing into sudden clarity her "real" identity, that she is the biological daughter of a woman who murdered her entire family with the exception of Christine herself. Bessie's criminality, the "horror of her inheritance" (170), skips a generation, but comes to life again in Rhoda. Christine blames herself:

The discovery of her [Christine's] true identity had clarified much which had once seemed so baffling in her child. She could see now that Rhoda was not responsible for the things she'd done. She, not Rhoda, was the guilty one, for it was she who had passed on the inheritance from Bessie Denker to the little girl, the inheritance that had lain dormant for a generation, but had bloomed once more to destroy. (171)

Reginald Tasker, the novelist, lends support to Christine's theory

He said it was a point he hadn't considered, but, after all, he didn't see why not! The thing that made these people what they were wasn't a positive quality, but a negative one. It was a lack of something in them from the beginning, not something they'd acquired. Now, colorblindness and baldness and hemophilia were all caused by a lack of something or other, and nobody denied that they were transmitted. Feeble-mindedness was a lack of something, too; and certainly it was passed along from generation to generation. (172-3)

The narrative discursively links seed with inheritance, breeding, offspring. The narrative appeal to eugenics secures the truth of Christine's situation, proving to her that she must
act to bring an end to familial contamination. As a kind of suicide note/explanation, Christine writes a letter to her conspicuously absent husband, Kenneth, "The problem is mine, and I must solve it alone. I alone am responsible. It was I who carried the bad seed that made her what she is, not you" (174, emphasis mine). In a whirlwind of decisive action, Christine burns her letters to her husband, overdoses Rhoda with sleeping pills, and shoots herself in the head, leaving nothing behind to explain her discoveries or the recent turn of events.

The terrifying irony of this last passage, and the novel's ending, is double. First, the reader finds out that Monica Breedlove and other neighbors break into the Penmark's apartment to find Rhoda unconscious, but save her in the nick of time, which means the Bad Seed lives on to continue her path of destruction. Second, Christine insists that it is only her fault that Rhoda turned out the way she is. Christine must eliminate not only Rhoda but herself as well, leaving Kenneth, husband and father, guilt-free ("not you"). I would rather not get into the matter of blame (whose fault and for what reasons and which mistakes were made about what kinds of social-scientific theories), but I think it is significant to the story that Christine must place the bad seed within her own body, as a carrier. To kill off the mother and the little girl is to prevent the breeding of a nation of bad seeds. To let the traveling father live is to suggest that his seed is always good, never bad (if a seed is bad, it must come from a woman). It is significant that Kenneth, the father with the good seed, is absent throughout the entire novel, except on the last three pages, at which point he returns for Christine's funeral.

The husband's/father's absence is required to set the narrative in motion. It is his failure to be present that makes Christine more anxious about how to handle Rhoda, and
she composes lengthy letters to him explaining everything -- letters which she never sends. His absence makes the reader desire his presence; Christine's increasing alienation and turmoil creates a narrative tension which the reader feels only Kenneth can assuage:

I wish you were here at this moment. Then you could hold me in your arms and laugh at my silliness; you could laugh your soft, wonderful laugh and rub your cheek against mine and tell me not to worry so. And yet if I had some magical power to bring you back, I would not use it. I swear to you I would not use it, my dearest one. (82-3)

Christine's affect increases the meaning of Kenneth, the promise of his return. Since, however, Kenneth does not return (until it is too late), Christine's discoveries remain the paranoid truth of the novel.

Reginald Tasker's hypothesis that a "lack of something . . . from the beginning" creates a serial-killer, in a way, mirrors the paradigm of the absent father, Kenneth, one who is a "lack from the beginning." The novel positions Christine as lacking her husband, someone who is needed to complete the heterosexual dyad. The woman, then, signifies lack; she is missing something. Kenneth signifies fullness, something that must be acquired in order for the novel to come to its close. Rhoda, like her mother, also signifies lack. Remember that, from the very beginning of the novel, Christine worries about her child's "acquisitive look" (11). There are certain objects that Rhoda must have and, if she does not receive them, she will kill in order to finally obtain them. Yet Rhoda's lack is concealed. Again, it is a lack that cannot be "told" since it is covered over by her performance of southern girlhood charm. For this reason, the reader comes to believe that Rhoda is naturally evil, and that the femininity she performs is an acquisition
-- something she learned along the way. But the novel counters the association of lack with femininity by adding an extra twist to the story. Even though Rhoda and Christine are "lacking," the reader also knows that both have something present in their blood: inherited violent tendencies, the bad seed which has been passed down from an earlier generation. For Christine, this violence turns inward upon the self; it results in a suicide. For Rhoda, violence is projected outward. The "bad seed" thrives by killing off those who stand in her way.

_The Bad Seed_ metonymically substitutes "lack" on many levels. It is the transposition of seed (and, most significant for my purposes here, not blood) from out of the body of the father and into the body of the mother that reincarnates feminine "lack" as weakness without the male, but also as bearing the burden of bad seed, of the wasted strains of human stock. The violence of the seed which Christine carries and passes down to Rhoda ends up reproducing violence throughout the narrative outside and unbeknownst to Kenneth, he who is violently absent from the story, available only as an addressee -- or utterance -- in Christine’s impassioned letters. The gender split in _The Bad Seed_ toys with traditional binary oppositions: even though the patriarchal figure is physically absent, he is present in a synecdoche of seed, only that seed is encoded as essential to the female body, something that Christine carries. Overhearing a conversation between two men on anxiety and violence, Christine turns these concepts over in her head, much in the same way the narrative turns gender relations as described above:

It seemed to her suddenly that violence was an inescapable factor of the heart, perhaps the most important factor of all -- an ineradicable thing that lay, _like a bad seed_, behind kindness. behind compassion, behind the embrace of love itself.
Sometimes it lay deeply hidden, sometimes it lay close to the surface; but always it was there, ready to appear, under the right conditions, in all its irrational dreadfulness. (30-1)

Even though The Bad Seed plainly constructs southern white femininity (girlhood) as damaged and monstrous, the story also implies that the absent father -- the masculine -- is the figure "behind" the Bad Seed, "sometimes . . . deeply hidden, sometimes . . . close to the surface; but always . . . there, ready to appear, under the right conditions." The right conditions emerge only when the line of bad blood (the mother) has killed herself, and the "bad seed" (the violent little girl) can finally be returned to the Father.11

Just as Faulkner's Dewey Dell declares that she feels "like a wet seed wild,"

March, too, uses seed as a simile. Christine claims that violence is "like a bad seed."

And, if violence is like a bad seed, and Rhoda is the bad seed, then the reader can reason that violence is connected to the horror of an unmanageable little girl. The difference between how the two novels make use of "seed" is interesting: Faulkner's seed is female, pregnant, visceral, wet and wild. yet, ultimately, governed by relations between men.

March's seed, approximately twenty years later, is violent, repressed, natural, inside the body, inherited by women and through women, embodied by a little girl. Less than a decade later, however, Flannery O'Connor takes up the trope of seed again. Unlike male authors who displace masculine anxieties onto female bodies, O'Connor's novel works with the metaphor of seed in order to explore relationships between men who are, for the most part, without women.12 O'Connor stretches southern masculine identity to its liminal points, constructing not only moments of extreme physical violence between men, but also by including a scene of male same-sex rape. In O'Connor's The Violent Bear It
Away, as we shall see later in Dickey's Deliverance, seed is embedded in a narrative in which differences between men depend upon competing ideologies of modernity, agrarianism, and death itself. Interestingly, just as Faulkner establishes a split between the seed of the body and the seed of the spirit for the Reverend Hightower in Light In August, O'Connor, too, prioritizes this split. As we shall see, O'Connor's violent plot insists upon the relation between male bodies as bearers of seed and patriarchal ideologies (whether traditional Christian or modern secular) as seeds which bear planting in the minds and bodies of other men.
4 Modernity, Masculinity, and Same-Sex Rape (O'Connor and Dickey)

[Young Francis Tarwater] continued to give [his Uncle Rayber, the schoolteacher] the same omniscient look. "It's you the seed fell in," he said. "It ain't a thing you can do about it. It fell on bad ground but it fell in deep. With me," he said proudly. "It fell on rock and the wind carried it away."

The schoolteacher grasped the table as if he were going to push it forward into the boy's chest. "Goddam you!" he said in a breathless harsh voice. "It fell in us both alike. The difference is that I know it's in me and I keep it under control. I weed it out but you're too blind to know it's in you. You don't even know what makes you do the things you do."

The boy looked at him angrily but he said nothing.

(Flannery O'Connor, The Violent Bear It Away 192).

Flannery O'Connor's The Violent Bear It Away (1960) stresses the impact of words: their emptiness, their overdetermined meaning; words as constatives or performatives.\(^{13}\) And in the above epigraph, the connection between "seed" and "word" is strong enough to rupture the performative/constative split, so that the impact of words-seeds affects each speaker's voice, and strikes each listener so that the body contorts and spasms in reaction.\(^{14}\) For young Tarwater (Francis, or just "Tarwater") and his uncle Rayber (the atheist schoolteacher), the seed of the great-uncle (Old Tarwater, or Mason, the Christian prophet) is always bad: either carried off by the wind and amounting to nothing or taking root and producing "weeds." Either way, O'Connor's text suggests that its conscious elimination or unconscious presence produces an anxiety in both men, an anxiety mediated by an intensity of gazes and gasps between words. For O'Connor, these "seeds" connect not with the flowering of life, but with the production of death, violence, or wasted ideas. I will begin this chapter with a reading of words as violent or dead things before turning to a closer look at the connection between seeds, sperm, national and
regional identities, birth without women, and the novel's same-sex rape scene.

*Bullets, Words, Dead Bodies*

The first scene of physical injury takes place just as the novel opens. In this scene, violence explodes with a minimum exchange of words (an exchange specifically not narrated as dialogue). The setting of the scene within a corn patch foreshadows the thematic link between verbal exchange, action, ripeness/withering, and the meaning of injury. Rayber has arrived in Powderhead, Tennessee to lay claim to young (Francis) Tarwater, but rather than taking possession of the boy, he instead gets shot by old (Mason) Tarwater -- twice. The scene takes place just as the corn patch has come to ripeness, a silent agrarian fullness through which Rayber must pass to arrive at the site of the shooting.

[Rayber] had had to leave his car on the dirt road and walk a mile through the woods on a path that appeared and disappeared before he came to the corn patch with the gaunt two-story shack standing in the middle of it. The old man had been fond of recalling for Tarwater the red sweating bitten face of his nephew bobbing up and down through the corn... The corn was planted up to four feet from the porch that year and as the nephew came out of it, the old man appeared in the door with his shot-gun and shouted that he would shoot any foot that touched his step. ... [T]he nephew lifted his foot and planted it on the step and the old man shot him in the leg. He recalled for the boy's benefit the nephew's expression of outraged righteousness, a look that had so infuriated him that he had raised the gun slightly higher and shot him again, this time taking a wedge out of his right
ear. The second shot flushed the righteousness off his face and left it blank and white, revealing that there was nothing underneath it, revealing, the old man sometimes admitted, his own failure as well, for he had tried and failed, long ago, to rescue the nephew. (6-7)

The "nothing underneath" Rayber's face suggests that in spite of old Tarwater's abundant preaching, the seeds which he planted in Rayber's youth, have been, for the time being, weeded out. And rather than try again with words, old Tarwater shoots to damage Rayber's body, to mark it permanently as a reminder of his penetrating presence. In the case of Rayber, words did not do and so old Tarwater must act -- shooting off enough of his ear so that Rayber goes deaf, thus enacting a full-on defense of his regional, backwoods, Christian household against national-modern-secular ideology.

The way in which male bodies bear the violent mark or trace of an Other (permanently, as with the missing chunk of ear, or temporarily, as with bodily contortion) connects closely with the original scene of death in the novel. Old Tarwater's death establishes not only temporal discontinuity (narratively, it follows quickly on the heels of the shooting scene, but it occurs in the present, as opposed to the shooting scene, which is recounted by young Tarwater as old Tarwater's memory), but it also adds to the radical implantation of violence in the novel.15 Here the reader receives another kind of violent exchange -- this one without words.

At the moment of [Mason Tarwater's] death, he sat down to his breakfast and lifted his knife in one square red hand halfway to his mouth, and then with a look of complete astonishment, he lowered it until the hand rested on the edge of the plate and tilted it up off the table...
Tarwater, sitting across from him, saw red ropes appear in his face and a tremor pass over him. It was like the tremor of a quake that had begun at his heart and run outward and was just reaching the surface. His mouth twisted down sharply on one side and he remained exactly as he was, perfectly balanced, his back a good six inches from the chair back and his stomach caught just under the edge of the table. His eyes, dead silver, were focused on the boy across from him. Tarwater felt the tremor transfer itself and run lightly over him. He knew the old man was dead without touching him and he continued to sit across the table from the corpse, finishing his breakfast in a kind of sullen embarrassment as if he were in the presence of a new personality and couldn't quite think of what to say. (10-11)

The "tremor" and "red ropes" that wrack the body and "twist" the mouth of Mason freeze him into a grotesque, eyes locked on Francis. This dead gaze carries with it the energy of a silent tremor, an invisible force which penetrates Francis's body (certainly less material than the bullets which penetrate the body of Rayber in the shooting scene, but just as affecting). The final twitchings of life in Mason's body -- the moment in which he passes from speaking subject to abject corpse -- transfer to the body of Tarwater, leaving him both "embarrassed" and speechless. The scene of Mason's death is carefully juxtaposed with the (remembered) scene of Mason's shooting of Rayber. O'Connor establishes male same-sex relations as historically caught in a physical and violent system of exchange, teetering on the verge of death. In addition, the vertical relations of masculine power established in the shooting scene (backwoods-regional over progressive-national, Christian over secular) are replaced with a horizontal configuration of masculine power:
the pro-regionalist southern Christianity embodied by Mason is directly transferred to young Tarwater.

As the reader comes to find out, death is something that has haunted Tarwater in the preaching and stories of his Great Uncle for a long time. Mason has prepared for his own death for years, building his coffin and instructing Francis on how to proceed in burying him. Tarwater remembers this conversation when he gets up from the kitchen table and goes out to the yard:

'The dead don't bother with particulars,' the boy interrupted.

The old man grabbed the front of his overalls and pulled him up against the side of [the coffin] and glared into his pale face. 'The world was made for the dead. Think of all the dead there are,' he said, and then as if he had conceived the answer for all the insolence in the world, he said, 'There's a million times more dead than living and the dead are dead a million times longer than the living are alive,' and he released him with a laugh. (16)

A weird and scary (but interesting) point.16 Rather than an agrarian world, teeming with life, the world which Mason constructs is teeming with death -- millions of dead bodies. Mason's physicality with Tarwater (his grabbing and pulling) impresses the point further: the world is made for the dead because death means more and lasts longer than life. But a few pages later, death means something else.

As the plot details more of the split between Rayber (Uncle) and Mason (Great Uncle), the meaning of "death" changes, hooks up with other, more foul signifiers, including modernity and words themselves. Just after the "The dead don't bother with particulars" scene, Tarwater remembers yet another story of Mason's. In this story,
Mason angrily recalls how, years ago, he decided to go ahead and live with Rayber so that he might preach to and reconvert him. Keep in mind, once more, that Mason and Francis refer to Rayber as "the schoolteacher," he who forsakes Christian knowledge (which is also southern knowledge, rural knowledge, backwoods knowledge) for institutional learning (which is what the nation provides for its citizens, officially sanctioned space of learning with its philosophy grounded in fact, science, and reason). Mason recounts the following in order to warn Francis against the damages associated with Rayber's pedagogical commitment to intellectual atheism and social psychology:

The old man had fancied he was making progress in convincing the nephew again of his Redemption, for he at least listened though he did not say he believed. He seemed to delight to talk about the things that interested his uncle. He questioned him at length about his early life, which old Tarwater had practically forgotten. The old man had thought this interest in his forebears would bear fruit, but what it bore, what it bore, stench and shame, were dead words. What it bore was a dry and seedless fruit, incapable even of rotting, dead from the beginning. (18-19, emphasis added)

Here the agrarian abundance that surrounds the shooting scene finds its binary opposite in the modernism of schooling, abstract thought, and the progressive human sciences. The "dry and seedless fruit, incapable even of rotting, dead from the beginning" refers to the schoolteacher's magazine article, an article that carves Mason into analytical pieces, turns him into "a type that's almost extinct" (15): "every living thing that passed through [Rayber's] eyes into his head was turned by his brain into a book or a paper or a chart" (19). Dead words "do" nothing but bear "stench and shame," signifying the abjection of
seed which was already "dead from the beginning." In the recounting of Mason's visit to Rayber's home, the "bad seed" trope connects in part with words (and ideology) and in part with death. If, as Mason Tarwater puts it, "the world was made for the dead," then what to make of the "dead words" of the schoolteacher? This contradiction polarizes "death" into two registers of meaning: Southern agrarianism and Christian death, on the one hand, and national secularism and social death, on the other. The logic of impurity governs both sides of the opposition, and both sides make use of the seed trope. As the novel progresses, the reader observes as young Tarwater struggles with and against each in an attempt to manage each man's seed, unable to "tell" which side of the binary he will embrace.

The aforementioned scene (the "dry and seedless fruit" scene) can be paired with the epigraph that begins this section ("It's you the seed fell in") to understand that all three males in the novel -- Mason, Rayber the schoolteacher, and Francis Tarwater -- make the word-seed connection. Each is convinced the seed of one or the other is "bad," "foul," "dry," or "dead;" each is convinced that he has resisted implantation, grown beyond the bad seed of the other(s). However, both Rayber and Mason are convinced their seed remains within their generational successors. That is, Mason believes he has planted permanent seeds in both Rayber and Francis, and Rayber believes he can help Francis dig out the old man's seeds.

_Births, Baptisms, Conceptions_

If words are seeds that literally are planted (with or without force) inside the body, then the purpose of baptism, in _The Violent_, is to utter words that make seeds that, in turn,
allow for a new birthing of the self. *The Violent* situates this process as an act which takes place *between men*, a kind of seed-sowing and birthing *without women*. Within the avuncular triangle of homosociality, the saying of words and performance of acts that involve "seed" shift between registers of meaning, slide from Christian duty to incestuous and intergenerational homoeroticism. The pleasure of living for old Mason is to plant *seeds* within his generational successors. The pain of living for the middle-aged Rayber, on the other hand, is to remember that his uncle, at one time, had planted his seeds inside of him. During the scene in which Mason has briefly moved in with Rayber (the time during which Rayber was studying Mason for an article in a journal), Rayber confronts Mason and accuses him of destroying his childhood innocence:

'You're too blind to see what you did to me. A child can't defend himself. Children are cursed with believing. You pushed me out of the real world and I stayed out of it until I didn't know which was which. You infected me with your idiot hopes, you're foolish violence. I'm not always myself, I'm not al . . .' but he stopped. He wouldn't admit what the old man knew. 'There's nothing wrong with me,' he said. 'I've straightened the tangle you made. Straightened it by pure will power. I've made myself straight.'

'You see,' the old man said, 'he admitted himself the seed was still in him.' (73)

Even though Mason reads Rayber's denial as an affirmation, this excerpt tells us how Rayber manages the seed of Mason by carefully making sure the seeds do not bloom. To straighten the tangle or to clear the "infection" (or to weed out the seedlings) means forestalling growth, making sure the new crop *never* has a chance to flower or become ripe for the picking. The language of traumatic recovery, of repression and denial crosses
over into the language of same-sex/incestual molestation. Rather than allowing the seed of his to give birth to a new self, Rayber treats the seed as a poison, one that threatens to dissolve his "real world" self.

Of course, for O'Connor, these moments of birth and rebirth in the name of baptism all have to do with the acceptance of Christian doctrine. Yet it is curious how so much birthing is going on without the presence of women and/or mothers. O'Connor does give the reader some background on Francis' biological birth, which acts as an analogue to his perverse double-baptism as an infant. (I will return to this scene shortly.)

The story of how Francis was biologically born simultaneously provides the reader with family information (who his mother was, where his father is, how it came to be that there exist only uncles and nephews in this family), and further complicates the connection between birth, death, words, and baptism:

[Francis' mother and grandmother], along with his grandfather, had been killed in an automobile crash, leaving only the schoolteacher, and Tarwater himself, for his mother (unmarried and shameless) had lived just long enough after the crash for him to be born. He had been born at the scene of a wreck.

The boy was very proud that he had been born in a wreck. He had always felt that it set his existence apart from the ordinary one and he had understood from it that the plans of God for him were special, even though nothing of consequence had happened to him so far. . . .

His uncle had never seemed to be aware of the importance of the way he had been born, only of how he had been born again. He would often ask him why he thought the Lord had rescued him out of the womb of a whore and let him see the
light of day at all, and then why, having done it once, He had gone and done it again, allowing him to be baptized by his great-uncle into the death of Christ, and then having done it twice, gone on and done it a third time, allowing him to be rescued by his great-uncle from the schoolteacher and brought to the backwoods and given a chance to be brought up according to the truth. (40-41)

Disaster -- a car crash which kills three family members -- brings Francis into the world. His successive "births" are performed by his great-uncle, from baptism to rescue. The scenes of violence and representations of death in the novel are still intricately tied to those of birth and re-birth: a birth into the world of the corrupt nation, a rebirth into the regional purity of Christian prophecy. The life of young Tarwater begins in "the womb of a whore" (his mother) and is transformed according to the "truth" of the old man.

In fact, the difficulty of so much of The Violent stems from its confusion of which comes first -- death, birth, or re-birth? The narrative doubles up flashback sequences, embeds memory within memory, focalizes events through the eyes of one character while another engages in the act of telling. These narrative twists and turns both complement the physical grotesqueries included in the story and distort the reader's sense of beginnings and endings, of the present and the past (of the past within the present), and, ultimately, of the meanings of birth, death, and re-birth. All are touched by violence in some form, and all are either made fertile with meaning or are stripped of meaning according to the old man or the schoolteacher. For Francis, the presence of death at birth, and the subsequent reminders of death-in-life, re-organizes narrative time as specifically gothic time (the inability to "tell" time), so that what is ahead of him (death) is also that which is behind him. That is, if the world is made for the dead, then death has always
already happened; the dead represent the past and the future, and show how the future has already happened (one has already died).

In *The Violent*, time is ordered by the law of death; baptism and rebirth signify the preparation for a death that has already happened. But it is interesting to think of these convoluted moments of birth-death in relation to the growth of seed, the formation and implantation of ideology, and in relation to conception of thought and literal conception of the human body (sperm-egg):

The old man had a great deal to say about Tarwater's conception, for the schoolteacher had told him that he himself had got his sister this first (and last) lover because he thought it would contribute to her *self-confidence*. The old man would say this, imitating the schoolteacher's voice and making it sillier than the boy probably felt it was. The old man was thrown into a fury of exasperation that there was not enough scorn in the world to cast upon this idiocy. Finally he would give up trying. The lover had shot himself after the accident, which was a relief to the schoolteacher for he wanted to bring up the baby himself. (57-58)

The sarcastic link between Tarwater's biological conception and the social-scientific reason for it ("self confidence") takes on a terrifying dimension given the violence of not only his mother's accidental death, but also his biological father's suicide ("The lover had shot himself after the accident"). The father's suicide -- his absence from the novel -- determines the trajectory of Francis' life and determines the split between his great uncle Mason and his uncle Rayber. Francis' father is dead, a memory, a story to be told. In the above quotation, the reader comes to see Francis' father as nothing more than the body which provided the seed for the conception of Francis. The violent absence of the Father
(and the strange system of avuncularity in which Francis circulates) thus signifies not the wasting of "seed," but rather a more primary wasting of the male body itself: a suicidal abjection of paternity, a self-determined transformation of the father's live body to its immediate opposite -- the nonproductive, shot corpse.

That which is behind Francis (the death of his father, the death of his mother) further intensifies during the flashback to his baptism as an infant. Keeping in mind the importance of baptism as a performative utterance, and Francis' continual struggle with his compulsion to baptize, we can turn to the scene in which Old Tarwater remembers how Rayber, the schoolteacher, catches him in the act of baptizing the infant Francis:

[Mason] was holding [Francis] Tarwater in one hand and with the other he was pouring water over his head out of the bottle that had been on the table by the crib. He had pulled off the nipple and stuck it in his pocket. He was just finishing the words of baptism as the schoolteacher came back in the door and he had to laugh when he looked up and saw his nephew's face. It looked hacked, the old man said. Not even angry at first, just hacked.

Old Tarwater had said, "He's been born again and there ain't a thing you can do about it," and then he had seen the rage rise in the nephew's face and had seen him try to conceal it. . . .

Old Tarwater had laid [baby Francis] back in the crib but [Rayber] took him out again, a peculiar smile, the old man said, stiffening on his face. "If one baptism is good, two will be better," he said and he had turned Tarwater over and poured what was left in the bottle over his bottom and said the words of the baptism again. Old Tarwater had stood there, aghast at this blasphemy. "Now Jesus has a
claim on both ends," the nephew said. (72-73)

The reversal of a religious system of purity here combines the sacred with the profane. If the face, or, more specifically, the forehead, is the "proper" location for the spilling of baptismal waters, then the other "end," the buttocks, Tarwater's behind, signifies a spoiling of the baptismal performative. Rayber pollutes the purity of the water that wets the body and satirizes the spoken words of baptism. Young Tarwater's infantile male body mediates the relations between men, functions as a material sign of the struggle between ideological forces which desire to call the subject (Francis) into two opposing systems of knowledge: Christian/secular, cerebral/anal, southern/national.

In *Bodies That Matter*, Judith Butler argues that performativity works through the materializing effects of discourse, a discourse which is produced by history, "norms," and regulation. As Butler puts it

The normative force of performativity -- its power to establish what qualifies as "being" -- works not only through reiteration, but through exclusion as well. And in the case of bodies, those exclusions haunt signification as its abject borders or as that which is strictly foreclosed: the unlivable, the nonnarrativizable, the traumatic. (188)

Interestingly, *The Violent*’s inscription of the performative acts of baptism, both the "good" baptism (on the forehead) and the "bad" baptism (on the buttocks), indeed works through "reiteration," yet the powerful component of "exclusion" exists in the text not as and either/or (baptized or not), but rather in the merging of the sacred and the profane in the double-baptism of Francis' body. While each performance of baptism might cancel out the effect of the other, together they produce the highly conflicted history and
subjectivity of Francis, who alone must struggle with discursive exclusion so that he may finally escape the "nonnarrativizable" abjection which, quite literally, "haunts" his sense of a coherent identity.

*Same-Sex Rape and The Color Lavender*

The haunting voice that troubles Francis in the first section of the novel ends up materializing at the novel's close, transforming from a disembodied voice (the voice of "the stranger") into the sinister body of the male rapist. The immaterial and "strange" masculine voice acts as a foil to the logic of Old Tarwater, speaking to Francis throughout the novel to discourage him from tackling his baptismal duty. But when the ghostly voice finally materializes in bodily form, Francis' relation to what is "behind" (to "history") returns from the discursive back to the violent, corporeal form established at the novel's beginning. See how the tempting voice of the stranger begins to materialize (partially corporealize) as Francis sits in the boat with Bishop, as he oscillates between baptizing Bishop or drowning him:

[Bishop's eyes] had lost their diffusiveness and were trained on him, fish-colored and fixed. By his side, standing like a guide in the boat, was his faithful friend, lean, shadow-like, who had counseled him in both country and city.

Make haste, he said. Time is like money and money is like blood and time turns blood into dust.

The boy looked up into his friend's eyes, bent upon him, and was startled to see that in the peculiar darkness, they were violet-colored, very close and intense, and fixed on him with a peculiar look of hunger and attraction.
No finaler act than this, his friend said. In dealing with the dead you have to act.

There's no mere word sufficient to say NO...

Be a man, his friend counseled, be a man. It's only one dimwit you have to drown. (214-15)

The "shadow-like" figure with the "violet-colored" eyes not only seduces Francis into committing the violent act, but also seduces him into a system of masculine identification (to "be a man"). In the end, Francis synthesizes the performative and constative acts of baptism and murder, placing him in an aberrant relation to Mason's and Rayber's sense of pure masculine identity. Much like the sacred-profane double-baptism of his infancy, the combination murder-baptism both effects and cancels out the systems of belief by which he feels most compelled (that which presents its face versus that which shows its rear-end). But the novel does not end here. Francis escapes from the scene of the crime and falls in with a lavender-colored stranger so that he might ultimately learn that seeds which are drowned are wasted, and that to move beyond the south/nation binary, Francis must have "seed" traumatically planted back inside his body in the form of male same-sex rape.

The rape scene, or what I call "the rape scene," is, in fact, not narrated (the Butlerian "nonnarrativizable"). The physical violation of Francis' body takes place outside the narrative, but the text provides enough clues for the reader to know what has happened, and focuses instead on the before- and after-events which surround the rape itself. The shadowy figure that accompanies the seductive voice in the drowning-baptism scene fully materializes in the final section of the novel. At the crucial moment of the rape, Bishop is dead in the lake and Francis is starving, parched, and exhausted. Notice the body of the rapist, the way in which what once was "word" has finally taken on "flesh:"
He had been trudging absently and had not waved [the car] down but when he saw it stop, he began to run forward. By the time he reached it, the driver had leaned over and opened the door. It was a lavender and cream-colored car. The boy scrambled in without looking at the driver and closed the door and they drove on. Then he turned and looked at the man and an unpleasant sensation that he could not place came over him. The person who had picked him up was a pale, lean, old-looking young man with deep hollows under his cheekbones. He had on a lavender shirt and a panama hat. His lips were as white as the cigaret that hung limply from one side of his mouth. His eyes were the same color as his shirt and were ringed with heavy black lashes. A lock of yellow hair fell across his forehead from under his pushed back hat. He was silent and Tarwater was silent. (227)

After some conversation, the "old-looking young" man cloaked in lavender gives Francis a "special" cigarette and some liquor. Francis indulges in both before passing out. The narrative, at this point, becomes desperate and urgent:

After a few minutes the stranger reached over and pushed [Francis'] shoulder but he did not stir. The man began to drive faster. He drove about five miles, speeding, before he espied a turnoff into a dirt road. He took the turn and raced along for a mile or two and then pulled his car off the side of the road and drove down into a secluded declivity near the edge of the woods. He was breathing rapidly and sweating. He got out and ran around the car and opened the other door and Tarwater fell out of it like a loosely-filled sack. The man picked him up and carried him into the woods. . . .
In about an hour, the stranger emerged alone and looked furtively about him. He was carrying the boy's hat for a souvenir and also the corkscrew-bottle-opener. His delicate skin had acquired a faint pink tint as if he had refreshed himself on blood. He got quickly into his car and sped away.

When Tarwater woke up, the sun was directly overhead, very small and silver, sifting down light that seemed to spend itself before it reached him. He saw first his thin white legs stretching in front of him. He was propped up against a log that lay across a small open space between two very tall trees. His hands were loosely tied with a lavender handkerchief which his friend had thought of as an exchange for the hat. His clothes were neatly piled by his side. Only his shoes were on him. He perceived that his hat was gone.

The boy's mouth twisted open and to the side as if it were going to displace itself permanently. In a second it appeared to be only a gap that would never be a mouth again. His eyes looked small and seedlike as if while he was asleep, they had been lifted out, scorched, and dropped back into his head. His expression seemed to contract until it reached some point beyond rage or pain. Then a loud dry cry tore out of him and his mouth fell back into place. (231-32)

Critics have long understood this scene as a Catholic condensation of Satanic seduction and vampiric homosexuality and as the final turning point in Francis' path to becoming a full Christian prophet. But one might ask, instead, how the trauma of same-sex rape -- the nonnarrativizable implantation of "seed" into the body of Francis -- connects with the scenes of violence with which I begin this section, and what does this tell us about the construction of a gothic relation between the South and the nation?
The twisting of Francis’ mouth is perhaps the most obvious signifier of spoiled (or, quite literally, dead) masculinity. Recalling Mason's death scene, in which the tremors pass from his dying body into that of Francis, Mason's "mouth twisted down sharply on one side and he remained exactly as he was." This is repeated in the post-rape moment, the mouth threatening to displace itself "permanently." The terrifying possibility of the mouth turning into a "gap that would never be a mouth again" signifies not only a transformation in death (from speaking subject [with mouth], to spoken subject [dead corpse, no mouth at all]), but also signifies the surrealistic possibility that the mouth transforms into its abject other/double: the anus. What comes from behind, and violently threatens the totality of the male body, at this point threatens to be that which is right in front -- the turning of the mouth into the nonnarrativizable anus.¹⁸ To boot, the nightmarish mouth-as-anus is flagged not by seeing eyes, but rather by "seedy" eyes, eyes which are "small and seedlike," burned and scorched, removed and replaced. Castration anxiety plants itself in the post-rape moment with metonymic signifiers: the non-mouth, the gap or hole which cannot be a mouth, and the imagined removal of the eyeballs. The grotesque face only re-composes itself as the scream of pain allows the mouth to "fall back into place."

The disorganization and re-organization of the face, even if for a brief moment, signifies the anxious relation between seeds (as words) falling into the body metaphorically (as agrarian-Christian-rural-southern or modern-secular-American ideology) and the literalization of the penetration of male bodies not with words, but rather by another male body. The rape scene concretizes the violence of "being open" to another male body. Francis is literally "propped up" in nature, in the woods, at the site of
his rape. And although Francis torches the ground upon which the deed was committed, we come to find that this attempt at erasure will not fully work:

He knew that he could not turn back now. He knew that his destiny forced onto him a final revelation. His scorched eyes no longer looked hollow or as if they were meant only to guide him forward. They looked as if, touched with a coal like the lips of the prophet, they would never be used for ordinary sights again. (233)

If Francis has resisted, throughout the novel, the implantation of seed from both his great-uncle Mason and his uncle Rayber, the traumatic assault on his body in the form of rape unleashes the seed of the stranger, filling him with the "revelation" of a new life, with new sight. In this case, seed transforms from words which do things into "seeing," the gift of vision, a extraordinary gaze which will enable Francis to change the world in which he lives, a world that is now beyond the south/nation binary. Francis is chosen to "wander in the world, [a] stranger from that violent country where the silence is never broken except to shout the truth" (242). It is this new sight, a new way of looking at male same-sex relations that cannot "tell" the difference between the South and the nation, which shows up a decade later, in James Dickey's Deliverance (1970).

*

O'Connor's The Violent and Dickey's Deliverance bridge a significant decade in American culture and politics, 1960-1970. Susan Jeffords evaluates the politics of national culture during this decade:

[R]epresentations of the Vietnam War can be used as an emblem for what I call the 'remasculinization' of American culture, the large-scale renegotiation and
regeneration of the interests, values, and projects of patriarchy now taking place in U.S. social relations . . . With the advent of women's rights, civil rights, the 'generation gap,' and other alterations in social relations that occurred during the fifties, sixties, and seventies, the stability of the ground on which patriarchal power rests was challenged. But rather than be negated, that ground shifted, altering its base for relations to a site from which somewhat different but no less forceful relations of dominance could be worked out. (xi-xii)

Jeffords assesses the way in which, in the wake of 1950s and 1960s civil rights activism, patriarchal dominance did not disappear, but rather changed form, setting up shop on "shifted ground." Jeffords goes on to analyze how American masculinity changed in the wake of the Vietnam War and how representations of the masculine subject worked to retrieve the masculine subject "lost" in Vietnam. Jeffords's insights into the national reconstruction of masculine identity during the writing and publications of both O'Connor's The Violent and Dickey's Deliverance are useful, therefore, for reminding readers of the later-twentieth century that the relation between the South and the nation is always relational and contextual and framed by international politics and a global economy.

It might seem, at first glance, that the differences between O'Connor and Dickey outnumber the similarities: differences in gender; in status as poet, novelist, or short story writer; in matters of the professional or cultural function of the "author;" in matters of myth, mystery, religion, and spirituality. However, both O'Connor and Dickey are writers who publish in the post-Southern Renaissance moment. Both authors also have ties to rural Georgia. But more importantly for my project, both have written novels
which contain a scene of male same-sex rape, published a decade apart. Whereas
O'Connor's novel places the moment of rape at her novel's close (encoding the body of the
rapist specifically as "lavender"-colored homosexual), Dickey's novel places the moment
of rape towards the novel's beginning (with the violation of the "pink" complected
Bobby). And whereas O'Connor's novel uses the moment of rape to open the eyes of her
Christian prophet, Dickey's novel includes the same-sex rape scene to crystallize narrative
binaries for the narrator: difference between suburban/rural, national/Appalachian,
monied/impoverished, bourgeois/wild, cultural/natural, dream/nightmare,
masculine/feminine, homosocial/homosexual. Finally, Dickey's novel embeds male
orgasm within a larger narrative of male adventure thrills and paranoia. As I have already
discussed, O'Connor's novel links seed to death, violence, and ideology; it makes no room
for its positive valence as pleasurable sexual expenditure. As the next section will
demonstrate, Dickey's writing of same-sex rape, male orgasm, and the difference between
national white men and their Appalachian doubles transforms the representation of
southern manhood and its relation to the national public sphere.

*Appalachian Wet Dream/Horrific National Nightmare: James Dickey's Deliverance*

"Had my first wet dream in a sleeping bag," Lewis said. "I surely did."
"How was it?" Bobby asked.
"Great. There's no repeating it."
(James Dickey, *Deliverance*, 86).

There's something about the way in which the sexual tensions or anxieties
between men get played out in a post-*Deliverance* America that keeps leading Americans
back to this film/novel: citing it, clinging to it's narrative in comic desperation. Much like the above exchange between Lewis and Bobby, conversations between men which invoke *Deliverance* disguise a much deeper, more complex set of anxieties about hegemonic, nationally-identified masculinity, male same-sex relations, and about men's relations with their own (sexual) bodies.\(^9\) I use the above epigraph to foreground the kind of anecdotal nature of masculine "jokes" which are both sexual and self-congratulatory. This foregrounding calls attention to the way in which the sexual and the comic function as both a knee-jerk defense (pleasure) and a banal intimacy (terror). My epigraph therefore points up a good question with which to begin my discussion of *Deliverance*: What kinds of relations between men enable the joke in the epigraph? What does the pleasureable exchange about an adolescent wet dream mean in a narrative that is otherwise preoccupied with the representation of adult male terror? Why does *Deliverance* present the reader with this allusion to a seminal emission deemed the "first"?

Lewis' "wet dream" is orgasmic without being masturbatory. It is unconscious, wrapped in the individualizing privacy of the fetishistic sleeping bag. Bobby's question -"How was it?" -- implies a sexual curiosity about other men's bodies and other men's sexual pleasures. Why does Bobby want to know? Why does Bobby want to be able to gauge the intensity of Lewis' first orgasm? We can imagine endless possible answers from Lewis, but Lewis' quick reply tells us that *all* of his subsequent male orgasms -- whether dream-induced, masturbatory, or with a partner -- cannot match the value of the first sexual release. For Lewis, the "wet dream" turns into an initiatory moment, one that installs masculine subjectivity in a narrative of repetition, an eternal attempt to copy the
originary moment in the sleeping bag. As we shall see, male pleasure and masculine identity in *Deliverance* depend upon Lewis and Bobby as markers, as limits of desire in the adventure narrative. In the wake of my reading of O'Connor's *The Violent*, this section looks closely at the ways in which nationally-identified masculine identity reaches moments of extremes in *Deliverance*’s rural southern landscape, moments in which the "wet dream" of male bonding dissolves into a nightmarish installation of difference between men. Before discussing the text itself, I will address Dickey's status as a contemporary writer.

A writer identified with the contemporary southern scene, Dickey's accomplishment as a poet overshadows his work as a novelist, with most enthusiastic academic work concentrating on his "early period" (what Robert Kirschten has marked as 1960-1968, [3]). *Deliverance*, Dickey's first novel, "attracted negative academic criticism" (7), and perhaps belongs more to the realm of the popular adventure/thriller (Kirschten tells us that by 1994 the novel had been "translated into twenty-five languages" and that "the novel was a best-seller when it appeared" [7]) than the Southern Literary Canon. Critical charges of sexism, mindlessness, and simplicity go hand in hand with critical understandings of the novel in Jungian, male initiation/ritual terms. But rather than dismissing the novel as politically offensive or mythically formulaic, I would like to pay closer attention to how the novel constructs and polices the limits of bourgeois masculinity, and argue that what the text ultimately does is stage the terrifying possibility that national subjects can become stalled (physically and psychologically) in the South. This portion of the chapter seeks to intervene in the critical attention given to *Deliverance* by examining its treatment of nation, region, sexuality, and masculinity.
Deliverance in Context

That Deliverance reads as a male adventure narrative comes as no surprise to the commonsense reader. Literary critics have compared the novel to Dante's Inferno, Cooper's The Deerslayer, Conrad's Heart of Darkness, and Twain's The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn. My reading of Deliverance keeps one eye on the male adventure narrative while keeping another on the way in which the national gets further and further subdivided into the southern and then the Appalachian. A reading of the novel provided by Frederic Jameson reads the novel's mountain men as historical traces of the southern/national past with whom the (post)modern adventurers have a brutal encounter.

Jameson contends that "the strategy of the adventure tale allows you to reconcile the apparently contradictory demands of your own individual license and your authoritarian political leanings simultaneously through the same series of events" (53). That is, the disruption of bourgeois masculine adventure with a direct assault on the male body (Bobby's rape, Drew's death, Lewis's broken leg, and Ed's self-penetration, in the side, by his own arrow) allows the implied male reader of Deliverance to risk a fictional escape into the narrative's adventurous wilderness only to, at the same time, fortify a sense of masculine selfhood that condemns these narrative actions. But to what extent is the narrative structured so that it implores the reader to wish the adventurous injuries away with an eye towards closure? As Jameson puts it, "when we look more closely at these new arrivals [the Griner brothers, Lonnie the banjo boy, and the anonymous mountain men who rape Bobby and (almost) Ed], something in their mode of narrative presentation catches our eye, . . . some stylistic incongruity that alerts us to the presence
of some deeper structural imbalance" (56). Jameson reads this imbalance as a *historical* one. The figures in the hills of Oree harken back to the impoverished white southerner I discussed in the first part of this dissertation: "ghosts from an older past, from the Dust Bowl and Tobacco road, faces that stare out at us of the old Evans and Agee album, that listened to Roosevelt over the old radio speakers and rode the Model-T Ford and voted for Huey Long" (Jameson 56). Jameson reads Dickey's representation of the nationally-identified, modern male citizen's encounter with Appalachian-identified, white trash bodies as an encounter with History itself: 22 "[I]t was the Thirties they went forth to meet, in some obscure way they journeyed into the wilderness to settle their accounts with the great radical tradition of the American past" (56). Jameson elaborates:

The hillbilly figures are of course a disguise and a displacement: for if the 1930s still call to mind that older indigenous heritage of American resistance and insubordination from Roger Williams to Eugene V. Debs, the threat to the middle-class way of life today has taken another form: that of the peoples of the Third World, of the Blacks, of the intransigent and disaffected young. For a political fantasy, however, which does not wish to know its name, these images of the Thirties provide an eminently suitable manifest content behind which the deeper logic of the story can be concealed. For the Thirties are dead, both figuratively and literally, and the triumph of the heroes over their class enemies can thus be draped in the mantle of historical necessity, the fantasy seeming to be confirmed by the very outcome of history itself... [S]ince the beginning of the civil rights movement, the redneck as a political symbol has changed his meaning, and tends rather to set in motion associations of knoownothingism and reaction, than of the
agrarian populism of an older era. (57)

I quote at length here to illustrate Jameson's theoretical working of southern literary history and its relation to the suturing of the white bourgeois male reader of Deliverance. But there is something lurking in Jameson's writing that points to, without ever coming clean, another reading of Dickey's Appalachian hillbillies. The "deeper structural imbalance" of the novel's representation of rural poor white men critically combines with the threat of citizens of the "Third World," "Blacks," and the "intransigent and disaffected youth" of the late 1960s. Jameson layers the meaning of the hillbillies to show how the radical southern past links to nationally (mis)recognized political Others in the 1970s. However, the "political fantasy" which "does not wish to know its name" latent in Jameson's argument is not only the "dead" Thirties, but more strongly the (unconscious) haunting of the text by the post-Stonewall, politicized homosexual male, who southern literary history has repressed and who figures in Deliverance as a gothic textual pressure which polices male sexuality and feeds male paranoia.

Desire and the Limits of the Homosocial

The novel begins by presenting the reader with four suburban, white, middle-class males. These men, clearly, live in Georgia and, for that matter, are associated with the South, but they are not, as we shall see, as regionally as embodied as they might be. The generic quality of these men is reinforced by their collective desire for a vacation getaway, to escape into the mountains of Georgia for the sake of "breaking the pattern" (36). Ed Gentry is the middling, graphic designer, Lewis Medlock stands as the hyper-masculine survivalist, Bobby Trippe occupies the role of the fat, inept bachelor, and Drew
Ballinger fills the role of the musician, the banjo-player. Ed provides detail and background information on the other men, from physical description ("Bobby Trippe . . . had smooth thin hair and a high pink complexion" [5]), to career ("[Drew] worked as a sales supervisor for a big soft-drink company and believed in it and the things it said it stood for with his very soul" [9]), to personal philosophy ("[Lewis] liked particularly to
Ballinger fills the role of the musician, the banjo-player. Ed provides detail and background information on the other men, from physical description ("Bobby Trippe . . . had smooth thin hair and a high pink complexion" [5]), to career ("[Drew] worked as a sales supervisor for a big soft-drink company and believed in it and the things it said it stood for with his very soul" [9]), to personal philosophy ("[Lewis] liked particularly to take some extremely specialized and difficult form of sport . . . and evolve a personal application to it which he could then expand" [4]). Ed is reliable not only because he has an eye for detail, but because it is his job to see things quite expertly, "as though it were a layout" and "from the standpoint of design" (11). For Ed, male bodies, career choice, hobby, and outlook on the world are inextricably bound; all combine as elements of masculine design.

Once the narrative solidifies Ed's position, we follow him back to his job as Vice-President of Emerson-Gentry, his advertising studio, and regard his life as terrifyingly quotidian. The quotidian finds representation in local commercial capital: "The agencies we liked and understood best were those which were most like us -- those that were not pressing, that were taking care of their people. We worked on small local accounts -- banks, jewelry stores, supermarkets, radio stations, bakeries, textile mills. We would ride with these" (15). Inside his office, Ed passes through a moment of panic: "It was the old, mortal, helpless, time-terrified human feeling . . . But I was really frightened this time. It had me for sure" (18). Ed's terror fades as he works on an ad's design: "it was my ability to get the elements of a layout into some kind of harmonious relationship . . . I liked harmoniousness and a situation where the elements didn't fight with each other or overwhelm each other" (18-19). The anal activity of layout and design, then, soothes Ed
and displaces his larger anxieties onto the project of work.

In addition, Ed replaces bourgeois class alienation with a sexual desire for this ad's young female model who is to be photographed with a cat for Kitt'n Britches, a brand of artificial silk women's underwear. For Ed, the Kitt'n Britches model signifies both material girl and soon-to-be commodified, two-dimensional object. When Ed meets the model face-to-face, she looks at Ed with her "golden flecked eye," giving Ed an unexpected "deep and complex male thrill, as if something had touched [him] in the prostate" (22). Ed's modern anxieties dissipate as "the sight of [the model's left breast in her hand] went through [him]" (22). The Before section, at its close, condenses four narrative strains into the sexual, private, interior of the male body (Ed's prostate): 1) the collective homosociality of the bar, 2) Ed's ability to differentiate masculine identities, 3) Ed's personal desire for escape (vacation), and 4) the positioning of women in the novel as guarantors of male heterosexuality. The narrative sensitivity to Ed's interior erogenous zone (the prostate) shows how the social elements which structure masculine security allow for this region of the body to be "thrilled," but that even in this "thrilling" construction, the inverse is implied -- that the protection and security of male identity can be penetrated and turn painful.

The major difference between Deliverance, the novel, and its 1972 cinematic production by John Boorman is the way in which each text begins, and the implications of these different beginnings for fuller understanding of the events which follow.

Deliverance (film) condenses the novel's barroom beginning into a multi-layered voice-over. This technique acts more as regional placement and ironic foreshadowing than a signification of masculine differentiation and homosociality (as in the novel). The film
opens with shots of the river, and the viewer hears men laughing and one voice (Lewis')
declares that the Cahulawasee River will be dammed soon, and that right now it is "just
about the last wild, untamed, unpolluted, unfucked up river in the South." The river shots
are then cut/contrasted with shots of bulldozers, tractors, and dump trucks working on the
side of a mountain. A new, longer shot begins from a distance, above the construction
site of the dam. The camera pans the location, moving from dam site to the water it is
holding back to the hills and mountains beyond. It is during this pan that Lewis' voice
tells his buddies (and, of course, the viewer), "You push a little more power into Atlanta,
a little more air-conditioners for your smug little suburbs, and you know what's gonna
happen? We're gonna rape this whole god damn landscape. We're gonna rape it."
Aurally layered with Lewis' voice is the increasingly louder sound of a siren or signal of
sorts, rising in volume as we hear the other three men's uneasy reactions to Lewis' theory,
"Oh, Lewis" and "That's an extreme point of view. You're extremist." When the siren
hits its top volume, the shot shifts to the side of a mountain. After a beat of silence, an
explosion occurs, kicking up a mushroom cloud of dust on the mountainside, with the
sound of the blast reverberating throughout the hills. The next shot is of two cars with
canoes tied to their roofs.

The trope of "rape" signals to the knowing viewer what she or he will anxiously
observe later in the film. But at the same time, this foreshadowing moment functions as a
brutal replacement for the novel's representation of Ed's prostate thrills. The film's
beginning of the male adventure with the specter (disembodied voice-over) of rape makes
a difference in the way in which we see Deliverance. In the novel, Ed's "deep and
complex thrill" in the prostate hooks up with other signifiers of that which comes from
behind, figured most concretely as rear-entry sex, and most abstractly as male paranoia. While the novel shifts between homosocial bonding -- homoerotic looking and touching -- homophobic panic and paranoia, and includes the rape scene as a, once again, marker of homosociality's limit, the film produces scenes of male panic that inform the relations between men as they continue towards and away from the scene of rape. That is, given Lewis' voice-over, the rape scene in Deliverance (film) is not only central to the story, but it threatens all relations between men in moments of panic. I bring this point up to clarify the importance of the novel's Before section, and also to note the way in which the visibility of the spectacle of same-sex rape in cinema notarizes the film as the paradigm of masculine perversion into the 1970s and beyond.26

Penetrations

Peggy Goodman Endel's "Dickey, Dante, and the Demonic: Reassessing Deliverance" (1988) locates four crucial sites in which rear-entry sex figures in the novel. 1) The Kitt'n Britches model, who is photographed from behind and who was originally supposed to be photographed "like the one in the Coppertone ad, where the Scotty is pulling the little girl's bathing suit down off her bare behind" (19). 2) The sex scene between Ed and his wife Martha. (Martha "turn[s] facedown on the pillow" and Ed "kne[els] and enter[s] her, and her buttocks rose and fell" [28]. As this occurs. Ed fantasizes about the Kitt'n Britches girl, and places her mutant gold-eye sliver squarely "in the center of Martha's heaving and expertly working back" [28]). 3) Ed's dream in the tent on the men's first night out, in which rear-entry sex with Martha "dissolv[es]" into Ed's advertising studio and becomes an out of control sequence of disordered parts:
The panties stretched, the cat pulled, trying to get its claws off of the artificial silk, and then all at once leapt and clawed the girl's buttocks. She screamed, the room erupted with panic, she slung the cat round and round, a little orange concretion of pure horror, still hanging by one paw from the girl's panties, pulling them down, clawing and spitting in the middle of the air, raking the girl's buttocks and her legbacks. (87)

And, finally, 4) Bobby's rape. These scenes accrue meaning in relation to the aforementioned prostate thrill. The abstraction of the material/commodified Kitt'n Britches model, who incites the sensation in Ed, is projected onto the back of his wife to assure the reader that Ed's "deep" desire has been relocated and assuaged elsewhere. Ed can handle the looking of the Kitt'n Britches model as long as he has control over where and how she looks -- on and from his wife's bare back. In other words, it is not the penetration of Ed from behind -- it is his wife. Ed's own anal eroticism -- the thrilling of the prostate -- is deep because it is buried under layers of a constructed heterosexual fantasy. This fantasy turns nightmare in Ed's dream, where the "kitt" tears at the britches of the model, destroys the order of the photo shoot, and betrays artistic, masculine design. Endel points out that this dream "anticipates the bestial man who commands Bobby" (183) later in the woods to remove "them panties" (Dickey 113), and, in turn, ruins the bodily site of Ed's secret pleasure.

These sites of rear-entry sex, what Endel calls "spheres of anality" (180), interface not only with each other, to produce a sign of male pleasure and danger, but also with sites of homosociality that cross over into homoeroticism. It is between heterosexual prostate thrills and same-sex anal rape that a blurring of the lines between homosocial-
homoerotic occurs -- a gothic inability to "tell." Ed's relationship with Lewis is, I think, the most obvious example. On their way to the river, Lewis' conversation with Ed turns apocalyptic and survivalist. In the face of imagined doom, Lewis asserts that "the whole thing is going to be reduced to the human body, once and for all. I want to be ready . . . I think the machines are going to fail, the political systems are going to fail, and a few men are going to take to the hills and start over . . . The body is the one thing you can't fake; it's just got to be there" (42). And later, "I sleep at night. I have no worries. I am becoming myself, as inconsequential as that may be. I am not something somebody shoved off on me. I am what I choose to be, and I am it" (50). For Lewis, the male body and the personal "I" fuse to solidify a corporeal, individualized identity. Ed, on the other hand, professes a "sliding" (41) through life, and occupies a more fluid sense of self. In the presence of Lewis, Ed slides in to match Lewis' more national masculinity: "I felt a great deal lighter and muscular around Lewis" (34). After waving good-bye to his wife and child, Ed and Lewis drive off, and Ed tells us "We were not -- or at least I was not -- what we were before" (35). The difference between Ed's identification with Lewis and his desire for Lewis becomes less distinctive with his sense of transformation.

As the men enter the river, Ed makes note of where and how its fluid rush affects him: "I had not really been aware of the water, but now I was. . . . The standing there was so good, so fresh and continuous, so vital and uncaring around my genitals, that I hated to leave it" (75). The fluid motion around Ed's genitals relieves the anxiety which masculine transformation in adventure builds for Ed. In fact, swimming in the same water the next day, Ed's gaze turns homoerotic in its appreciation for Lewis' physique:

Lewis was already in the water naked, booming overhand down the current with a
lot of back showing, like Johnny Weismuller in the old Tarzan movies . . . I
swam back . . . and stood up next to Lewis, who was waist deep with water
crumpling and flopping at his belly. I looked at him, for I had never seen him
with his clothes off.
Everything he had done for himself for years paid off as he stood there in his
tracks, in the water. I could tell by the way he glanced at me; the payoff was in
my eyes. I had never seen such a male body in all my life, even in pictures in the
weight-lifting magazines, for most of those fellows are short, and Lewis was
about an even six feet. I'd say he weighed about 190. The muscles were bound up
in him smoothly, and when he moved, the veins in the moving part would surface
. . . You could even see the veins in his gut, and I knew I could not even begin to
conceive how many sit-ups and leg raises -- and how much dieting -- had gone
into bringing them into view. (102-3)
Homoerotic looking and glancing combines with the homoerotic touch: "He dropped a
hand on my shoulder and stirred the fur around, 'What do you think, Bolgani the
Gorilla?'" (103). Ed's answer turns the question into a joke, but one that encodes not only
his desire for Lewis' body, but for Lewis' possession of him: "I think Tarzan speak with
forked tongue . . . I think we never get out of woods. He bring us here to stay and found
kingdom" (103). Ed's primitivist joke fantasizes a post-national "kingdom" that the virile
and affectionate Lewis ("Tarzan") builds by keeping Ed and the rest of the men in the
woods. Ed's attention to the detail of Lewis's body -- the pleasurable "payoff" -- shows
the way in which homosexual desire fits into the novel's design of homosocial
identification. Five pages later, the mountain men appear. Their appearance destroys
Ed's postnational fantasy of a new kingdom within American/Appalachian geography. Specifically marked as Appalachian white trash, complete with physical deformities, these nameless figures violently erase the four men's identifications with each other and with the postnational landscape. Ed's fantasy about a new kingdom refuses to see the region through which they travel as either American or Appalachian. In Ed's fantasy is, therefore, a colonial one. The mountain men emerge from the landscape, reminding Ed, at least, of his essential difference from the region through which they are canoeing. At this moment, the narrative replaces the pleasure of all-white-male homoerotic looking and touching with the horror of dis-identification and rape across class lines.

The rape scene in the novel suddenly and violently shifts the terms of pleasure to the terms of danger, from affectionate similarities between white men to the horrifying differences between white men. Ed witnesses the mountain men anally rape Bobby, and is, subsequently, threatened with oral rape. The Appalachian mountain men cut at Ed, tied to a tree, with a knife: "The blood was running down from under my jaw where the point had been. I had never felt such brutality and carelessness of touch, or such disregard of another person's body" (112). The stark contrast with the earlier looking and touching between bourgeois men, along with Ed's solitary prostate pleasures, turns more stark: "The tall man restored the gun to Bobby's head, and the other one knelt behind him. A scream hit me, and I would have thought it was mine except for the lack of breath. It was a sound of pain and outrage, and was followed by one of simple and wordless pain" (114). The brutality of this scene not only violates the body of the character figured as least masculine (Bobby is, remember, "high pink," and he doesn't join the others in their play in the river. He is consistently traited as abject, fat, complaining,
and useless), but also dis-establishes Ed's fantasy of being *like* Lewis.

'You're kind of ball-headed and fat, ain't you?' the tall man said.

'What do you want me to say?' I said. 'Yeah. I'm bald-headed and fat. That OK?'

'You're hairy as a goddamned dog, ain't you?'

... 

'Ain't no hair in his mouth,' the other one said. (115-16)

The rapist's discourse hyperbolizes Ed's difference from Lewis and re-places him in a more contiguous relation to the already-raped Bobby, destroying, at this moment, Ed's identification *with* Lewis, and leaving Ed only with a desire *for* Lewis' presence, for a rescue. Lewis comes through for Ed and Bobby, penetrating and killing the rapist *from behind* with an arrow which "was there so suddenly it seemed to have come from within him" (116).

After burying the body, Ed's role in the novel shifts once more: from identification with Lewis, to desire for Lewis, to *being* Lewis. Ed takes on the role of Lewis to insure Appalachian conquest and the completion of the adventure. Indeed, after Drew dies and Lewis breaks his leg on the rapids, strains of the homoerotic combine with narrative urgency to thrust Ed into and *beyond* the role of Lewis. Ed tells Bobby (much to Bobby's disturbance) they have to "take [Lewis'] pants down" (148) and later surveys Lewis' injured body: "His bare legs were luminous, and the right leg of his drawers was lifted up to the groin. I could tell by its outline that his thigh was broken; I reached down and felt of it very softly. Against the back of my hand his penis stirred with pain" (149). Touching Lewis' penis, finally, empowers Ed with a will to murder. Lewis gaspingly informs Ed that "It's you. It's got to be you" (150). In response, Ed hatches a plan which
involves the paranoid theory of the rapist-murderer's return, and develops an elaborate scheme to avenge the death of Drew (even though we never know if Drew was shot or if he fell out of the canoe by accident or on purpose), the rape of Bobby, and Ed's physical violation as well. Ed takes up Lewis' way of speaking and thinking, performing a masculine identity learned not only from Lewis, but from the movies as well -- a nationally meditated form of "the South." "Look up yonder," Ed says (152).

I liked hearing the sound of my voice in *the mountain speech*, especially in the dark; it sounded like somebody who knew where he was and knew what he was doing. . . . 'What I mean is like they say in the movies, especially on Saturday afternoon. It's either him or us. We've killed a man. So has he. Whoever gets out depends on who kills who. It's just *that simple.*' (152-3, emphasis mine)

Here, Ed conflates the ideology of Lewis, television/cinema, and Appalachian dialect to re-form his masculine identity. Ed climbs the cliff (at the foot of which Lewis' injured body remains helpless) in search of a man he *assumes* will be at the top, a man he *assumes* will kill the rest of his group; the reader receives *no* textual evidence that Drew's death was a murder -- it is the paranoid speculation of Ed, Lewis, and Bobby that "[w]e can start out with the assumption that he's trying to kill us" (153). Lewis adds the final motivational force behind the Ed's action. "'Kill him,' Lewis said with the river" (160).

Phobic paranoia drives Ed for the rest of the novel, particularly as events are narrated with an attention to the positions of in front of or behind. After successfully climbing a major portion of the cliff, Ed thinks, "I wanted to kill him exactly as Lewis had killed the other man: I wanted him to suspect nothing at all until the sudden terrible pain in his chest that showed an arrow through him from behind, come from anywhere"
(174). The phallic arrow that penetrates the Appalachian Other must do so from behind, must strike in the corporeal zone of anality, in order to effectively re-place the white bourgeois male in the position of control and to redirect attention away from the site of his own possible anal penetration and pain. However, the threat of rape for Ed was oral, a violation from the front -- that which is facing him and that at which he must look. By occupying the space of one who cannot be seen, Ed's vision can focus on its object of conquest without the disruptive threat of a returned look, without the penetrating force of another's penis or another's gaze. Still, in order for Ed to occupy the position of the unseen aggressor, his must imagine himself as his own victim.

Ed's paranoia anticipates his eventual impalement on his own arrow, thus the reader sees Ed simultaneously occupying the penetrator/penetrated positions twice: once in a paranoid fantasy, and once in a harried self-injury. Believing his aggressor from the day before is lurking at the top of the cliff, Ed thinks, "For me to kill him under these conditions, he would have to be thinking as I had thought for him, and not approximately but exactly. The minds would have to merge" (185). This line of thinking finds Ed waiting for his victim in a tree, and it is from this vantage point that Ed takes his shot at the hunter he spies later. Once again, Ed's sense of the visual separates himself from and eroticizes his target: "There was something relaxed and enjoying in his body position, something primally graceful; I had never seen a more beautiful or convincing element of design. I wanted to kill him just like that" (189). The shot itself is not narrated, although we know that Ed shoots the hunter in the front, not from behind and unseen as intended, and that the arrow he fires penetrates the man's neck and "hang[s] down his back just below the neck" (193). What is equally as important is that Ed falls from the tree and, as
he hits the ground, "[s]omething went though [him] from behind, and [he] heard a rip like tearing a bedsheets" (192).

Ed's subsequent gory removal of the arrow from his side combines the language of same-sex eroticism and same-sex rape, pleasure and violence:

I licked my hand and put saliva on the shaft [of the arrow], hoping that lubrication would help. It did at first, and then it didn't; the arrow stuck solidly, and I could not move it at all without coming close to passing out. I would have to cut . . . I took the knife from my belt, sliced away the nylon I was wearing from around it, and looked. Just looked, and that was more terrifying than trying to work the arrow out with my eyes closed . . . it was in me. In me. The flesh around the metal moved pitifully, like a mouth, when I moved the shaft . . . The shaft would come; I moved it through me a little more, and the wound changed. The bloody shaft was in my hands, and my side was oozing and pouring down the rock . . . There had never been a freedom like it. The pain itself was freedom, and the blood. (194-5)

The freedom in penetration and pain, displaced outwards away from the anus (site of Bobby's rape) and the prostate (site of Ed's thrill), and onto the side-wound (figured as a displaced "mouth") allows Ed to continue in his role as the novel's hero, as beyond the position of Lewis. The disposal of the corpse, the shooting of the rapids, the arrival back in "civilization," and the construction of an alternate story about what exactly happened in the mountains depend upon Ed's ability to resolve the erotic tensions between himself and Lewis, and the phobic structuring and elimination of "the enemy." At the novel's close, the resonance of Ed's "deep complex thrill" from the novel's beginning sounds in his
description of the river and all of the events it signifies:

The river and everything I remembered about it became a possession to me, a personal, private possession, as nothing else in my life ever had . . . I could feel it -- I can feel it -- on different places in my body. It pleases me in some curious way that the river does not exist, and that I have it. In me it still is, and will be until I die, green, rocky, deep, fast, slow, and beautiful beyond reality. (275)

The depths of Ed's pleasure here scatter away from the prostate to "different places in [his] body," much like the wound in his side. But the meaning of masculine pleasure still depends upon a "having" of the adventure tale from a position which requires that its goth infant paranoid elements remain a secret (that which can never be "told").

*Wet Dreams (Come Again?)*

Much like Dickey's novel, I will conclude this section with a return to the place from which we started: the wet dream. Ed's final thoughts about his canoe trip duplicate, in more floral prose, the signifiers of Lewis' unbeatable first orgasm. The metaphor of the river -- its very wetness -- saturates Ed's thinking about his canoe trip. The "feel" of the river, its "pleasing" and "curious" effect on the body of Ed, is based upon something which "no longer exists." The one-time experience of the canoe trip, all of its horrors and pleasures, its peaks and its plummets, is "beautiful beyond reality" for Ed. The narrative takes us back into the language of the unconscious, into the language of Lewis' wet dream ("beyond reality"). Ed's "river" and Lewis' "wet dream" share a fantasy of memory, both harken back to a referent which has been lost and which, in turn, is caught up in a system of desire and memory, loss and repetition.
In *Deliverance*, therefore, male sexuality is caught in what Jean Baudrillard calls *simulation*. The continual referencing of cinema and role playing, graphic design and advertising assists Ed in making sense of his "adventure." He hunts, kills, and rescues performatively, erasing the "real" as a referent for the reader and installing, in its place, a series of "known" visual texts that repeat information to help Ed survive. As I discussed earlier, the visual (seeing, being seen, the unseen, the comparison of "real life" with visual cultural production) is a strong force in the novel. It is significant, therefore that the dissolution of the difference between "real life" and "the movies" has an orgasmic effect on Ed, producing yet another experience of "the wet dream." The following takes place in the middle of the novel, when Ed shakily scales the foreboding cliff:

By a lot of small tentative maneuvers I swapped hands in the crevice and touched upward with my left hand, weighted down by the bow hanging over my shoulder, along the wall, *remembering scenes in movies* where a close up of a hand reaches desperately for something, through a prison grate for a key, or from quicksand toward someone or something on solid ground. There was nothing there... The back of my left leg was shaking badly. My mind began to speed up, in the useless energy of panic. The urine in my bladder turned solid and painful, and then ran with a delicious voiding like a wet dream, something you can't help or be blamed for. (164-5, emphasis added)

When Ed finally makes it to the top of the cliff, the sublimity of the natural view is expressed in terms of, once again, advertising. "Only that terrific brightness. Only a couple of rocks as big as islands, around which a thread of scarlet seemed to go, as though outlining a face, a kind of god, a layout for an ad, a sketch, an element of design"
These portions of the novel focus the experience of the euphoric/sexual in the gaze of the cinematic and the advertisement. Ed's narration enacts the logic of simulacra, which participates in "a panic-stricken production of the real and the referential, above and parallel to the panic of material production" (Jameson 197). This loss of the referent, and its referential obliteration, produces an out-of-control (or uncontrollable) subject in crisis, which Ed experiences as a "delicious" spasm of pleasure.

Seeds, like blood, are never, of course, essentially national or southern items. But seed appears in the novels discussed in this section in the same way that blood does in the last, as a sign of the impossible separation of the South from the nation as bodies try to make sense of themselves in the twentieth century. Faulkner, March, O'Connor, and Dickey tell stories about violence, pleasure, and an agrarian/modern split in a specifically white racial configuration. Just as Part One focused upon how eugenics and the construction of southern white trash brings the problem of national impurity to the fore, so, too, does racial whiteness serve as a frame for imagining how the nation is different from itself as it appears in figures like Reverend Hightower, Rhoda Penmark, Mason Tarwater, or the anonymous mountain men in Deliverance. Whiteness and the nation become abject sites of otherness as each gets mixed up with codes of southernness and violence. The violence of poor white agrarian resistance against modernization, however, transforms in the third part of this study, which replaces the figure of polluted and embodied whiteness with the figure of whiteness as it is represented by the state. In the next section, racial whiteness torn between the South and the nation is not figured as an abject regional other, but rather as the law itself, set out to terrorize African Americans who have ties to the
South. Police men, armed soldiers, train conductors, and the National Guard appear as local forms of the white nation-state, and against whom black men between the first and second World Wars must be on guard.
Part Three: On Guard(s)
5 Lynching Narratives and the Year 1919

In 1919, over 200,000 African American troops returned from World War I to the United States, most of whom came home to families and communities in southern states, or rejoined those who migrated from the South to northern industrial cities during the war itself (Dittmer 203). Prior to the war, the ideological divide between the South and the nation was already deep, given the politics of Reconstruction, the rise of lynching, and the building of a New South. The participation of southerners, both black and white, in the war did relatively little to heal racial wounds or to dissolve internal differences between the South and the nation at large. Indeed, racial anxieties and hostilities intensified as black veterans returned from overseas military service clad in the national uniform. The uniform marked black male bodies as national contradictions: the nation demanded that black men defend American ideals overseas but, once the war was over, the nation would not grant black men access to the American ideals for which they put their lives on the line. Lt. Col. Michael Lee Lanning’s history of the African American soldier describes the hostility black soldiers returning from the war faced:

Throughout the Deep South community leaders urged the formation of vigilante groups to prevent the wholesale ravishment of southern [white] women. Sen. James K. Vardaman of Mississippi demanded that white southerners defend their wives and daughters against ‘French-women-ruined Negro soldiers’ . . . Instead of marching bands and grateful citizens to welcome them, black soldiers encountered
mobs, complete with Ku Klux Klan members, who frequently beat them and stripped them of their uniforms. It was white America’s effort to return African Americans to their ‘place.’ . . . One local city official, greeting a group of veterans returning to New Orleans, declared, ‘you niggers were wondering how you are going to be treated after the war. Well, I’ll tell you, you are going to be treated exactly like you were before the war; this is a white man’s country and we expect to rule it.’ (150-1)

Black masculinity in uniform, therefore, was at odds with white nationalist patriotism, which sought to control black citizen-soldiers by signifying their national bodies with pre-war racist rhetoric, recasting military black men as “niggers” who are always already about to be lynched in the name of American purity and Southern pride. In a 1919 visual economy of uniforms, the robes of the KKK, present in the above narrative as “members” of an otherwise generic “mob,” deposed the political power that would otherwise attend the military clothing covering the body of a black soldier.

By 1919, the National Association for the Advancement of Colored People (much like Ida B. Wells before them) had begun a thorough investigation and detailed documentation of public Lynchings, demanding that state and government officials be held accountable for allowing the power of white mobs to overrule the power of the law, of national and state institutions. The NAACP reported that, prior to 1919, during the time of Reconstruction and the concomitant building of a New South, over 2500 blacks were lynched. In Thirty Years of Lynching in the United States, 1889-1918, the NAACP gathered together newspaper reports and drew up tables, graphs, maps, and charts complete with locations, dates, names of victims and their alleged crimes to show the
overwhelming problem of lynching -- specifically the lynching of black men -- in southern states. 1919, therefore, was a year of significance in African American history: black WWI soldiers returned to the U.S.; blacks continued a Great Migration from southern rural and urban areas to find work in Chicago, D.C., New York City, and Philadelphia; and interracial violence and black uprisings escalated nationwide, coming to be known as the “Red Summer,” a period of five months (May 1919 -- September 1919) during which bloody race riots continuously broke out not only in large northern cities like Chicago, but also in small, rural Arkansas towns. Finally, 1919 was both a year in which ritualized lynchings were publicly addressed and denounced on a national scale (thanks to work done by the NAACP), and a year in which many black soldiers were subject to lynching precisely because they were wearing their WWI uniforms.

In narratives of the 1919 lynchings, both historians and historical documents provide a description of at least one black soldier who was lynched while still wearing his uniform. The figure of the lynched black soldier functions as a horrific reminder of the how -- even after the promises (and failures) of the Reconstruction, and even after taking up arms to die in the name of Western democracy and global freedom -- black men (and, of course, by analogy, black women) still represented a visible disruption of national, political, and racial uniformity. Robyn Wiegman observes that lynching “[o]perat[es] according to a logic of borders -- racial, sexual, national, psychological, and biological as well as gendered . . . [L]ynching figures its victims as the culturally abject -- monstrosities of excess whose limp and hanging bodies function as the specular assurance that the racial threat has not simply been averted, but rendered incapable of return” (82). The particularity of the lynched black soldier, therefore, adds to Wiegman’s already
politically layered analysis yet another layer of meaning: even as the black soldier returns
to the U.S. from military duty, he is rendered incapable of a return “home” precisely
because his return signifies the possibility/threat of a new turn in American racial politics
(equality, inclusion, empowerment, authority, suffrage, social integration, uniform access
to capital, property, and education).²

Depending on where one looks for information about the lynchings of 1919, the
number of black soldiers who were brutally beaten and killed at the hands of a white
lynch mob varies. According to a May 29, 1919 document which is archived in the
Papers of the NAACP Anti-Lynching Campaign (1912-1955),

Nineteen Negroes [were] lynched in eight states of the United States since January
1, 1919! Four of these burned to death in the presence of hundreds of men,
women and children. Two of the victims have been returned soldiers, still in their
uniforms, recently returned from overseas where they fought to help make the
world safe for democracy!³

Immediately following this report (in June 1919), the NAACP published a pamphlet,
which acts as a historical record of lynching practices in the first half of 1919. In Burning
at the Stake in the United States: A record of the public burning by mobs of five men,
during the first five months of 1919, in the states of Arkansas, Florida, Georgia,
Mississippi, and Texas, newspaper clippings along with official “queries” from NAACP
Secretary John R. Shillady (queries gone mostly unacknowledged, with the exception of a
notable reply from Sidney J. Catts, Governor of Florida), serve to document the gruesome
details of public burnings and hangings of black men in Southern states. One of the five
documented, Frank Livingston, lynched on May 21, 1919 in Eldorado, Arkansas, was
“recently discharged from the army at Camp Pike” (15). In this brief, and somewhat general, account of a black soldier who suffered brutal public torture and death, the NAACP, at the very least, calls attention to an incongruous relation between the black male body, national semiotics, and the violent supremacy of localized white power.

But there also exist more detailed accounts of black soldiers who lost their lives through ritualized beatings, hangings, or burnings at the hands of a white mob. Such accounts turn the allegorical figure of the black soldier into the historical reality of multiple black soldiers. Several historical sources verify that over ten black soldiers (out of a total of seventy-eight black men overall) were lynched in the year 1919 -- again, several of whom were still wearing their uniforms. According to Donald L. Grant’s history of African American life in Georgia, the state of Georgia led the number of lynchings carried out in 1919:

Georgia led the lynching parade by a wide margin in 1919. . . . Many of the demobilized black veterans continued to wear their uniforms, sometimes because they had no other clothes and sometimes because they were proud of their service. Many whites reacted savagely to this practice. In May 1919, Georgia veteran [Ben Herne] who had gone into a drugstore [in Atlanta] for a soda was hit with a baseball bat for being in uniform. In Sylvester, Daniel Mack, still in uniform, was dragged from the local jail by a mob and beaten to death. His crime -- for which he received a thirty-day sentence -- had been to announce that since he had fought in France, he would no longer accept mistreatment from white people. When Wilbur Little returned from the army, several whites at the Blakely railroad station forced him to take off his uniform and walk home in his underwear. He continued
to wear his uniform and paid with his life.

Other black soldiers died for not quickly stepping back into ‘their place.’ Ex-soldier Charles Kelly was killed in Cochran because he failed to show sufficient deference to whites by yielding the right of way. A former private named Elles was beaten to death in Spalding County because he told a white [sic] he had just gotten out of the army and was not ready to go back to work. A fifth veteran, James Grant, was lynched in Cordele in 1919. (307-8)

Black soldiers who are not “in their place,” then, signify an early- to mid-twentieth century problem of how America finds itself “out of place:” national identity is uniformly attached to bodies that are violently abjected from the national public sphere. Place, in all of these narratives, signifies geographical location (the South, the U.S. at home and overseas) as well as the subordinate position of African Americans.

In this section, I turn to novels that embed within their narratives scenes in which African Americans step out of “place” -- both figuratively and literally out of the South and out of a racist symbolic system so firmly held in place by a white panoptic logic-- in the years following 1919 through the end of World War II. To read this stretch of time as marked by the eruption of two World Wars is to call attention to the tropes that accompany political violence in the name of national Western security: uniforms, guardianship, masculine identity, and the constructed divide between the outlaw and his uncanny double, the lawman. In my analyses of Toni Morrison’s Sula, Jean Toomer’s Cane, Richard Wright’s Uncle Tom’s Children and Native Son, and William Faulkner’s Light in August, I return to the figures and tropes that stand out in moments of racially motivated violence in the year 1919, and argue that by juxtaposing a psychic model of
personal guardedness with the political materialization of the National Guard, one can track how the threat of lynching affected the (anti)nationalist narration of black men and women, and can further understand the complexity of the ideological divide between the South and the nation in the twentieth century.

The irony of beginning with Morrison’s *Sula* is double: written in 1973, it is the most recent of the three novels, but *Sula* takes place during the years when *Cane* (1923), *Light in August* (1932), *Uncle Tom’s Children* (1940) and *Native Son* (1940) were being written. In other words, this chapter begins in 1973 only so that it can travel back in time to 1919, 1923, 1932, and 1940. Beginning with 1919 and ending with 1965, *Sula* is arranged chronologically with each year serving as a chapter title even though, within each year, other years are remembered or anticipated. (For example, the first chapter, 1919, actually begins in 1917 and, in 1921, the narrator flashes back to 1895.) *Sula* has chapters for 1919, 1920, 1921, 1922, and 1923, and then skips to 1927 to close down the first part of the book. The novel then picks up, a decade later, in 1937. The second part of the book also skips years, moving from 1937 to 1939, 1940, and 1941 to close in 1965. *Sula*, therefore, is a novel invested in the years between the two World Wars; while explicitly addressing the international frame of WWI, the novel does not speak directly of WWII (nor mention the U.S.’s increasing involvement in Vietnam). The novel’s blatant omission of the years in which the United States went to battle against extreme forms of nationalism in Germany, Italy, and Japan, suggests that Morrison’s novel works against common-sense American ideas about what a nation *is*, how internal, domestic divisions are or are not like external conflict and foreign affairs, and how the meaning of bellicosity both changes and remains the same as it is deployed inside and outside two “World“
wars.

In addition, this chapter examines how psychic guardedness often takes shape -- for black men particularly -- in the formation of either a one-man nation or one-man militia. In Richard Wright's work, the figure of a black one-man militia emerges most clearly as both imagined fantasy and as political enactment, forming a dynamic intertextuality with 1919 lynching narratives, with Morrison’s representation of the shell-shocked WWI black soldier as a nation-of-one, and with Faulkner’s representation of the white male citizen-soldier as a nation-of-one.⁶
6 National Suicide and the Black One-Man Militia (Morrison, Toomer, and Wright)

*Sula* is a novel that weaves together multiple stories about the guardianship of spatial and sexual privacy, narrating, with "sadomasochistic lyricism," the mimetic relationship between geography and corporeality. Where characters are caught off-guard -- everywhere, it seems, from the European battlefields of WWI to their own private bedrooms -- means just as much as how characters are caught off-guard. To be caught off-guard is to traumatically rupture, sometimes permanently, the difference between public and private, the personal and the political, the secret body and the exposed body.

In *Sula*, bodies are mapped in the same way as space; local parts form a whole topographical identity, private areas are guarded against public intrusion. Space becomes place in the same way that anonymous bodies become full identities: through the repetition of stories, events, and economic and social exchanges; and through injury and reparation, damage and reconstruction. The novel is cluttered with holes, houses, bathrooms, bedrooms, and kitchens; neighborhoods, towns, cities, states, regions, and nations; and missing limbs, scapegoats, and a nostalgia for or mistrust of home. Morrison's novel charts the way in which Medallion, this "Bottom" neighborhood "where black people lived" (1), struggles to survive during specific moments of the twentieth century, moments when an idealized, abstract, spatially-oriented national "mind" imagines itself as defined against and different from an embodied place like the Bottom.

As studies of regionalism and nationalism have shown, in the dominant
geocultural imaginary, place differs from space in terms of its particularity. A place can be defined and known. Space, on the other hand, is a broad, more inclusive area. Space might include place, but it is also always associated with national power; economic, cultural, and political influences. Sula fictionalizes how the difference between space and place is often reinforced through racial violence and, with dark irony, implies that during the years officially marked as "between wars," the bloodshed that accompanied racial tensions within the U.S. can be understood as a kind of unofficial battle itself. That is, if national history tells us that, for the U.S., the War Years are 1914-1919 and 1941-1945, then Morrison's novel functions as a critique of such a timeline, and, instead, represents national history as a un-re-membered body hostile towards its own internal region(s) as it passes through the years 1919, 1920, 1921, 1922, 1923, 1927, 1937, 1939, 1940, 1941, and 1965.

It is with great irony that the place where global, national, and regional pressures condense and, finally, explode in Sula is officially named "Medallion" and, unofficially, the people who live there call it "the Bottom." That Morrison pins a large medal squarely to the nation's Bottom subverts the very idea of a national body and, by proxy, of American (white) nationalism itself.

The continuous, complicated overlaying of nation, region, and the construction and dissolution of sexual and racial guardedness finds apt expression in the chapter that features the boarding of a train, one that will take a mother and her daughter from the comfort of their all-black Bottom neighborhood of Medallion, Ohio to a city that functions as its urban, uncanny, Southern double -- New Orleans. A journey South, especially in the year 1920 (a year whose significance should be apparent given the above
description of post-World War I national and racial conflict), reverses the historical trajectory of African American nation-crossing at the time, establishing a sense of physical danger.  

*Constructed Guards: A Beautiful Dress, a White Conductor, and Two Black Soldiers*

The chapter titled "1920" provides the reader with an intimate, matriarchal history of the Wright (nee' Sabat) family, one that crystallizes the uncanny relation between the Bottom-Medallion and New Orleans. In New Orleans, Helene Sabat, we are told, is taken from her mother, "a Creole whore," and raised by her grandmother, Cecile: "The grandmother took Helene away from the soft lights and flowered carpets of the Sundown House [the bordello in which her mother works] and raised [Helene] under the dolesome eyes of a multicolored Virgin Mary, counseling her to be *constantly on guard* for any sign of her mother's wild blood" (17, emphasis mine). Helene's removal from the Sundown House to the home of her grandmother signifies the purification, desexualization, and guardianship of the female body; if the body is moved from a profane space (bordello) to a sacred space (the Virgin Mary), the body will no longer (or so the grandmother would hope) carry signs of its origin.

The chapter begins with the declarative "It had to be as far away from the Sundown House as possible" (17). "It," in this sentence, refers to both location and desire. "It" is where Helene must ultimately wind up. To remove her from the whorehouse is one thing, but to remove her from an entire region (of which the Sundown House is a synecdoche) is what will completely ensure Helene's physical, sexual, and spiritual purity. Once Helene meets her husband (who is also, by the way, her
grandmother's nephew, and so related by blood), Wiley Wright, she can finally escape New Orleans and all of its connotations: her "wild blood," the Sundown House, and the sexual dirtiness of the South in general. In Medallion, Ohio, Helene is re-placed into a northern bourgeois home: "a lovely house with a brick porch and real lace curtains at the window," a place in which "[s]he would sigh sometimes just before falling asleep, thinking that she had indeed come far enough away from the Sundown House" (17-19).

When Helene receives word that her pious grandmother Cecile is on her death bed in New Orleans, she finds that "[s]he didn't want to go, but could not bring herself to ignore the silent plea of the woman who had rescued her" (19). Indeed, the southern city of New Orleans has been encoded as a site to be resisted; it is a sexual nightmare that, if not entirely forgotten, has at least been neatly dealt with. Helene must make the journey South with her guard up: "she had the best protection: her manner and her bearing, to which she would add a beautiful dress" (19). A beautiful dress, along with the right attitude, encodes Helene's body as fortified by northern dignity, class ascendancy, and bourgeois femininity. In addition, Helene travels with her daughter, Nel, whose presence, at the very least, marks Helene as a respectable, well-dressed, maternal guardian. For Nel, too, bears the signs of the clean and proper body, having been raised in accordance with her mother's pride: "Any enthusiasms that little Nel showed were calmed by the mother until she drove her daughter's imagination underground" (18). Both mother and daughter prepare to guard themselves against the taint of New Orleans-style sexuality as they travel back into the symbolic womb of the whoring mother.

The difficulties of this return are not limited to its final destination. It is November 1920, a date stressed not only in the title of the chapter, but repeated in the
narrative: "It was November. November, 1920" (19). 1920 is not a time in which public racial "mistakes" can be made by (mulatto) black women without repercussions:

They ran along the track looking for the coach pointed out to them by the colored porter. Even at that they made a mistake. Helene and her daughter entered a coach peopled by some twenty white men and women. Rather than go back and down the three wooden steps again, Helene decided to spare herself some embarrassment and walk on through to the colored car . . .

As they opened the door marked COLORED ONLY, they saw a white conductor coming toward them. It was a chilly day but a light skim of sweat glistened on the woman's face as she and the little girl struggled to hold the door open, hang onto their luggage and enter all at once. The conductor let his eyes travel over the pale yellow woman and the stuck his finger into his ear, jiggling it free of wax. 'What you think you doin', gal?'

Helene looked up at him.

So soon. So soon. She hadn't even begun the trip back. Back to her grandmother's house in the city where the red shutters glowed, and already she had been called 'gal.' All the old vulnerabilities, all the old fears of being somehow flawed gathered in her stomach and made her hands tremble. (19-20)

This liminal moment between cars -- a moment in which Helene and Nel anxiously struggle to move between institutionalized differences between black and white -- becomes a site of trauma only as the white male conductor interpellates the "pale yellow woman" as "gal." Here, Helene's one "mistake" snowballs into several: the mistake of entering the wrong car, of trying to correct the mistake from within a state-sanctioned
space of racial difference (of having too much pride to exit the car for whites and enter the car for blacks), of thinking that she can simply pass through the space without being regarded as one who is trying to pass as, of literally and figuratively breaking the law.

The presence of the white conductor -- a white guard -- functions to chip away at the guard so carefully put up by Helene, a "beautiful dress" that was supposed to allow her the comfort of dignified, black bourgeois selfhood, but that turns, under the gaze of the white conductor, into a worthless or obvious performativity -- an attempt to pass.

The conductor looked at the bit of wax his fingernail had retrieved. 'What was you doin' back in there? What was you doin' in that coach yonder?' Helene licked her lips. 'Oh . . . I . . .' Her glance moved beyond the white man's face to the passengers seated behind him. Four or five black faces were watching, two belonging to soldiers still in their shit-colored uniforms and peaked caps. She saw their closed faces, their locked eyes, and turned for compassion to the gray eyes of the conductor. (21)

Interpellation turns to hyper-interpellation as a new set of gazes police Helene's movement between cars. The visual economy here intensifies the situation: the black faces which are "closed" and "locked" presume as much as the white conductor. The eyes of the black male soldiers (clad in "shit-colored uniforms") watch Helene negotiate her transgression of social space. The soldiers are fecalized (in their dress), but still maintain representational power. As I have been arguing thus far, soldiers who return alive from World War I have a conflicted brand of nationalism attached to their uniformed bodies. Soldiers, we assume, are "real" guards; their bodies have been trained, disciplined, and put through the ravages of war to protect a nation that still wishes to keep blacks in their
place. Morrison's black soldiers, in turn, represent at least two, conflicting social forces: 1) the material conditions which can allow black men to serve and perhaps die for a country in which blacks must live as second-class citizens, in which blacks must be kept in their place and 2) the possibility of hope, that a liberal/liberated post-war era will come to recognize that black men embody national ideals as much as white men, that black men, by going to war, have earned an equal place in American social formation.

To the soldiers, Helene represents pure mis-taken-ness. She believes, if only for a moment, that she is allowed to take place.

'We made a mistake, sir. You see, there wasn't no sign. We just got in the wrong car, that's all. Sir.'

'We don't 'low no mistakes on this train. Now git your butt on in there.'

He stood there staring at her until she realized that he wanted her to move aside. Pulling Nel by the arm, she pressed herself and her daughter into the floor space in front of a wooden seat. Then, for no earthly reason, at least no reason that anybody could understand, she smiled. Like a street pup that wags its tail at the very doorjamb of the butcher shop he has been kicked away from only moments before, Helene smiled. Smiled dazzlingly and coquettishly at the salmon-colored face of the conductor.

Nel looked away from the flash of pretty teeth to the other passengers. The two black soldiers, who had been watching the scene with what appeared to be indifference, now looked stricken. Behind Nel was the bright and blazing light of her mother's smile; before her the midnight eyes of the soldiers. She saw the muscles of their faces tighten, a movement under the skin from blood to marble.
No change in the expression of the eyes, but a hard wetness that veiled them as they looked at the stretch of her mother's foolish smile. (21-2)

It is one thing for the soldiers to be "locked," "closed," or "indifferent" as they fix their gazes upon Helene, but it is another thing altogether, the narrator insists, for them to turn to "marble" or for their gazes to solidify into a "hard wetness" that acts as a "veil."

Helene's smile, a "bright and blazing light," is enough to transform male interiors "from blood to marble." Her lightness is their heaviness; her brightness is their "midnight."

Nel observes how, in the economy of smiles and gazes, Helene lets her guard down, becomes playfully flirtatious ("coquettish") in exchange for the white conductor's "compassion," a compassion that she never receives. The smile is wasted. Once Helene's guard is down, the soldier's guardedness doubles, even triples: 1) shit-colored uniforms, closed faces, locked eyes, 2) a layer of marble beneath the skin and, 3) eyes veiled by a hard wetness. With a mixture of horror and fascination, Nel understands that her mother has let her guard down, has reduced herself, in some sense, to the level of the New Orleans whore from whom she so carefully tries to distance herself. As a result, Nel, like her mother before her, resolves that the shell that guards a pudding-like feminine weakness shall never be cracked, that she will be, at all times, on her guard:

Nel sat . . . facing her mother and the soldiers, neither of whom she could look at. She felt both pleased and ashamed to sense that these men, unlike her father, who worshipped his graceful and beautiful wife, were bubbling with a hatred for her mother that had not been there in the beginning but had been born with the dazzling smile. In the silence that preceded the train's heave, she looked deeply at the folds of her mother's dress. There in the fall of the heavy brown wool she held
her eyes. She could not risk letting them travel upward for fear of seeing that the hooks and eyes in the placket of the dress had come undone and exposed the custard-colored skin underneath. She stared at the hem, wanting to believe in its weight but knowing that custard was all that it hid. If this tall, proud woman . . . if she were really custard, then there was a chance that Nel was too. It was on that train, shuffling toward Cincinnati, that she resolved to be on guard -- always. (22)

Helene, in an attempt to keep her guard up, loses it completely. Her "manner and her bearing" and her "beautiful dress" have come undone, exposing the weakness of the flesh beneath. Helene's body no longer carries with it the protection she was afforded once she moved north, away from the fleshy, sexual body of her southern mother. Not only is Helene stripped of her guard, her daughter Nel notices it, and quickly dis-identifies with the custard-body, which is left over. In Sula, at least, no guard is impenetrable but is, instead, comprise of shit, custard, or ear wax.

In the interplay between the terrorizing guardianship of the white male conductor and the black woman caught off-guard, the potentially national significance of black-men-in-uniform transforms into the material weightiness of marble swathed in shit. As one guard is exchanged for another in a visual economy of race, gender, and power, so, too, does the narrative clarify the ways in which protection, security, volition mean different things for differently raced and gendered subjects in 1920. The white male conductor stumbles into a scene of unintentional transgression, and boorishly bullies and embarrasses Helene. Bored enough to pick earwax from his ear, his indifference signifies his power. His jaded reaction is what makes Helene's smile all the more difficult for the soldiers to watch.
Nel reiterates her resolve to be on guard at the end of this chapter. Upon her return to Medallion, Nel recalls the frightful, carnivalesque quality of her trip South: squatting in fields to relieve herself (because there are no bathrooms for black women); the marble-hard bodies of the soldiers; her mother’s grotesque, custard-body; the dead body of her great-grandmother; and "the smell and the tight, tight hug of the woman in yellow who rubbed burned matches over her eyes" (Helene’s mother, Rochelle, the Creole whore) (28). As a result of this trip, Nel intimately reconstructs the boundaries of her ego:

[S]he had gone on a real trip, and now she was different. She got out of bed and lit the lamp to look in the mirror. There was her face, plain brown eyes, three braids and the nose her mother hated. She looked for a long time and suddenly a shiver ran through her.

'I'm me,' she whispered. 'Me.'

Nel didn't know quite what she meant, but on the other hand she knew exactly what she meant.

'I'm me. I'm not their daughter. I'm not Nel. I'm me. Me.'

Each time she said the word me there was a gathering in her like power, like joy, like fear.

It was the last time as well as the first time she was ever to leave Medallion. For days afterward she imagined other trips she would take, alone though, to faraway places. Contemplating them was delicious. Leaving Medallion would be her goal. (28-9)

The irony of this passage lies in Nel's resolve to not only claim a personally-crafted
identity, a "me" which stands in contrast to the interpellating calls of her mother, grandmother, and great-grandmother ("not their daughter"), but that this new "me" is supposed to allow her to continue to visit "faraway places" -- something she never does.

If traveling South is an ego-shattering/ego-rebuilding experience for Nel, the newly (re)formed ego which guards her never again has a chance to be broken (and, in turn, to be reformed and reformed, again and again). Nel's "me" is a "me" which stays local, never fulfills its childhood wish to stretch itself across different landscapes of the U.S. or even other nations. Her "me" confines itself to a private, familiar space, leaving Sula, her uncanny double, to leave the place of the Bottom in order to travel nationally ("Nashville, Detroit, New Orleans, New York, Philadelphia, Macon, and San Diego" [120]).

National Suicide and The Hero(in)

The fecal figures of the two, anonymous black soldiers who silently watch (in as much as they silently guard) Helene and Nel uncannily return to the reader as fully developed characters. Shadrack and Plum make their ways back to the Bottom from the trenches of World War I in two somewhat different fashions. Both, however, signify the metaphoric relation between excrement, masculinity, American nationalism, and African American subjectivity as they seek to repair the psychic damage done by going to war for a country that places a limit on the kind of national freedom each defended. If one of the military’s primary goals is to fashion soldiers from men -- to whip the male body into another shape -- then surely the national project of soldier-making fails in the cases of Shadrack and Plum, two soldiers who do not, perhaps because they cannot, acquire the rock-hard, marble based masculine interior displayed by the soldiers on the train.
1. Shadrack

_Sula_ begins with a section entitled "1919," but immediately takes the reader back to an event which "permanently astonished" Shadrack in December 1917.

A young man of hardly twenty, his head full of nothing and his mouth recalling the taste of lipstick, Shadrack had found himself in December, 1917, running with his comrades across a field in France. It was his first encounter with the enemy and he didn't know whether his company was running toward them or away . . . Shellfire was all around him, and though he knew that this was something called _it_, he could not muster up the proper feeling -- the feeling that would accommodate _it_ . . . The day was cold enough to make his breath visible, and he wondered for a moment at the purity and whiteness of his own breath among the dirty, gray explosions surrounding him . . . Wincing at the pain [the bite of a nail] in his foot, he turned his a little to the right and saw the face of a soldier near him fly off. Before he could register the shock, the rest of the soldier's head disappeared under the inverted soup bowl of his helmet. But stubbornly, taking no direction from the brain, the body of the headless soldier ran on, with energy and grace, ignoring altogether the drip and slide of brain tissue down its back. (7-8)

The next time Shadrack opens his eyes, he is in a hospital bed, suffering from terrible shell shock, of which one side effect is the hallucination that his fingers grow and interlace with each other, in a "higgledy-piggledy" fashion (9).

The trauma of witnessing a fellow soldier's face, and then whole head, explode
into liquid, while the body, still energetic and graceful, runs on, is a trauma from which Shadrack never quite recovers. At twenty-two, he is released from the hospital. Only minutes after his release, Shadrack is sitting on a curb and crying because he cannot unlace his shoes.

Twenty-two years old, weak, hot, frightened, not daring to acknowledge the fact that he didn't even know who or what he was... with no past, no language, no tribe, no source, no address book, no comb, no pencil, no clock, no pocket handkerchief, no rug, no bed, no can opener, no faded postcard, no soap, no key, no tobacco pouch, no soiled underwear and nothing nothing nothing to do. (12)

The trajectory the narrator sets up in the first few pages of the novel, then, follows from one traumatic moment to the next. Whereas we can read the headless soldier as Shadrack's uncanny double, a body "stubbornly" moving without a signal from the brain, still clad in its uniform and fighting for a country without even knowing in which direction the enemy lies, the moment of catharsis (crying out on the curb after his release from the hospital) restores the split Shadrack (he who is witness to the headless running soldier and, in the realm of the symbolic, the headless, running soldier himself) to the singular Shadrack. However, the singularity of Shadrack's self is not one determined by a known identity, but rather the absence of identity (as evidenced in the narrator's repetition of "no" and "nothing" in the list of what is missing from Shadrack's life).

As Shadrack spirals into a dark hole of "no's" and nothings, the police arrive and throw him in jail for "vagrancy and intoxication" (13). Once in jail, Shadrack "could only stare helplessly at the wall, so paralyzing was the pain in his head. He lay in this agony for a long while and then realized he was staring at the painted-over letters of a command
to fuck himself. He studied the phrase as the pain in his head subsided" (13). This is an
instructional moment, subtle enough to be "painted-over," but crude enough to make
Shadrack think. The anonymous command to go fuck himself incites a desire for
Shadrack to look at his face in a mirror. The jail cell is mirror-less, and, instead,
Shadrack "made his was to the toilet bowl and peeped in" (13):

The water was unevenly lit by the sun so he could make nothing out. Returning to
his cot he took the blanket and covered his head, rendering the water dark enough
to see his reflection. There in the toilet water he saw a grave black face. A black
so definite, so unequivocal, it astonished him. He had been harboring a skittish
apprehension that he was not real -- that he didn't exist at all. But when the
blackness greeted him with its indisputable presence, he wanted nothing more. In
his joy he took the risk of letting one edge of the blanket drop and glanced at his
hands. They were still. Courteously still. (13)
The painted-over command to "fuck himself" is, therefore, obeyed. Shadrack needs a
mirror to assure himself of his realness, his materiality. How can he fuck a self that isn't
even there? He wants to see his face, a locus of recognizable identity. Lacking a clean
square of silver, one that would reflect a precise image of himself (the precise image seen
by, say, Nel, in the aforementioned "I'm me" scene), Shadrack turns to the dirty hole of
water in the jail-cell toilet. Instead of disgust, Shadrack feels hopeful for and, later, "joy"
in seeing his face in this place made for waste. The face he sees is "grave," but "definite,"
so astonishing that it replaces the astonishment of shell-shock, allowing Shadrack to
finally gain control over his hands. The next day, the sheriff gets a wagon to cart
Shadrack back home to Medallion.
The dissolution and reconstitution of Shadrack -- from a 1917 battlefield to a hospital to a jail cell and then home to Medallion in late-1919 -- provides the backdrop for the creation of National Suicide Day. The analeptic narration of Shadrack's trauma and subsequent damage/recovery brings us to the narrative present, 1919. The narrator tells the reader that on his way to Medallion,

Shadrack began a struggle that was to last for twelve days, a struggle to order and focus experience. It had to do with making a place for fear as a way of controlling it. He knew the smell of death and was terrified of it, for he could not anticipate it. It was not death and dying that frightened him, but the unexpectedness of both. In sorting it all out, he hit on the notion that if one day a year were devoted to it, everybody could get it out of the way and the rest of the year would be safe and free. In this manner he instituted National Suicide Day.

On the third day of the new year, he walked through the Bottom down Carpenter's Road with a cowbell and a hangman's rope calling the people together. (14)

National Suicide Day, therefore, helps Shadrack recover from his shell shock. Instituting a National Suicide Day not only allows Shadrack to "get [the unexpectedness of death and dying] out of the way," but it also dislocates the ideological imperatives of "the nation" from the body of the wounded (possibly insane) soldier and projects it outwards onto a mass subject. National Suicide Day ironizes the national body. It is a holiday that celebrates Shadrack as a (black local) nation-of-one. The parade is a chance for the people to collectively "kill themselves or each other" (14). Even though, for years, Shadrack is the only participant in the National Suicide Day parade (an "annual solitary parade" as the narrator puts it [15]), the people of the Bottom come to integrate it into
their everyday conversation: "they had simply stopped remarking on the holiday because they had absorbed it into their thoughts, into their language, into their lives" (15). The coarticulation of the national and the suicidal (especially in a novel so heavily invested in places and spaces) tells the reader that national bodies, national ideologies, national identifications, for the people of the Bottom in 1920, are partial, at best, and ridiculous, at the very least: "Easily, quietly, Suicide Day became a part of the fabric of life up in the Bottom of Medallion, Ohio" (16).

2. Plum

The other fully articulated WWI soldier in Sula is Plum. Whereas the narrator provides plenty of details about Shadrack's war trauma, the narrator tells nothing about Plum's war experiences. The reader only knows that Plum left for war in 1917 and that he "returned to the States in 1919 but did not get back to Medallion until 1920" (45). Shadrack and Plum are contemporaries who, as far as the reader knows, have never met. At the same time that Shadrack makes his way from hospital to jail cell to Medallion, Plum travels the United States, hitting all of the big cities in the north, "New York, Washington, D.C., and Chicago" (45). The reader might assume, then, that Plum's post-war urban explorations in the northern (specifically north-eastern) U.S. would reconstruct him as a self-determined "New Negro" of the Jazz Age, an African American whose identity, culture, and aesthetic differs radically from what Alain Locke describes as "the dusty spectacles of past controversy" ("The New Negro," 1585). But Plum, like Shadrack, returns from World War I without an urban sophistication or military masculinity in place, either of which might occasion a small-town celebration of a national hero. Instead, the narrator
tells us, "there was obviously something wrong" (45).

[Plum's] hair had been neither cut nor combed in months, his clothes were pointless and he had no socks. But he did have a black bag, a paper sack, and a sweet, sweet smile . . . Then he began to steal from them, take trips to Cincinnati and sleep for days in his room with the record player going. He got even thinner, since he only ate snatches of things at beginnings or endings of meals. It was Hannah who found the bent spoon black from steady cooking. (45)

Plum is not a hero. Nor can he be a heroine. Instead, he is addicted to heroin, signified by the "bent spoon black from steady cooking." The proud uniform of the war hero is traded in for clothes that are "pointless," clothes that fail to mark him as a national body. Plum's body withers, becomes "even thinner" as it wastes itself in the sleepy wash of heroin shots.

Plum's wasting of what is supposed to be his own (black) national (soldier's) body works as a slow response to Shadrack's ironic call to commit National Suicide. But for Plum, there is no war story; there is no representation of Plum trudging through fields or coming under fire. These narratives are conspicuously absent. What the reader does know is a story of Plum as an infant.

Sometime before the middle of December, the baby, Plum, stopped having bowel movements. Eva massaged his stomach and gave him warm water. Something must be wrong with my milk, she thought. Mrs. Suggs gave her castor oil, but even that didn't work. He cried and fought so they couldn't get much down his throat anyway. He seemed in great pain and his shrieks were pitched high in outrage and suffering. At one point, maddened by his own crying, he gagged,
choked and looked as though he was strangling to death. Eva rushed to him and kicked over the earthen slop jar, washing a small area of the floor with the child's urine. She managed to soothe him, but when he took up the cry again late that night, she resolved to end his misery once and for all. She wrapped him in blankets, ran her finger around the crevices and sides of the lard can and stumbled to the outhouse with him. Deep in the darkness and freezing stench she squatted down, turned the baby over on her knees, exposed his buttocks and shoved the last bit of food she had in the world (besides three beets) up his ass. Softening the insertion with the dab of lard, she probed with her middle finger to loosen his bowels. Her fingernail snagged what felt like a pebble; she pulled it out and others followed. Plum stopped crying as the black hard stools ricocheted onto the frozen ground. (33-4)

This moment overlaps at least three binary oppositions regarding Plum: 1) maternal protection and maternal violation, 2) anal retention and anal expulsion, and 3) food and feces. Each binary testifies as much to the horrors of poverty as it does to the psychoanalytic construction of Plum as pre-Oedipal child. While this is not a scene of castration, it is certainly one of removal. "What feels like a pebble," then, is Plum's core, the hard center of a fruit. The "pebble" is Plum's pit, his internal seed, and his ability to self-regenerate. This is what causes him excruciating pain. The relief brought about by its removal suggests that, although it is only the size of a pebble, the fruit without his seed, his hard core interior, will eventually wither. This, finally, is a scene, which recounts how Eva plumbs her Plum. Plum, obviously, is a plum, a fruit -- a strange fruit that cannot develop into a fully grown man because he has no seed. He is a baby fruit
which has no pit, no masculine hard core or center. Instead, he is only sweet pulp, skin, and a hollow center. This plum/Plum is also a fruit that is a deep purple, the darkest shade of lavender. For Eva to remove Plum’s seed, then, is to imply that the guardianship of the male body by the mother, at least in this context, far outweighs the significance of the symbolic, national, military Father.

As it always seems to be the case in Sula, the identification of the black male body with the U.S. uniform is also always an identification of the black male body with shit. From the shit-colored uniforms of the soldiers on the train, to Shadrack’s reflection in the jail cell toilet bowl, to the infant Plum’s constipation and release, Sula always embeds the excremental somewhere in the black soldier’s narrative. As Maia Boswell theorizes, the significance of excrement and racial blackness in Sula is to show that “blackness is not just the ‘enslaved cipher’ of a binary but the other of the binary system as such -- the runaway slave, the passing figure, the play of the outhouse, the exteriority of the body as excrement or excess -- giving the lie to the entire metaphoric[s] of interiority” (127). Beyond a system of binary logic, black masculinity in Sula works against the representation of the black male body as the lynched, “culturally abject,” while still telling of the black male’s close dangerously powerful proximity to waste and expulsion.

Both Plum and Shadrack, then, signify the struggle of black male subjectivity over and against the imposition of national (white) masculinity. Military discipline and service overseas only damages the psyches of young black men from the Bottom. Shadrack’s call for national suicide every January third matches with Plum’s slow fade into a sleepy stasis. Shadrack, of course, makes it through the novel, and is the one who comforts Sula after she kills Chicken Little. Plum, on the other hand, burns to death after Eva can no
longer stand his addiction and lights him on fire.

When Eva recounts for Hannah how she lit Plum on fire, she presents the event as an eerie blend of symbolic and literal incest, which, perhaps, explains why she spoke "with two voices . . . [I]ike two people talking at the same time, saying the same thing, one a fraction of a second behind the other:

'He give me such a time. Such a time. Look like he didn't even want to be born. But he come on out. Boys is hard to bear . . . It was such a carryin' on to get him born and to keep him alive. Just to keep his little heart beating and his little old lungs cleared and look like when he came back from the war he wanted to git back in. After all that carryin' on, just gettin' him out and keepin' him alive, he wanted to crawl back in and well . . . I ain't got the room no more even if he could do it. There wasn't space for him in my womb. And he was crawlin' back. Being helpless and thinking baby thoughts and dreaming baby dreams and messing up his pants again and smiling all the time . . . I'd be laying here at night and he be downstairs in that room, but when I closed my eyes I'd see him . . . six feet tall smilin' and crawlin' up the stairs so quietlike so I wouldn't hear and opening the door soft so I wouldn't hear and he'd be creepin' to the bed trying to spread my legs trying to get back up in my womb. He was a man, girl, a big old growed-up man. I didn't have that much room. I kept on dreaming it. Dreaming it and I knewed it was true. One night it wouldn't be no dream. It'd be true and I would have done it, would have let him if I'd've had the room but a big man can't be a baby all wrapped up inside his momma no more, he suffocate . . . I had to keep him out so I just thought of a way he could die like a man not all scrunched up
inside my womb, but like a man.' (71-2)

In this recounting, Eva connects Plum's heroin use with the maternal body. The safety of the womb and the pleasure of junk provide a perverse protection for Plum. As Eva states, "after the war," Plum changes. The story of Plum's infancy overrides the unspoken narrative of Plum as a soldier. Plum takes refuge in the shelter of the maternal body and/or its narcotic substitute, and it is Eva, the mother in question, who provides the critique of Plum's inability to maintain a full, paternal, national manhood. The soldier-making experience of going to war, therefore, fails to ascribe a progressive gender to Plum, but instead causes him to regress, to once again become the baby whose only protection is his mother. That Eva chooses to kill Plum by lighting him on fire harkens back to the lynching narratives presented at this chapter's beginning. This is not to argue that Eva has lynched Plum, but rather that the act of burning a black man to death in 1921, for Eva, makes him more of a "man" than wasting away in junk-filled dreams.

3. Feminist Narration(s) of Black Masculinity

While no one is lynched in Sula, the narrative's obsession with black masculinity-in-crisis is obvious. Along with the vagrant Shadrack and the addict Plum, Sula tells the story of the missing BoyBoy, the three interchangeable Deweys, drunken Tar Baby, dead Chicken Little, and the cheating Jude. All of these men function as signs of lack, different kinds of aberrant or anomalous masculinity that directly affects the novel's construction of black women.11

The troubling problematic of modern American black masculinity in the 1920s and 1930s, however, is finally addressed head-on by Sula, she for whom the novel is
named, and who trains her critical eye on the various ways that black men signify both
nationally and locally. In 1937, Sula returns to the Bottom to pay a visit to her old friend
Nel for the sake of joking and talking about how things have changed (or not) in her old
neighborhood. When Jude, Nel's husband, comes home from work with the complaint
that "a Negro man had a hard row to hoe in this world" (103), Sula refuses to coddle him
the same way Nel does, and instead offers up this reading of black men, mining the
archetypal figures that are central to the creation of the myth of the black male rapist and
his subsequent lynching:

'I mean, I don't know what the fuss is about. I mean, everything in the world loves
you. White men love you. They spend so much time worrying about your penis
they forget about their own. The only thing they want to do is cut off a nigger's
privates. And if that ain't love and respect I don't know what is. And white
women? They chase you all to every corner of the earth, feel for you under every
bed. I knew a white woman wouldn't leave the house after 6 o'clock for fear one
of you would snatch her. Now ain't that love? They think rape soon's they see
you, and if they don't get the rape they looking for, they scream it anyway just so
the search won't be in vain. Colored women worry themselves into bad health just
trying to hang on to your cuffs. Even little children -- white and black, boys and
girls -- spend all their childhood eating their hearts out 'cause they think you don't
love them. And if that ain't enough, you love yourselves. Nothing in this world
loves a black man more than another black man. You hear of solitary white men,
but niggers? Can't stay away from one another a whole day. So. It looks to me
like you the envy of the world.' (103-4)
This critical and, I would argue, feminist joke highlights the timely relation between the
myth of the black male rapist, the prevalence of black male lynchings, white male fears of
black male sexual endowment, the iconography of the childlike Uncle Tom, and the slide
between black male friendships and black male homosexuality. To joke that black men
are "the envy of the world," then, is to cleverly re-narrate the terroristic policing of the
black male body (in 1937) as "love" -- an affectionate/sexual desire for the black male
body. Sula’s joke brings with it all of the ideological weight each moment of psychic
guardedness accumulates in the novel: black male guardianship of the black female,
black female guardedness against the black male, black male guardedness against white
males and females, black female guardianship of her children, white male guardianship of
white females, and black female guardedness against white males and females.

_The Threat of Lynching and The Black One-Man Militia (Jean Toomer's Cane and
Richard Wright's Uncle Tom's Children)_

Sula’s knowledge of how lynching operates -- as disciplinary practice and literary
narrative -- recalls, therefore, other twentieth-century narratives in which lynching
functions as a kernel event. Jean Toomer’s influential and experimental _Cane_ (1923), for
example, incorporates a lynching narrative in several of its sections. The poem “Portrait
in Georgia” not only draws attention back to Georgia’s status as the site of multiple
lynchings after WWI, but also functions as the text’s center.

Hair -- braided chestnut,

coiled like a lyncher’s rope,

Eyes -- fagots,
Lips -- old scars, or the first red blisters,

Breath -- the last sweet scene of cane,

And her slim body, white as the ash

of black flesh after flame. (27)

In this poem, the lynched black male body serves as a referent for the white female body in whose name the black male has been lynched. Cane’s poem reinvents the relation between part and whole. Whose wholeness is made whole through whose incompleteness?

“Portrait in Georgia” pairs the black male body with the white female body to re-examine the poetics of synecdoche in terms of race and gender. The various parts of the white female body -- hair, eyes, lips, breath, and skin -- not only stand in opposition to the complete obliteration of the black male body, but also imply that the construction of one cannot exist without the destruction of the other.

In a different context, the short story, “Blood Burning Moon” (which follows on the heels of “Portrait in Georgia”) also centers on the lynching of a black man. In “Blood Burning Moon,” however, the woman who functions as the object of desire is a black woman, torn between her love for a black man (Tom Burwell) and a white man (Bob Stone). A fight between Tom and Bob ends with Tom producing a knife and slashing the throat of Bob. In response, a white mob forms and quickly dispenses with Tom:

White men like ants upon a forage rushed about. Except for the taut hum of their moving, all was silent. Shotguns, revolvers, rope, kerosene, torches. Two high-powered cars with glaring searchlights. They came together. The taught hum rose to a low roar. Then nothing could be heard but the flop of their feet in the thick dust of the road. The moving body of their silence preceded them over the crest
of the hill into factory town. It flattened the Negroes beneath it. It rolled to the wall of the factory, where it stopped. Tom knew they were coming. He couldn't move. And then he saw the search-lights of the two cars glaring down on him. A quick shock went through him. He stiffened. He started to run. A yell went up from the mob. Tom wheeled about and faced them. They poured down on him.

(34)

The excessive force of the white lynch mob, its ability to move as a singular, silent body, exemplifies the variable construction of violence as it is played out along lines of race and gender. There is no mass of black bodies to counter the white one (which will emerge in Wright's *Uncle Tom's Children*), but rather a singular black male body, terrorized by instruments of torture ("shotguns, revolvers, rope, kerosene, torches") and the sheer number of white men who militantly patrol the area so that they may carry out extra-legal punishment in the name of racial supremacy.

In Richard Wright's collection of short stories, *Uncle Tom's Children* (1940), lynching also figures as the paranoid backdrop of life in the rural South. However, Wright presents his readers with a resistance to white mob power, both imagined and acted out, including, towards the end of the book, the formation of a Marxist/Communist, or "Red," coalition of blacks and poor whites. The story that begins this collection, "Big Boy Leaves Home," shows how the complicated and dangerous tangle of sexual paranoia and white-black relations can inspire a fantasy of black vigilantism. The figures that accompany the myth of the black male rapist (mentioned by Sula, above) emerge in this particular story: the pure white woman, the paranoid construction of the black male as rapist, and the violent supremacy of the all-white, all-male mob. "Big Boy" begins with a
scene of young, black male homosocial bonding (including naked sexual play and jokes about their own bodies) at a privately owned, white swimming hole. This dangerous play is disrupted by the presence of a white woman.

'Oh!'

They looked up, their lips parting.

'Oh!'

A white woman, poised on the edge of the opposite embankment, stood directly in front of them, her hat in her hand and her hair lit by the sun.

'It's a woman!' whispered Big Boy in an underbreath. 'A white woman!' (29)

Caught off-guard (and naked) by the presence of a white woman, two of the young boys, Buck and Lester, are shot by Jim, a white man wearing "an army officer's uniform" (31). The two remaining black boys, Big Boy and Bobo, stand naked before the uniform-clad white soldier and, in a moment of struggle, Big Boy grabs the barrel of the rifle and knocks the white soldier's teeth in before finally shooting and killing him in the presence of the astonished white woman. The contrast between naked black youth and the uniformed soldier underscores the national symbolic attending the violent struggle for phallic power. In this scene, an unclothed, and certainly un-uniformed, black boy resists the power of white masculinity as it arrives fully dressed in the nation’s official military clothing.

Wright's short story re-distributes the meaning of militant violence and defense in a scene of imagined resistance just prior to the lynching of Bobo. As the white mob gathers together and combs the area in search of Bobo and Big Boy, Big Boy, hidden inside a kiln, fantasizes himself as an army of one, a singular soldier who would "stand off
a whole mob wid a shotgun:"

He looked at the ground as he turned a[n imaginary] shotgun over in his hands.

Then he leveled it at an advancing white man. _Booом!_ The man curled up.

Another came. He reloaded quickly, and let him have what the other had got. He too curled up. Then another came. He got the same medicine. Then the whole mob swirled around him, and he blazed away, getting as many as he could. (50)

In the creative space of the kiln, Big Boy envisions himself as a one-man militia, a black nation that vigilantly destroys a nation of white supremacists. Big Boy's revenge fantasy, however, remains a fantasy; nonetheless, Big Boy does, in the end, escape from the long arm of white terrorism.

The second story in Wright's collection, "Down by the Riverside," takes place in the midst of a natural disaster, a terrible flood and storm. Brother Mann (whose name continues Wright's ironic boy/man split along racial lines -- white soldiers repeatedly refer to Mann as "boy" and "nigger") travels with his dying and pregnant wife, his mother, and his child, Peewee, in a boat stolen by his brother from Heartfield, a white man who runs the general store. As Mann navigates the dark waters of the flood, he runs across the Heartfield family, who recognizes the stolen boat and demand that Mann stop at once.

Mann, desperate to get his wife to the Red Cross, flees the scene, at which point Heartfield opens fire on him. Mann shoots back, and kills Heartfield. For the rest of the story, Mann, already suffering from sickness and fatigue, fears that the white soldiers in charge will discover his violent deed.

White soldiers have been called in to guard the Red Cross hospital and, as the flood grows worse, force all black men to assist with the piling of sand- and cement bags
onto the levee, which is in danger of collapsing at any moment. Mann is one of the men enlisted to perform strenuous labor, in spite of the fact that he is obviously ill and that his pregnant wife has just died from inadequate pre-natal care. As he performs his duties, Mann cannot decide if laboring under the orders of the white soldiers increases his chances of being caught (general proximity to the law itself) or decreases them (since he is constantly moving around, and he is, for the white soldiers, interchangeable with and therefore indistinguishable from the other black men).

Once Mann is caught, the interaction between the black man who has killed in self-defense and the white soldiers who represent national security transforms from perceived threat to a kind of protection. The following scene takes place just after Mann has been identified as Heartfield's killer. The soldiers remove Mann from the all-black tent and parade him through a white crowd to Mrs. Heartfield, asking her:

'Is this the nigger, Mrs. Heartfield?'

'Yes, he's the one.'

More white faces gathered around. The crowd blurred and wavered before his eyes. There was a rising mutter of talk. Then he could not move; they were pressing in.

'What did he do?'

'Did he bother a white woman?'

He heard the soldiers protesting.

'Get back now and behave! Get back!'

The crowd closed in tightly; the soldiers stood next to him, between him and the yelling faces. He grabbed a soldier, clinging, surging with the crowd. They were
screaming in his ears.

'Lynch im!'

'Kill the black bastard!'

The soldiers struggled.

'Get back! You can't do that!'

'Let us have im!'

He was lifted off his feet in a tight circle of livid faces. A blow came to his mouth. The crowd loosened a bit and he fell to all fours. He felt a dull pain in his thigh and knew he had been kicked. Out of the corners of his eyes he saw a moving tangle of feet and legs.

'Kill the sonofabitch!'

'GET BACK! GET BACK OR WE WILL SHOOT!' (117-8)

In this scene, Mann actually uses the body of a white soldier as a shield, an embodied guard, to keep the furious white crowd from attacking him. Perhaps suprisingly, the white soldiers continue to guard the black body under suspicion: "GET BACK OR WE WILL SHOOT!" The threat here is directed towards the white mob. The soldiers, for this brief moment, work in defense of Mann.

Mann, however, cannot trust the white guard that has formed around him. Just as in "Big Boy," the fantasy of shooting and killing an onslaught of white men emerges under extreme pressure: "He had a wild impulse to pull [the gun] out and shoot, blindly; to shoot and be killed while shooting. But before he could act a voice stopped him" (120). After finding Mann's gun on his person, the soldiers drag his resisting body back to the soldier's camp. "Lawd have mercy! Once there and he would be dead. There and
then the end" (122). Mann makes a run for it, deciding he would rather "die" than be lynched: "He would die before he would let them kill him. Ah'll die fo they kill me! Ah'll die . . . He ran straight to the right, through the trees, in the direction of the water" (123). The story ends with the white soldiers riddling Mann's body with bullets, yelling to the by now unhearing corpse, ""You shouldn't've run, nigger! . . . You shouldn't've run, Goddammit! You shouldn't've run . . ." (123). In the end, then, the difference, for Mann, between choosing to die and being subject to a killing (a lynching), marks his actions as heroic and, therefore, tacitly aligns his volition with the state-empowered agency of the white soldier. The soldier's words, "you shouldn't've run," place Mann's decisive action in the context of political resistance. Since it seems that, no matter if he runs or not, Mann will perish, his choice to run (to take matters into his own hands, to make a stand against the forces of oppression) signals his demise as, at the very least, a sign of political movement.

The political fantasy of taking up arms against a white mob manifests itself as a textual reality in Wright's next story in the collection, "Long Black Song." Loneliness pervades the scene that begins this story, a loneliness felt by Sarah, a woman who is missing not one, but two husbands. One husband, Tom, has not returned from World War I, and so, after the better part of a year, Sarah acquired her second husband, Silas. Silas, the reader learns, has been gone for only a week, taking the wagon to the town of Coldwater ("Colwatah") to purchase goods and supplies (127). As Sarah speculates on the whereabouts of Silas, she drifts into a more deeply felt "aching" for Tom.

Loneliness ached in her. She swallowed, hearing Bang! Bang! Bang! Tom had been gone t war mos a year now. N tha ol wars over n we ain heard nothin yit.
Lawd, don let Tom be dead! She frowned into the gloam and wondered about that
awful war so far away. They said it was over now . . . She felt that merely to go
so far away from home was a kind of death in itself. Just to go that far away was
to be killed. Nothing good could come of men going miles across the seas to
fight. N how come they want to kill each other? How come they wanna make
blood? Killing was not what men ought to do. (127)

Sarah provides a critique of masculine warring in the name of domestic fracturing. For
Sarah, Tom's recruitment into the U.S. army makes no sense -- "killing was not what men
ought to do," implying, instead, that men ought to stay at home to assist in the building of
family and community.

But in this story, killing seems to be the only thing that men do, aside from having
sex with Sarah. Just after she daydreams about the missing Tom, Sarah allows herself to
be seduced by a white traveling salesman, and gets a discount for a much-coveted
graphophone (138). Silas eventually returns and discovers Sarah's infidelity and, the next
day, when the white salesman returns, Silas shoots and kills him. Standing over the dead
body, Silas delivers a speech "to no one in particular" (152). (Notice how this speech
anticipates Sula's feminist narration of black men discussed earlier. Important, too, is
that, while Sula can be ironic about the plight of black men, and describe it in terms of
"love," Sarah, in Wright's story, certainly has no ironic distance. Sarah fully embodies
the "love" which Sula critiques.)

'The white folks ain never gimme a chance! They ain never give no black man a
chance! There ain nothin in yo whole life yuh kin keep from em! They take yo
lan! They take yo freedom! They take yo women! N then they takes yo life!' . . .
'Ahm gonna be hard like they is! So hep me, Gawd, Ah'm gonna be hard! When they come fer me Ah'm gonna be here! N when they git me outta here theys gonna know Ahm gone! . . . Yuh die ef yuh fight! Yuh die ef yuh don fight!

Either way yuh die n it don mean nothin . . .' (152)

The "hardness" of which Silas speaks harkens back not only to the kind of military masculinity fleshed out in Morrison's *Sula*, but also, in this context, enables the equation of black masculinity with white masculinity. "Hard like they is" means that Silas will mirror the phallic power he associates with white masculinity and, in this moment of sameness, Silas can be reassured of his sheer difference from white men altogether. His final words in the above quotation signal his transformation from oppressed subject to a soldiering subject. In the same way that Mann, in "Down by the Riverside," risks the last moments of his life for a chance to escape (preferring to die than be killed), Silas, too, has been pushed to the limits -- if he is going to die, he might as well go out fighting.

Sarah keeps her eye on the house from her hiding place in the fields as "white men with pistols" surround the house (154). Silas shoots at least two white men before one crawls beneath the house with a can of gasoline and lights the house on fire. Sarah watches as the house burns, waiting for Silas to emerge, but he never does. Instead, the house collapses in on him, leaving only a "black chimney loom[ing] amid crumbling wood" (156).

"Long Black Song," then, returns to the paradigm of the black one-man militia. Only, in this story, Silas acts out what Big Boy and Mann can only fantasize. Silas takes up arms to defend his land, his freedom, his woman, and his life (152). "Long Black Song" pairs Silas with the "real" soldier of WWI, Tom, who is, ironically, available to the
reader only through Sarah, as a memory, an absence. Wright splits the figure of black male soldier into two: 1) Tom, overseas, and possibly dead, fighting in the name of a nation that houses someone like 2) Silas, the self-appointed soldier of his own, personal army, who takes up arms to destroy the threat of the white lynch mob. The "black chimney" that stands up from the collapsed debris of the house, thus signifies doubly: 1) the black phallus, the "hardness" that Silas so desires, remains in spite of the destruction of the black home and/or 2) the black phallus standing alone suggests a metaphoric l lynching and castration, the "black chimney" functioning as the severed remains of the "culturally abject" black one-man-militia.

The one-man militia of the first three stories in Wright's collection disappears in "Fire and Cloud," and is replaced with a small-town counter-movement of "the people" (210). "Fire and Cloud" follows the Reverend Dan Taylor as he tries to negotiate the demands of his starving all-black congregation, local officials and the police, and the "Red" organizers of a planned demonstration (a march through town which would protest the denial of food and resources to poor whites and blacks). On the evening prior to the march, Taylor is kidnapped outside his home by several white men, taken to the outskirts of town, tied to a tree, and whipped until his body is "one sheet of pain . . . leaping, jumping, blazing in his flesh" (201).

At the beginning of the story, Taylor refuses to commit to either the Reds or the white politicians and officers of the law. Instead, he shuttles back and forth between the two (literally, in the space of his own home, between the parlor and the Bible room). Taylor's thinking at this point in the story circles around his position as the representative of his congregation, and his reluctance to commit is influenced by his worry that, if he
lends his name to the demonstration, white authority figures will refuse to grant him (and those who he represents) any kind of small amount of political opportunity. At the beginning of the story, Taylor stands as the part that represents the whole. However, after the white men’s brutal whipping, this relationship changes. As the various parts of his body bleed “fire,” Taylor realizes that his representative singularity means nothing unless it is thought of in terms of a collective resistance: “Wes gotta think erbout the people, night n day, think erbout em so hard tha out po selves is forgotten . . . Whut they suffer is whut Ah suffered las night when they whipped me. Wes gotta keep the people wid us” (211). Here, Taylor begins to allow the whole to represent him as a part it.

Political power switches from singular representation to collective representation:

They ast me t tell yuh not to march, an Ah tol em Ah wouldn’t. Then they beat me. They tied me t a tree n beat me until Ah couldn’t feel no mo. They beat me cause Ah wouldn’t tell yuh not t ast fer bread. They said yuhd believe everything Ah said. All the time they wuz helpin me, all the time they been givin me favors, they wuz doin it sos they could tell me t tell yuh how t ack!

(217)

At the end of the story, then, Taylor does join the march to City Hall, gathering strength from the power of the masses: “he wondered what was about to happen; he wondered without fear; as though whatever would or could happen could not hurt this many-limbed, many legged, many-handed crowd that was he” (219). The body of the singular, black one-man militia in the stories previous to this one is thus transposed onto the body of the masses, the formation of a counter-mob, one that guards and protects even as it publicly courts the violence of the state against which it demonstrates. “Fire and Cloud” sheds the
image of a black man with a gun, picking off whites one-by-one as they come after him, and, instead, reconfigures black rage in the formation of a political body -- poor blacks, whites, and Reds; a many-limbed, many-legged, many-handed crowd -- that threatens the security of the white state in its power to represent itself as a kind of counter-national movement.

The collective body of Red resistance, however, splinters under the pressure of the white state in the final story in *Uncle Tom's Children*, “Bright and Morning Star.” Told from the point of view of Sue, this story returns to the threat of lynching in the rural South, but replaces the young black one-man militia with an elderly black woman. Sue’s son, Johnny-Boy, heads a local chapter of the Communist Party, and comes to find out that he is being hunted by the white sheriff and his posse for organizing poor whites and blacks into a resistance group. After Johnny-Boy leaves the shack in which he and his mother live, the sheriff and several white men barge into this home and demand that Sue tell where Johnny has gone. Even though she is beaten until unconscious, Sue resists. When she awakens, Sue finds Booker, a white man who recently joined the party, standing over her. Booker coaxes Sue into telling him the names of other party members, so that he can, supposedly, go warn them about what’s happening to Johnny-Boy (who, by this point, has been apprehended by the white police force). Booker, however, is not a member of the CP, but an infiltrator, working for the sheriff. Realizing her mistake too late, Sue takes Johnny-Boy’s gun, wraps it in a sheet, and heads out to where a gathering white mob watches while the police beat Johnny-Boy.

Arriving on the scene, Sue deftly performs the role of an “aunty” who has innocently come to reclaim the body of her boy.
‘Yuh don need that sheet. Yo son ain dead yit,’ [the sheriff] said, reaching towards her.

She backed away, her eyes wide.

‘Naw!’

‘Now, lissen, Anty!’ he said. ‘There ain no use in yuh ackin a fool! Go in there n tell tha nigger son of yos t tell us whos in this wid im, see? Ah promise we won kill im if he talks.’ (357)

The events that follow this performance of ‘foolishness’ underscore the political commitment Sue has to the collective survival of the Red movement. Sue watches, wordlessly, as the sheriff commands his officers to break Johnny’s legs, then “split his eardrums” (259-60). When Booker, the white informant, breathlessly bursts in with the information he wheedled out of Sue, Sue lifts the gun and shoots him through the head, much to the shock of the white mob surrounding her. The police then shoot Johnny and finally shoot Sue herself. Sue’s last words, “Yuh didn git whut yuh wanted! N yuh ain gonna never git it!” place her squarely in the paradigm of the black one-man militia, only, in this final story, this singular militant act is carried about by a woman.

Like *Sula*, both *Cane* and *Uncle Tom’s Children* remind readers of the power that lynching narratives have in texts written by and about African Americans in the first half of the twentieth century. In both texts, the guardianship and protection of the black body -- specifically the black male body -- from the hands of a white mob means delineating the archetypal figures that accompany the construction of black male subjectivity to begin with. Both Toomer and Wright work with the overlapping narratives of white women’s sexual purity, the status of black men as second-class or non-citizens, the power of or
denial of power to black women, and the state-sanctioned violence of the all-male white mob. Whereas the two pieces I examine from Toomer's text present the reader with the horrors of Southern lynching, and end there. Wright’s text imagines the political possibilities of black resistance from the violent to the peaceful, the singular to the collective, the black masculine to the black feminist, and the fantastic to the enacted. Wright’s stories, as a whole, reject the archetypal “Uncle Tom” referenced in the title, and imagines, instead, “Children,” descendants, who refuse a classic American construction of African American subjectivity as docile. No longer cast as sentimental and harmless objects of delight, there for the amusement or comfort of white Americans, the black men and women in Wright’s text operate according to the logic of battle, arming themselves against a white nation that believes it can continue to participate in or ignore the problem of racial and class oppression and violence which troubles America’s interior.

The “one-man black militia” I have been describing in the work of Richard Wright returns in Wright’s most famous novel, Native Son (1940). Again, Wright’s fiction works with racial and racist paradigms regarding black men only to thwart any easy collapse of that subject position into the standard narrative opposition of the childlike, docile Uncle Tom and the bestial black male rapist. Drawing once more from the horrors of lynching, Wright’s story about the hunting down of an impoverished black man accused of raping and murdering a rich white woman ends not with a burning at the stake, but rather takes the reader inside the prisons and the courts to suggest that, even if Bigger Thomas is not hung, castrated, burned, and shot by an unruly, southern, white mob who has taken the law into its own hands, the ingrained beliefs of white supremacy that
lead to such a violent destruction of the black male body also infiltrate the legal system on a national scale.
7 How to Read the National Guard (Wright and Faulkner)

This chapter contrasts Wright's *Native Son* with William Faulkner's *Light in August*, paying particular attention to the way in which both novels narrate the South's relation to the nation. Each novel contains a scene in which the National Guard enters into highly charged moments of racial tension. The various kinds of guardedness I have already grappled with in *Sula, Cane*, and *Uncle Tom's Children* turn up in these two novels as a modern military force comprised of citizen-soldiers. By reading the ways in which both novels treat the presence of the National Guard, I close down this section's investigation of how texts manage national and southern legal and extra-legal disciplinary action and its effect on the construction of African American male subjectivity.

Representations of the National Guard, as a modern military force, appear in both Richard Wright's *Native Son* (1940) and William Faulkner's *Light in August* (1932). By contrasting the ways that both of these novels make use of the National Guard to tell their stories, I hope to speak to the question of how region and nation might (not) fit together and explore the idea that, in both novels, the "National Guard" functions as a metaphor for regional violence and its national impact.

*What is the National Guard?*

To guard is not only to protect, but also to be on the lookout, to prevent the transgression of borders. The job of the National Guard, then, is to redraw official
borders in times of national crisis, to delimit where the nation begins and where it ends. At times, the Guard literally forms a line or wall or soldiers, physically embodying a national border that cannot be crossed (evident in the very first deployment of the National Guard in March 1916, when troops, literally, lined the U.S.-Mexico border to guard against another invasion by Pancho Villa). Perhaps the most infamous bodying forth of national lines by the Guard in recent history occurred in May 1970, at Kent State University in Ohio. The Kent State Massacre, as it is historically known, took place on May 4, and involved approximately twelve members of the Ohio National Guard, who fired sixty-seven shots in thirteen seconds at a crowd of demonstrators protesting the U.S. invasion of Cambodia and the presence of ROTC on campus. The division, in this case, between what officially constitutes the nation and its internal Other could not be more clear-cut. The Guard effectively dispersed the crowd of campus- and local-anti-war protesters by using military force. In a moment of state-sanctioned violence, campus demonstrators served to represent the foreign enemy/other in the local bodies of resistant American citizens. After temporarily (four days, to be exact) occupying the campus and claiming the area as a site of national insecurity, the Ohio National Guard was able to officially re-draw the lines of the nation by excising its disruptive, internal other. Four students were killed, nine were wounded.\textsuperscript{12}

Scholars familiar with military history or the history of lynching in the United States know, perhaps, that the National Guard was regularly called in to \textit{prevent} lynching during the early part of the twentieth century. In fact, the National Guard, as we know it today, is pretty much a twentieth-century invention. Histories of American militias report that it was not until 1903, with the passing of the Dick Act, that what were considered to
be worthless state militia units were reorganized into and professionally trained as the army's first line of reserves. The National Defense Act of 1916 federalized the National Guard and provided an intensive training for military officers as well as civilians. Members of the National Guard were simultaneously enlisted in both the federal and state National Guard (each state having its own National Guard), thus creating double identities for their white recruits: he who is both civilian and soldier, with an understanding of defense at both the local and national level. Historically, the National Guard not only enacts a militant patrolling of national geographic borders, but also represents a symbolic modernization of how white male citizens might conceive of themselves as belonging to a set of states which are united and protected by internal military discipline.

I specifically mark members of the early formations of the National Guard above as “white” to emphasize the way in which Jim Crow laws prevented blacks from joining the ranks of the newly articulated civilian-soldier. Once again, I turn to Lt. Lanning’s history of the African American soldier to explain how, just as black soldiers were segregated from whites in the formation of troops for battle in WWI, blacks also realized fewer opportunities to serve in the state militia -- now known as the National Guard. Both the military and the state governments defined the Militia Act of 1903 as limiting federal control of the National Guard. All agreed that the racial composition of the National Guard remained a state prerogative, and as a result, many state units no longer accepted blacks. By the time the United States entered World War I in 1917, the National Guard contained only five thousand African Americans, less than three percent of its total . . . No
black unit or black man served in the National Guard of any of the Deep South states. (102)

Therefore, although blacks did make up "less than three percent" of the National Guard, the logic of white supremacy determined that those soldiers who would embody the nation would remain, uniformly, white ones -- an important distinction to make when considering the presence of the National Guard in *Native Son* and *Light in August*.

*American Nationalism and Black Nationalism*

Both Wright and Faulkner place the National Guard at the ends of their novels. In *Native Son*, the presence of the National Guard is less dramatic than in *Light in August* (Percy Grimm shoots and castrates Joe Christmas in the name of the "State national guard") but equally as important (and more historically accurate). Just before Bigger Thomas is sentenced to death for the rape and murder of the daughter of his upper class white employers, a newspaper is delivered to his Cook County jail cell in Chicago. The *Tribune* runs an article with the headline "TROOPS GUARD NEGRO KILLER'S TRIAL" and "PROTECT RAPIST FROM MOB ACTION" (365). The article tells Bigger, the "Negro Killer" and "Rapist" of the headlines, that the state governor "ordered two regiments of the Illinois National Guard to keep public peace during [his] trial" (365).

Before reading Wright's use of the National Guard as a metaphor, recall, for a moment, Wright's essay, "How Bigger Was Born." This Introductory essay to the novel magnifies the complicated connection between Southern race relations, violence, and the imagined community of a larger "America." In it, Wright makes visible the historical
conditions that shape "Bigger Thomas" as a signifier. The essay acts as a historical, geographical, and ideological map, tracing how and where "Bigger" emerges: in particularized locales (Jackson, Mississippi [434]), general regions (the "Jim Crow South" [436]), and finally as a part of a larger national imaginary, what Wright calls the "lurid American scene" [443]. Wright's analysis of southern racial relations -- black struggle against write rules and restrictions -- takes a turn when he moves north, to Chicago, leading him to claim that "the Southern scheme of oppression was but an appendage of a far vaster and in many respects more ruthless and impersonal commodity-profit machine" (441). Bigger is not simply a southern character who can be traced to Wright's youth, but rather "an American product, a native son of this land" (446). Wright tells us that it was only once he moved to Chicago that he was able to feel free enough to put pen to page, and that he also discovered "the possibility of alliances between the American Negro and other people possessing a kindred consciousness" (441).

Eventually, Wright comes to think of Bigger as a figure who transcends racial and national boundaries: "Bigger in America and Bigger in Nazi Germany and Bigger in Old Russia. All Bigger Thomases, white and black, felt tense, afraid, nervous, hysterical, restless" (446). But because of the limitations placed on black men living in America but not as Americans, Bigger Thomas must, for Wright, be conceived of as one who is caught up in "snarled and confused nationalist feelings" (451); his is "a representative symbol of the Negro's uncertain position in America" (455). In "How Bigger Was Born," then, Wright explains to his reader how regional borders become blurred, how the regionally specific (the Jim Crow South) translates into both national and international terms and then back again. The Bigger Thomases of America, Wright argues, are looking for a
"nation, a flag, an army of our own;" they express a desire to join together in ranks, military style, and yet cannot because American individualism prevents collective solidarity, and therefore only fosters a sense of interiorized anger, hatred, and resentment (445). It is interesting to me, in terms of regionalist and nationalist paradigms, that Wright does not return Bigger to the South where he was "born," but rather places him squarely in the center of the Nation, a signifier of "American life . . . a prophecy of our future" (447).

In Native Son, Bigger Thomas's knowledge of the National Guard arrives to him in mediated form: he reads about their presence in a newspaper delivered to his jail cell. From a mediated distance, Bigger discovers that he is a national subject. But for Bigger, there does not exist what Lauren Berlant calls the "state prophylaxis," an "identification with state disembodiment" which will "suppress or deflect" his corporeal excess ("National" 112-14). Instead, the narrator tells us, Bigger "would not mind dying now if he could only find out what this meant, what he was in relation to all the others that lived, and the earth upon which he stood. Was there some battle everybody was fighting and he had missed it? And if he had missed it, were not the whites to blame for it?" (363). The National Guard is called in, supposedly, to prevent the increasingly roiled white mob from lynching him, to prevent the reproduction of a typically southern extra-legal disciplinary practice. But Wright stresses for the reader, time and again, that Bigger is already caught in a system of guards who come and go: guards who stand in front of his door, guards who hand him trays of food or newspapers, guards who open and close doors, guards who walk with him to the courthouse, guards who lurk inside the courthouse itself.
The irony here is that Bigger is not, ultimately, a national subject or "generic person" in need of protection. Rather, he functions to guarantee the nation of its own disembodied citizenship. He acts as the Other body: the black male body of violent disruption, the black male body on the loose, the black male body without an interior, the black male body reduced to a beastly killer, the black male body who stands for all black male bodies everywhere. Bigger represents a national problem that must be dealt with legally. The National Guard, in effect, does not so much guard Bigger as much as they guard the ideological apparatuses which keep racial and class struggles in check: prison, police, court house, media, and the public sphere represented as saturated by white citizenry. Perhaps this is why there is never any direct contact between Bigger and the National Guard. The closest Bigger can get to the Guardians of the Nation is by looking at them out through a window, a narrative detail of spatial distance which is crucial for understanding how Wright figures black male subjectivity. Bigger "catches a quick glimpse of a vast crowd of people standing behind closely formed lines of khaki-clad troops" as he is moved from his jail cell to the court room (367).

Thus, when the National Guard shows up to prevent Bigger Thomas from being lynched, the text calls into question whose national interests are being guarded. If the National Guard draws and re-draws national borders as it forms lines of protection around site-specific areas, then it seems that, in Native Son, Bigger is under "guard" only so that the nation can cordon off its own internal difference from itself. The National Guard, at least in Wright's novel, is more interested in the protection of those institutions that politically represent the white mob gathered outside. For Wright, the National Guard is less a guardianship of an oppressed body in need of protection, and more a guardianship
of the white mob itself, making sure the white mob does not transgress legally sanctioned forms of governance. For the white masses to enter into and disrupt the smooth functioning of the prison and the court would be to call into question the abstraction of the citizen into the public sphere and the point, for Wright, is to expose the hypocrisy of how and why certain bodies are guarded against, while others are guarded in the name of national citizenship.

National Guard or White One-Man Southern Lynch Mob?

Written eight years prior to Native Son, Faulkner's Light in August also tells the story of surplus embodiment in the figure of the racially ambiguous Joe Christmas, whose death scene describes how his "pent black blood . . . rush[es] out of his pale body like the rush of sparks from a rising rocket" (465). Who, exactly, is responsible for the evacuation of Joe Christmas's bloody interior? Percy Grimm, "captain in the State national guard," he who has been "saved" by the "new military civilian act" of 1916 (449-50).¹⁶

Faulkner tells the reader that, prior to his enlistment in the Guard, Grimm "was like a man who had been for a long time in a swamp, in the dark . . . lazy, recalcitrant, without ambition" (450-1). Membership in the Guard, we are told, opens up a path for Grimm. He is "freed now of ever again having to think or decide" and "the burden he now assumed and carried [is] as bright and weightless and martial as his insignatory brass" (451). This unencumbered, disembodied abstraction is, for the new citizen-soldier, a distinctly American identity, one tied to "a belief that the white race is superior to any and all other races and that the American is superior to all other white races and the American uniform is superior to all men" (451). Here, Faulkner makes explicit the split
between the "national subject" and the "national body." Faulkner traces the same route Wright will trace in "How 'Bigger' Was Born" only with a different effect. Grimm transforms from the "suffering," young Southern white male who "wants to tell it, to open his heart to someone" into a new, more powerful nationally identified male (450). Grimm speaks of "the law" and "the nation" in order to organize a local militia, and tells members of the town's American Legion that they must wear their uniforms so that the rest of the townspeople "can see that Uncle Sam is present in more than spirit" (435). As a result, Grimm's patriotic purpose, to police every move of Joe Christmas (who is already under lock and key), spreads like wildfire in the town of Jefferson. Soon enough, "without knowing they were thinking about it, the town had suddenly accepted Grimm with respect and perhaps a little awe and a deal of actual faith and confidence, as though somehow his vision and patriotism and pride in that town . . . had been quicker and truer than theirs" (456-7). Thus Percy Grimm, a National Guard of ONE, not only transforms this local Southern region into a site of national pride (a site in which he will "protect . . . America and Americans" [454]), but also collapses the difference between the supposedly peacekeeping National Guard and the anarchic formation of a southern white lynch mob. In the end, Percy Grimm, in the name of the National Guard and in the name of America (but NOT the South), fires five shots into the body of the escaped Joe Christmas and castrates him, "flinging behind him the bloody butcher knife," exclaiming "Now you'll leave white women alone, even in hell" (464).
Notes to Introduction

1 While it incorporates regionally-identified writers and critics from the U.S. (Sarah Orne Jewett and Eudora Welty), Dainotto's study of regionalism is, for the most part, international in scope, reading texts from the U.S. in conjunction with Basque regionalism and literature of the Lake District in England. See Dainotto.

2 For a look at how critics grapple with subject position and overlapping subject positions, see Wiegman and Roof, *Who Can Speak?*.

3 See Fetterley and Pryse.

4 For an excellent response to Dainotto's work, see Comer.

5 I am indebted to Jennifer Rae Greeson's article, "The Figure of the South and the Nationalizing Imperatives of Early United States Literature" for instructing me how to think about the nation-south relation. Greeson's article focuses on the development of the U.S. from colony to nation in the early Republic, and brilliantly proves that the South figuratively existed in early national literature as "the residual coloniality within the nation itself" (239). For more on the South as a figure opposed to the nation during the Confederation period, see Greeson.

6 For more on the way in which the national body functions in contemporary American culture, see Berlant, *Queen*.

7 I thank Shannon Leonard for this intriguing example.

8 See White for a full description of the difference between "synecdoche" and "metonymy."

9 I borrow the reading of synecdoche as a dialectical relation between part, whole, and
hole from Lee Edelman's "The Part for the (W)hole," an essay which examines how "synecdoche informs, at every level, the discourse through which 'race' finds articulation within the white-dominated structures of social control, so it governs as well the visual logic to which the fiction of 'race' itself refers: the logic that specifies personhood through reference to a skin whose 'color' must submit to interpretation as, for example, black or white, though each of those labels is itself a crude and patently untenable synecdoche of pigmentation" (45). While Edelman's is an analysis of phallic power, black masculinity, castration anxiety, gender difference, and homosexuality, I think the gendered terms which structure his argument carry over to my own analysis of the United States and the South. See Edelman.

10 Work done on the southern grotesque tends to take scholarship in a direction which does not follow my own. For an overview of such work, see Lawson, Spiegel, Kolek, and Barnes. For a more intellectually challenging take on the southern grotesque and disability studies, see Frega and Craft. For more on the interconnectedness of the grotesque, abjection, and the uncanny, see Russo.

11 See Bakhtin.

12 As almost all critics who work with the grotesque point out, the term is derived from the Italian la grottesca and il grottesco, and refers to cave (grotto) paintings from fifteenth-century Pompeii and Herculaneum. These paintings depict figures whose ambiguity turns around the blurring of categories between human, animal, and plant forms.

13 I want to point out that I don’t buy Cassuto’s argument, but mention him to establish the way in which the grotesque does, indeed, have intellectual capital in a market
saturated by studies of the body and racial politics.
Notes to Chapters One and Two

1 There is more to be said about the geographical ties of each Presidential candidate. Bush's continuous comparison of the state of Texas to the nation at large, as well as his epithetical naming of Gore as a "D.C. politician" supposedly functioned to replace one synecdoche with another. In Bush's logic, D.C. represents corrupt or scandalous Clintonian politics, but Texas signifies the more generic American people. Gore's home state of Tennessee did not carry the same kind of political weight as Texas, leaving Gore to talk more about his role as Vice President of the nation, rather than a regionally marked southerner.


3 As Sedgwick implies, contemporary cultural readings of the polluted body or polluted blood in the late-twentieth century certainly must take into consideration the way in which HIV/AIDS has changed common-sense understandings of what blood is and how we make sense of it as a vital, interior fluid. Given the early-1980s emergence of "GRID" (Gay Related Immunodeficiency) and, later that same decade, HIV/AIDS, "blood" now has ties to sexual minorities and I.V. drug users. From menstrual flow to the one-drop rule, the concept of polluted blood has always had ties to cultural taboos and essential identities, continuing to signify both gender and racial differences. For more on culture and the difference between pollution of blood and pollution by blood, see Douglas.

4 For more on Buck v. Bell and the politics of class, gender, and birth control, see Lurie, 83-94, 103-118.

5 There is no material evidence that Laughlin ever even met Carrie Buck. Laughlin's
connection not only to Virginia's "act to Preserve Racial Integrity" (1924) but also to Nazi Germany's 1935 Nuremberg Laws is profoundly eerie. See Smith and Nelson, 170, 182-184.

6 See Dyer for a full-length study which elaborates the connection between the aesthetics of cinematography and racial whiteness. See also hooks, Wray and Newitz. For a comprehensive treatment of the "southern poor white" as a stock character in white U.S. literature, see Cook.

7 For a fuller history of American eugenics, see Haller and Hasian.

8 See Rafter.

9 For a comprehensive list of human "traits" with which eugenic researchers had to be familiar, see Davenport. For a thorough historical treatment of the eugenics movement in the early-twentieth century United States, see Pickens.

10 For another look at the way in which race and abjection intertwine in twentieth-century fiction, specifically of African American male authors, see Reid-Pharr.

11 See Douglas for a more complete understanding of how cultural contamination, taboo, and notions of cleanliness obtain anthropological importance.

12 Kristeva's work provides a starting point from which to think about the social and/or political function of abjection. More recently, Judith Butler argues that "the abject designates ... those 'unlivable' and 'uninhabitable' zones of social life which are nevertheless densely populated by those who do not enjoy the status of the subject" (3). See most helpfully Butler's footnote, which reminds us that "[a]bjection literally means to cast off, away, or out" (243). For Butler, abjection carries with it a sense of agency: "I want to propose that certain abject zones within sociality also deliver this [psychotic]
threat, constituting zones of uninhabitability which a subject fantasizes as threatening its own integrity with the prospect of psychic dissolution ('I would rather die than do or be that!!')" (243). For other articulations of abjection and its relation to texts, bodies, and cultures, see Thomas, Round Table, and Foster.

13 For a detailed analysis of Caldwell's "politics of the grotesque," see Cook, 64-84.

14 For more on the connection between the Southern grotesque and "mystery," see O'Connor, 40-41.

15 Similar stories are told in Caldwell's God's Little Acre (1933) and in James Agee and Walker Percy Evans's more experimental, photo-journalistic Let Us Now Praise Famous Men (1939).

16 Hurston's interest in writing about the white rural poor of Florida stemmed not only from a desire to "break the rules" concerning blacks writing only about blacks, nor to merely "pander to white readers" (as Hazel V. Carby suggests), but to put into fiction a working knowledge of the way in which certain whites were being characterized in eugenic anthropological studies. Thematic similarities between Hurston's fictional and anthropological work and eugenic family studies suggest a broader cultural overlap that one might not immediately suspect. For example, working under Franz Boas, Hurston spent time gathering measurements of black bodies (skulls, specifically) in Harlem in the late-1920s. But it is the research and writing which Hurston did in Florida, under the New Deal's Federal Writers' Project, which most strongly links Hurston with the white trash narratives of eugenicists. As John Lowe explains, "Although Hurston certainly knew some Crackers when she was growing up, her most intense scrutiny of this group came much later, after she had become both a practicing folklorist and novelist
accustomed to noting the intricacies of sociological and anthropological detail as a member of the Federal Writers' Project in 1938-39" (265). In her collection of Hurston's FWP writings, Pam Bordelon also argues that "[t]he massive FWP research engine supplied background material for Hurston's last novel, Seraph on the Suwanee, a seminal connection that has never been established. Indeed, the connection between Hurston's FWP experience and Seraph is so complete that one can find passages where Hurston lifted sentences from her FWP field notes and placed them in the mouths of her novel's characters" (x).* Hurston's direct involvement with the documentation and study of Florida Crackers from an anthropological perspective stands in mimetic relation to descriptive accounts of the "cacogenic" authorized in ERO reports. For more on "why" Hurston wrote a novel about whites, see Carby. For more on Hurston and her work with Franz Boas, see Hemenway (63, 88). For Boas' relation to the politics of eugenics, see Hasian (60, 110) and Pickens (especially 173-74). For more on Hurston and the FWP, see Bordelon Go as well as Bordelon "New."

17 For an overview of Seraph's critical reception see St. Clair.

18 See the close readings and contextualization's in duCille, Plant, and Lowe.

19 For an excellent re-reading of the theoretical complexities of Hurston's non-conformity and her vision of "community," see Kawash.

20 Claudia Tate reminds scholars of the importance psychoanalysis had for Harlem Renaissance writers and reads Seraph in conjunction with Freud. See Tate.

21 For a more comprehensive account of these charges, see Hemenway. Note especially the language of abjection that creeps into Hurston's devastated letters (321-22).

* See Bakhtin. For a specific connection between the grotesque body and the female
body, see Russo.

22 It should also be pointed out that this name is also possibly a pun, suggesting that the child is not going to be the royal patriarch's golden boy, but rather that he will exist in a more mediocre position in the family's "nobility" (as "earl" is to "marquis").

23 I have chosen to by-pass any mention of Earl's death, the result of a neighborhood hunt for him in the swamps which surround Arvay and Jim's home. The hunt for Earl follows Earl's attempted rape of one of the Meserve's neighbors, Lucy Ann Corregio. While this essay does not treat the significance of the Portuguese American Corregio family in relation to the racial politics of the novel, it is interesting to note that Arvay struggles with an attempt to racialize this family. The arrival of the Corregio family on the Meserve property angers Arvay, because Jim had not told her of their "ethnic touch:" "Jim had said that they were white folks, but the man turned out to be a Portuguese, and his name was Corregio. That made them foreigners, and no foreigners were ever quite white to Arvay. Real white people talked English and without any funny sounds to it" (120, emphasis added). The irony of this discourse of nationalist racial purity is, of course, that Arvay herself is ashamed of her "funny sounding" English, particularly evident when she and Jim travel to the University of Gainesville to see Kenny perform as drum-major for the band: "[Arvay] felt awkward and out of place. Listening to the people around her, she became terribly conscious of her way of speech. She hated to open her mouth for fear of making a balk, and putting her children to shame" (209-10). Still, later in the novel, Arvay returns to this "not quite" theory of whiteness: "Felicia (Corregio) and her mother were nothing but heathen idolaters, and not to be treated white. Arvay proceeded to set up images of them among the African savages and heathen Chinee. They were not
fellow-humans, they were nothing of the kind" (242).

34 The anal metonymies at work in the entire new porch/constipation chapter are manifold. The description of the porch as that which is "stunning[ly] new" and difficult for Arvay to get used to combines with a language of relaxation. We are told that Arvay "never sat down unless Jim insisted, and then she did not lean back in the deep, comfortable chairs" but that "[i]t got easier every time she tried it" (234). Once Arvay takes to the porch, the narrator tells us that "[i]t built Arvay up and made her feel more inside of things. It was kind of a throne room . . ." (234). Arvay's initial resistance to upper-class leisure and comfort takes on a kind of toilet-training narrative, in which her stubbornness finally dissolves once she discovers the ease of enjoyment.

34 Arvay's otherness within the Sawley community materializes so that she is both unlike other whites and, to a degree, more like blacks. Throughout Seraph, music is associated with African American culture -- Kenny's apprenticeship under Joe Kelsey assures us of this. Arvay's "great interest and . . . quick ability" (9) to master the organ sets her apart from the rest of the white community in Sawley, and marks her as more like blacks than whites. More to the point, Arvay's religious fervor at the novel's beginning is labelled as "excessive," and the narrator tells us that "[e]xcessive ceremonies were things that Negroes went in for. White folks just didn't go on like that" (4). The point here is not to read Arvay as a substitute black character, but rather to shed light upon the way in which Arvay's own behavior does not exist in an isolated, pure white space which has been passed down from generation to generation, but rather that there exists more cultural overlap than she might suspect. If Arvay is like blacks it is not simply that she was born that way, but that there is a strong cultural connection which allows for it.
More can be said about the term "Cracker" in Joe's joke. The disruption of Joe's speech, the replacement of "Cracker" with "a white man from back in the woods," signifies the political weight of the term. The fact that Joe cannot fully articulate the epithet signifies a quasi-danger in its usage. Joe obviously knows that "Cracker" cannot be spoken in front of Jim and Arvay, yet his readiness to use the term shows that it would not be the first time he has referred to the Meserves (or other poor whites) as "Crackers."

If the term "cracker" implies both white supremacist and white trash, then perhaps this struck Hurston as comic: if Arvay, the Hensons, Earl, and even Jim are "crackers" to Joe Kelsey, are they racist rednecks or white morons? For a full history of the term, see Otto.

In light of more political feminist criticism, Kristeva's theory of the maternal seems dated and, perhaps, damaging to contemporary discourses about women's bodies. Yet I invoke Kristeva here (and throughout this essay) to show how Hurston's writing makes use of a similar poetics of the "horrific" Mother -- a poetics Kristeva finds in the work of Freud, in modernist writers such as Louis-Ferdinand Celine, and in Biblical texts such as Leviticus and portions of the New Testament. Hurston's writing of the white maternal body anticipates Kristeva, only Hurston's connection between the mother and abjection is more deeply concerned with racial and class politics.

Arvay's "my husband says" speech uncannily echoes the following passage from Henry Herbert Goddard's largely popular 1912 The Kallikak Family: A Study in the Heredity of Feeble-mindedness: "A study of [bad heredity] will help to account for the conviction we have that no amount of work in the slums or removing the slums from our cities will ever be successful until we take care of those who make the slums what they are . . . If all of the slum districts of our cities were removed to-morrow and model tenements built in
their places, we would still have slums in a week’s time, because we have these mentally
defective people we can never be taught to live otherwise than as they have been living”
(70-1). Arvay’s ideas about slums and mansions regurgitates this eugenic theory of
poverty. The close connection between Goddard’s study and Arvay’s speech once again
shows the way in which eugenic family studies overlap with Hurston’s story.

Not to say that the metaphor of bodily expulsion is over with for Arvay, but that the
abject horror of letting things go has settled into a kind of easy contentment. Rather than
thinking of motherhood as an excremental or excrementalizing process, Arvay can,
instead, think of motherhood as a process through which she comes to know the world
and make sense of its difficult binaries. The chapter in which Arvay ponders the "many
mysteries" "buried and hidden in human flesh" attests to this resolution (350).

I choose to focus on the language of excorporation here, but it is also important to think
about the language of "picking over" in the same passage. When Jim rapes Arvay under
the mulberry tree at the beginning of the novel, the act sharpens the focus of class and
gender power relations. To re-quote, Jim "smiled as he picked a dead leaf and bits of
trash out of the back of her head” (53). Throughout the novel, Arvay meditates in order
to "pick herself over inside" (35). However at this point in the text, after the rape, we see
that it is Jim who picks trash off of Arvay’s body, thus signifying his rape as a violent
imposition of class values and patriarchal dominance, implicitly accompanied and
explained by the logic of purification. That Arvay sits under the mulberry tree to watch
the conflagration and to "pick herself over inside" possibly demonstrates that while she
can burn the site of her economic and familial oppression, Arvay is still bound to the site
of her gender oppression. The novel eventually finds Arvay back together with Jim, and
finally happy. Arvay's romantic return to Jim closes and resolves the romance plot, problematically smoothing over the gap or rupture that is signified by Arvay's rape. For a more complex reading of rape in *Seraph*, see DuCille, Plant, and Lowe.

While the constipation-laxative scene after the porch certainly thrusts anality at the reader, it is not the only scene in which anality (and, by implication, the asshole) figures prominently. Arvay and Jim's first marital argument takes place in bed, as Arvay reads the biblical story of Cain and Abel. Jim insists that Cain had "no sense of humor" and that he "was so chuckle-headed that he couldn't even take a joke" (66). Much to Arvay's horror, Jim proceeds to theorize that "[Cain] never would have got into all that trouble if he could have seen a joke. He never would have up and scorched a stinking, rotten cabbage under God's nose for no sacrifice. Common sense ought to have told him God wouldn't stand for him stinking up Heaven and all like that. How come he couldn't have made God a nice cool salad and took it to Him?" (66). Arvay is shocked to hear Jim "mock" the Bible in such a way, and refuses to sleep with him that night. However, the subtext here about jokes and stinking cabbages under God's nose implies an integration of anality in an otherwise pristine text; the fact that Jim and Arvay have a "battle which raged and roiled" suggests passion (in some form) has erupted from the discussion of anal metonymies in bed. More clearly, at the novel's close, Arvay (finally) makes an anal joke of her own. When Carl Middleton pays an uninvited visit to Arvay in her hotel, he complains to her about injuries which took place on the Henson property (in an attempt to weasel some money out of Arvay). Arvay insists that Carl tell her where he is hurt on his body, and Carl replies, "I been trying to treat you like a lady. Where I'm hurt at ain't to be exposed in public . . . it's my behind, and could be inside injuries besides for all I know . . .
. I guess now you want me to show it to you" (292). Arvay quips, "Nope . . . My Mama always told me not to look on backlands . . . I'm in no way responsible, but if you're in as bad a fix as you say, I can tell you something might good for a case like that. Get hold of some mutton tallow, then melt it together with some teppentime and grease yourself good back there" (292). Arvay publicly humiliates Carl in the hotel, but seems unaware that she is making a joke, "But I ain't joking. It really is mighty healing. Takes the soreness right out. I keep it on hand all the time" (292). The point here is that Arvay is able to articulate her relation to her own behind -- how to care for it when it is sore, how to grease it when it needs lubrication -- so that while Hurston does not need to come out and say "asshole" (just as Arvay does not need to see Carl's in order to know whether it is healthy or injured) it is clear to the reader that Arvay is an expert at this orifice's care.
Notes to Chapters Three and Four

1 Cal Thomas makes the argument that a gendered symbolic economy encodes invisible semen as "essential, rational, and masculine" and visible semen as "excremental, irrational, feminine" (60).

2 Class divisions further corporealize Southern white masculinity, associating poor and/or rural white men of the South with perversion, disease, idiocy, accident, poverty, and waste.

3 For more on the Progressive Movement, see Leutchtenburg and Harrison.

4 For readings of gender and O'Connor, see Reesman, Gentry, and Giannone.

5 See, for example, Nelson for work on manhood and citizenship from the Revolutionary War to the 1850s, Thomas on masculinity and writing during the era of modernism, and Jeffords on masculinity and the later-twentieth century.

6 This is not to say that white women and men and women of color, in particular African American men and women, did little to contribute to the Renaissance, but rather that a blind eye has traditionally been turned to such contributions. An interpretation of the Southern Renaissance which excludes women and/or people of color only repeats original formulations of this movement as a white, patriarchal network of writers who revelled in the self-same construction of the South as ONE kind of South. For more on deconstructing the racial and gender politics of the Southern Renaissance, see

6 For a full discussion of white masculinities in the South from antebellum to the twentieth-century, see Gebhard, Leverenz, and Ownby.
Think of Jeeter Lester in Erskine Caldwell's *Tobacco Road* (1932), who talks about mill workers and their "spring sickness" because they have been removed from the land, "But when a man stays on the land, he don't get to feeling like that this time of year, because he's right here to smell the smoke of burning broom-sedge and to feel the wind fresh off the plowed fields going down inside his body" (28-9).

The *OED* defines the phrase "to go to seed," "to cease flowering as seeds develop; to become habitually unkempt, ineffective, etc; to deteriorate." This, I think, corresponds well with the way in which O'Connor and Dickey attempt to "post" the flowering of the Renaissance.

For a complete literary biography, see Simmonds.

It is worth noting that the reader does not ever find out where Kenneth is while he is away from home -- just that he is gone. One does know that Kenneth is a "naval lieutenant," and so it is implied that, as a military figure, his body and its absence signify the national, leaving Christine and especially Rhoda to negotiate the relation between the nation and the area of the South in which they live.

Flannery O'Connor's male characters often struggle with violence, faith, and the impact of words and the performative utterance. Hazel Motes, in *Wise Blood* (1952), certainly enacts a kind of grotesque masculine identity as he seeks to finally confirm his own relation to Christianity. In the short story "A Good Man Is Hard to Find" (1953), the Grandmother carefully selects the words she will use to describe the men she encounters. Both her son, Bailey, and he grandson, John Wesley, are referred as "boy." The male "Negro child" is referred to as a "pickaninny." Red Sammy Butts is called a "good man" by the Grandmother, but the sign which advertises his barbecue describes him as "THE
FAT BOY WITH THE HAPPY LAUGH! A VETERAN! RED SAMMY'S YOUR MAN!" which suggests Red Sammy is both "boy" and "man." When the Misfit and his crew (Hiram and Bobby Lee) arrive on the scene of the accident, one is described as a "fat boy," while the Misfit is immediately called "an older man than the other two." The Grandmother calls her son "Bailey Boy!" as he is led off to the woods to be shot. Part of O'Connor's design, here, is to call attention to a variety of Southern masculinities, most likely with the intention of positioning the Misfit as a "good man" because he drives the Grandmother to pray at gunpoint, and then kills her. Finally, I think it is of significance that in "Good Country People" (1955), the Bible-salesman who steals Hulga's wooden leg is named Manley Pointer.

12 Judith Butler's theories of performativity and subject formation seem almost too good to be true when it comes to O'Connor's novel. O'Connor seems to anticipate (actually, she seems to already know) Butler's model, only rather than working along the lines of masculine/feminine and genders in-between, O'Connor delves into the impurities and violences of the self and the South which constitute "real" identities for rural white men. The Violent deals with the performative acts of Christian calling, baptism, the making of a will, and the concept of owing (as personal or financial debt) as spiritual/psychic/intellectual nightmares which involve "faith" in words (and words as deeds) which may or may not stand firm under the pressure of a doubting or terrified subject. The horrors of linguistic ambiguity and the semiotic messes which challenge Old and Young Tarwater, not to mention Uncle Rayber, are similar to the kinds of analyses Butler makes regarding postmodern gender and race subject formations. See Butler.

13 I realize, of course, that this allusion to seed is Biblical, from Jesus' parable of the sower
in the Book of Matthew: "One day, a farmer went out sowing. Part of what he sowed landed on a footpath, where the birds came and ate it up. Part of it fell on rocky ground, where it had little soil. It sprouted at once since the soil had not depth, but when the sun rose and scorched it, it began to wither for lack of roots. Again part of the seed fell in among thorns, which grew up and choked it. Part of it, finally, landed on good soil and yielded grain a hundred- or sixty- or thirtyfold. Let everyone heed what he hears!" (Matt: 13, 4-9). O'Connor's Catholicism determines the interpretation of *The Violent* for many critics, who wish to privilege the Biblical as the final word. Since mine is a secular, more critical, reading of O'Connor, I take the emphasis off of the Biblical resonance of the novel in order to get into the novel's staging of gender and violence. I would like to mention here that "seed," in this passage from Matthew, is certainly connected to the performative utterance, and is arguably a sexual metaphor as well.

14 O'Connor's narrative strategy nearly defies classification: Tarwater's memory of his grandfather's telling of a remembered story. Double focalization? Triple focalization? Even though we get the perspective of the grandfather, we need to keep in mind that the grandfather is remembering, and that Tarwater frames these particular narratives from his own perspective. The layers of time here are stunning in their depth, and provide the reader with a sense of how O'Connor "posts" the Southern literary convention of keeping the past in the present. The past is not one thing or a memory, but rather a series of concomitant "pasts" which are told and/or re-membered as memories themselves.

15 This logic resembles that of Addie Bundren's father in Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*. As Addie puts it: "I could just remember how my father used to say that the reason for living was to get ready to stay dead for a long time" (169). Interesting, too, is the seed/sperm
allegory which crops up in Addie's language. The next sentence reads: "And when I
would have to look at [my students] day after day, each with his and her secret and selfish
thought, and blood strange to each other and strange to mine, and think that this seemed
to be the only way I could ever get ready to stay dead, I would hate my father for having
ever planted me" (169-70, emphasis added).

16 It is worth noting that critics too easily conflate the figure of the rapist with the figure of
"the homosexual," whether or not that is O'Connor's intention (which, of course, it is).
The narrative encodes of the rapist as "lavender," as having bleached blonde hair and dark
eyebrows, as seductive and sinister: what does it mean that the materialization of the
abject ultimately takes shape in the form of "the homosexual," and that this "homosexual"
figure is also a rapist? My chapter answers this question by looking at the constructed
overlap between violence, homosexuality, and masculinity. Other critics have written on
the more traditional psychoanalytic currents which run through the novel. For a reading
of the homoeroticism and incestual underpinnings of avuncular relations in The Violent,
see Paulson. For readings which easily collapse the rapist into the category of "the
homosexual," see Bleikasten and Asals.

17 It might be asked why I am insisting that this scene is one of anal rather than oral rape,
or why this might not have been a scene of sexual molestation (non-penetrative sexual
violation), or perhaps even a scene in which the figure in lavender merely strips Francis
and ties him up for the sake of looking at him naked. These are all possible readings,
especially given the non-narrated status of the encounter. However, given the poetics of
seed, sperm, and the gothic paranoia which haunts Tarwater (as well as other characters)
from behind, and given other tropes of anality which are dispersed throughout the text, it
follows that this rape is anal.

18 I am thinking of hegemonic masculinity as aligned with both subordinated and marginalized masculinity, as Bob Connell delineates in his essay, "Masculinity, Violence, and War:" "At any given moment some forms of masculinity will be hegemonic -- that is, most honored and most influential -- and other forms will be marginalized or subordinated . . . Modern hegemonic masculinity is defined as heterosexual . . . and sharply contrasted with homosexual masculinity . . . And there are struggles about what form of masculinity should be hegemonic -- for instance the contest going on in the ruling classes of the capitalist world between professional/managerial and entrepreneurial/authoritarian masculinities" (7).

19 For a good overview of academic and popular reception of the novel, see Kirschten.

20 See Endel, Calhoun, Hill, and Wagner.

21 Jameson's understanding of the return of the historical past in the figure of the poor white (misrecognized and misused) interestingly corresponds with Richard King's project in *A Southern Renaissance: The Cultural Awakening of the American South, 1930-1955*. King's text turns to Southern textual productions (from fiction to critical theory) from the earlier part of the twentieth century to examine to cultural, political, and mythic forces which shaped the literature of the period. Referring to "seminal historical works" of canonical Southern writers such as William Faulkner, Allen Tate, Will Percy, and Robert Pen Warren, King writes "that they take us back, then through, and out the other side -- which turns out to be the way we came in, only at a different level" (10). If we think of King's trajectory in corporeal terms, especially in light of *Deliverance*'s meditation on the *male* body (and Jameson's reading of the novel in terms of History and
the return of the "dead" 1930s), the "back," "through," and "other side" sounds much like what literally and symbolically governs the oral and anal sexual politics of the novel.

22 See Cook for a comprehensive literary history of the "poor white" in U.S. literature, from the eighteenth century through the Southern Renaissance. Cook traces the development of the "poor white" from her or his placement as the comedic grotesque to her or his positioning as a revolutionary proletarian figure and beyond.

23 John Hartigan argues that "the figure of white trash exists as much in middle class fears and fantasies as it does in the rural southern hill country or in the northern urban communities of migrant Appalachians. The figure gives dynamic shape to transgressors of the intangible boundaries and decorums that constitute whiteness as a cultural identity" (9). Hartigan focuses on the way in which a fear of falling out of the middle class and outside of bourgeois white culture drives Deliverance's paranoid "terror," and that this terror speaks to normative white culture at large, which seeks to avoid identification with "dramatized images of white trash as 'backwards,' 'degenerate,' 'incestuous,' living filthy in piles of 'relations' or 'kin'" (9). See Hartigan.

24 Much work has been done on the meaning of rape and the intersection of rape narratives with identity politics, primarily in terms of differences in gender, race, and class. Deliverance adds another dimension to the "Southern rape complex," as articulated by W.J. Cash and re-presented by Richard King. King reminds us of the "close identification of the South with the white woman" (165) and the racist "reversal and projection of [white] desires: that black men must want white women because white men have desired and taken black women" (166). The paranoid fears of white men (and the violent results of these fears as manifested in the form of the white lynching mob) sought
to protect racial purity and the purity of the white Southern family at the cost of black men (165-6). What does it mean, then, that in *Deliverance* the rape that takes place in the Appalachian mountains is not only between men, but between white men whose radical differences are inscribed in terms of their class status and regional affiliation? There is a long, complicated, and contradictory history of the narrativization of inter-racial and cross-gender rape; the difference between the usual deployment of rape narratives and the one found in *Deliverance* points to the possibility that the spectacle of same-sex rape guarantees a narrative horror that jars the reader in a way which is, bizarrely enough, unexpected. See King.

To reiterate, the cinematic production of *Deliverance* depends less on the narrative slide between homosocial, homoerotic, homosexual, and homophobic registers, and more on the construction of the same-sex rape scene as its representative center. The original screenplay, written by James Dickey, was cut and changed to meet the needs of production time and the needs of narrative economy. In the Afterward to the published screenplay (original version), Dickey explains, "The director first, then the actors, then the technicians and other functionaries set things up to be filmed in a way which is congruent with the director's version of the dramatic and scenic possibilities of the story and whether or not this is consistent with the writer's is strictly immaterial, irrelevant, and in the end something of an embarrassment, at least to the writer" (155). Therefore, it comes as no surprise that the way in which the film begins (its series of shots and the voice-over, discussed above), was *not* in the original script in any form. The decision to highlight the voice-over with the repetition of the word "rape" points to the notoriety of the film as "[b]y far the most recognized and remembered male rape scene in any movie"
(Scare 114). While I do not wish to position the Appalachian rapists in the film (or, for that matter, in the novel) as "homosexuals" (to do so would be to -- simply -- collapse an act of violence with an act of sexuality), I think it is important to see the way in which the visual representation of male rape in Deliverance produces a kind of homophobia which induces a cultural amnesia in the remembering of the film in popular culture. That is, the spectacle of same-sex rape implores the viewer to lock the meaning of film into one representative moment. Michael Scare's Male on Male Rape: The Hidden Toll of Stigma and Shame reports the way in which the rape scene in Deliverance not only generates a popular discourse about same-sex rape, but also generates other narratives about the filming of the rape scene itself, including narratives produced by Burt Reynolds (Lewis) in his autobiography, My Life, and another by Ned Beatty (Bobby) in his May 16, 1989 guest editorial for the New York Times, "Suppose Men Feared Rape," A23.

Sedgwick's discussion of the development of the Victorian Gothic also includes male same-sex rape as an element of this genre, one which accompanies an historical shift away from the thematic of class differences and more towards "a thematics of Empire," which represented an exotic Orientalism and a fear that "the exotic" will hypnotize, possess, and take control of the British national subject (Between 182). Sedgwick recognizes that "a partly Gothic-derived paranoid racist thematics of male penetration and undermining by subject peoples became a prominent feature of national ideology in Western Europe. Its culmination is an image of male rape" (183). The imperialist relation of England to "the Orient" in Victorian Gothic literature shifts in Dickey's 1970s Appalachian gothicism, where the men turn the adventurous conquest for secure national U.S. identity inward. As a textual and cultural effect, the novel constructs a paranoid
popular mythos about same-sex rape which is directly tied to the impoverished populations of Appalachia. See Sedgwick, *Between*.

27 See Baudrillard.
Notes to Chapters Five, Six, and Seven

1 See Wells, *Southern Horrors* and *A Red Record*.

2 W.E.B. DuBois wrote regular essays in the *Crisis* during 1919, both chronicling African American war heroes and denouncing American Jim Crow racism and violence after the return of black troops. In a June 1919 article, “An Essay Toward a History of the Black Man in the Great War,” Du Bois wrote, “To everyone war is, and, thank God, must be, disillusion. This war has disillusioned millions of fighting white men -- disillusioned them with its frank truth of dirt, disease, cold, wet and discomfort; murder, maming, hatred. But the disillusion of Negro American troops was more than this, or rather it was this and more -- the flat, frank realization that however high the ideals of America or however noble her tasks, her great duty as conceived by an astonishing number of able men, brave and good, as well as of other sorts of men, is to hate ‘niggers’” (“An Essay“ 63). See also DuBois, “Documents” and “The Black Man.”


4 See Foner, 126; Patton, 149 n.5; and Tuttle, 22.

5 I borrow the outlaw/lawman binary from Robyn Wiegman’s study of interracial male bonding narratives. See *American Anatomies* 122-3.

6 I borrow the term “nation-of-one” from Comer’s *Landscapes of the New West*. See Comer.

7 I borrow the term "sadomasochistic lyricism" from Kathryn Bond Stockton. See Stockton "Heaven's Bottom," 82.
See Comer.

9 Interesting to note that in *The Bad Seed*, little Rhoda kills her classmate Claude because she believes that she deserves the school's handwriting medal. A medal and its larger, more ostentatious version, a medallion, signifies, perhaps obviously, achievement. But since both March and Morrison are invested in writing novels in which the hypocrisy of a white bourgeois nation is exposed, it is interesting that in March's novel, the medal is an object of perverse desire, and in Morrison's novel, the medal(lion) exists (as Stockton argues) as a signifier of anality and coinage. Also, think about the Cowardly Lion in *The Wizard of Oz*, who receives a medal for being a hero. With his medal, he no longer lacks courage. More on medals and heroes later.

10 See Stockton, 86.

11 Perhaps the only black male character in the novel who signifies wholeness is Ajax, who taunts the young Nel and Sula with the word "pigmeat" when they are pre-adolescents, and who beds down with Sula after she sleeps with Nel's husband, Jude. But, finally, the reader, along with Sula, comes to find out that Ajax is not the cleanser Sula thought he would be. Once Ajax leaves, Sula discovers she did not kow as much about him as she thought. His name is not "Ajax," as in bleach, but rather Albert Jacks, or "A. Jacks" for short (135).

12 Find Web Page with this info.

14 See Cooper for a history of African Americans in the National Guard. See Mahon for a history of how segregation and integration of blacks into the National Guard became an issue during the late 1940s early 1950s, when black congressmen obstructed the passing of the Universal Military Training and Service Act, which would have made all males under the age of eighteen register for the draft and enter into the National Security Training Corps (207).

15 "Generic person," always implicitly white and male, is a term borrowed from Berlant. See “National,” 112)

16 Notice that Faulkner capitalizes "State" instead of "national" and "guard," a reversal of how it is usually written: state National Guard.
Works Cited


1983.


Dainotto, Robert Maria. "'All the Regions Do Smilingly Revolt': The Literature of Place and Region." *Critical Inquiry* 22 (Spring 1996): 486-505.


Grant, Donald L. *The Way It Was in the South: The Black Experience in Georgia.* Carol Publishing Group, 1993.


Kite, Elizabeth S. "Two Brothers." The Survey. 27.22 (May 2, 1912): 1861-64. Rpt. in


