
Part I

Introduction

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Writing Southern Cultures

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In 1931 John Peale Bishop wrote from France to his friend Allen Tate about the deepening economic crisis in the West. “Personally I feel there is no hope for us,” he confided to Tate,

unless we are willing to go back, examining our mistakes and admit them. To go on the way of machinization and progress to their ultimate destination, some American form of communism, is simply to applaud and hasten death. For death it will be, and no mistake. The Russians may well survive, for they are the beginning of something non-European; we are the end of all that is European. With us Western civilization ends.¹

Bishop’s remarks hit a responsive chord with Tate, who only two years prior to this, in his biography of Jefferson Davis, had identified the decline of the West with the defeat of the South, a region he called “the last stronghold of European civilization in the western hemisphere.” For both men, in fact, what they agreed to call “the South” was the last great moment in culture. All that was left was to capture the moment of its passing and to commemorate its glory. More brutally, all that was left was the reality of loss and the realization of failure. As Tate put it to Bishop:

The older I get the more I realize that I set out about ten years ago to live a life of failure, to imitate, in my own life, the history of my people . . . The significance of the Southern way of life, in my time, is failure . . . What else is there for me but a complete acceptance of failure? There is no other “culture” that I can enter into, even if I had the desire.²

True, Tate admitted, the contemporary crisis might very well bring about something devoutly to be wished: “the destruction of the middle-class capitalist hegemony.” But, instead of millennial beginnings or cultural redemption, all that would result from this, he believed, was a rough beast slouching from Russia to be born. What was heaving into view, in short, was not a possible beginning but the end.

The imagination of disaster that Tate and Bishop shared in their correspondence and elsewhere – sometimes with a rather unseemly, lipsmacking relish – is surely one of the constants of Southern self-fashioning. So is their sense of aberration and anomaly. Whatever else Southerners may have in common (and it is sometimes very little), they have habitually defined themselves, as Tate and Bishop did, against a national or international “other.” A familiar set of oppositions performs important cultural work here: “Southern” *vs.* “American”/“Northern”/“Western” (the slippage between these three terms is, in itself, a measure of the Southern sense of deviation from a “norm”) = place *vs.* placelessness = past *vs.* pastlessness = realism *vs.* idealism = mournful, deeply felt endings *vs.* millennial, vaguely fancied beginnings. In this context, “South” and “North” end up functioning rather like a photograph and its negative, in a mutually determining, reciprocally defining relationship: the South *is*, in these circumstances, whatever the North *is not* and vice versa. It may be that all cultures do this, in order to define themselves. The difference with the Southern strategy is that it customarily begins from a consciousness of its own marginality and even “failure,” its position on the edge of the narrative. The constitutive otherness of the North or the American is considered central; the South, in whatever terms it is understood, is placed on the boundary, posed as a (albeit probably preferable) deviation. This is a poignant reversal of the usual strategies of cultural self-positioning. It would never have occurred to those who constructed the idea of the Orient, for example, to see their object of study as anything other than inferior to the enlightened West and on the dangerous borders of Western culture. The lesser breed was famously without the law. The idea of Southernness may or may not carry a moral burden. It may project on to the typology of itself, and its opposite, a sense of its own superiority and a claim to historical centrality of the kind Tate and Bishop both ventured – or of the sort the South Carolina politician William Lowndes Yancey was imagining when he declared:

The Creator has beautified the face of the Union with sectional features. Absorbing all minor subdivisions, he has made the North and the South; the one the region of frost . . . the other baring its generous bosom to the sun . . . Those who occupy the one are cool, calculating, enterprising, selfish, and grasping; the inhabitants of the other are ardent, brave, and magnanimous, more disposed to give than to accumulate, to enjoy ease rather than to labor.³

Nevertheless, the claim cannot be made effortlessly, without a powerful sense of past exclusion, present discontent, and future peril; Yancey was, after all, speaking as the sectional crisis deepened towards war. Southerners start by seeing others with a more than usually astringent sense of how others see them; their arguments begin, as it were, *within* an argument already made that has shifted them on to the historical edge – an edge from which, quite possibly, they are about to fall off.

A word of caution is perhaps useful. These acts of regional self-definition made in the face of crisis are not, of course, simply fake. It is not that the South and the North

or the American nation – even in the crudely simplistic terms imagined by Yancey – are merely falsehoods, fables, no more in touch with historical contingencies than, say, stories of the lost city of Atlantis. They are, however, *fictive* – and in a double sense. They are fictive, first, because they involve a reading of existence as essence. What Anwar Abdel Malek has to say about Orientalism is relevant here. Orientalists, he points out, “adopt an essentialist conception of the countries, nations, and peoples of the Orient under study, a conception which expresses itself through a characterized ethnist typology.”⁴ In short, they form a notion of a cultural “type” based on a real specificity but divorced from history. Similarly, the cultural work that has devised ideas of the South and Southerners, and their opposites, occurs in history, and is a result of the forces working in the field of historical evolution. But its end result is to transfix the beings, the objects of study and leave them stamped with an inalienable, non-evolutive character – to sever them from the living tissue of their moment in time. These constructions of regional types are also fictional in the sense that perhaps Yancey had at the back of his mind when he conveniently skipped over what he called “all minor subdivisions.” The South has never *not* been made up of a number of castes, classes, and smaller communities that at best live in uneasy coexistence with each other and at worst are in active conflict – and some of which, at least, choose to claim that *their* South is *the* South, their story the master narrative of the region. Readings of the South are just that, readings; for better or worse, they involve selection and abstraction, a figuring and, in the purest sense of that word, a *simplifying* of history.

“Communities are to be distinguished,” argues the historian Benedict Anderson, “not by their falsity/genuineness, but the style in which they are imagined.”⁵ And that “style,” the terms in which an imagined community *is* imagined, has met with a peculiar series of challenges in the recent South – as the familiar sense of being peripheral and in peril has been exacerbated, for contemporary Southerners, by radical changes to both the material substance and the moral shape of their lives. As far as the economic imperatives are concerned, Southerners are now exposed to the demands of the marketplace – for good or (as Tate and Bishop would surely have seen it) for ill. With the collapse of the plantation system, the dispersal of the mill villages, and the breakdown of other places of settled employment, white males in particular have felt this exposure – but white women and African Americans have felt it too, as they have become more visible elements in the economy. The women’s movement, together with the crumbling of traditional structures, has opened up female access to the marketplace. And the civil rights movement, together with subsequent federal legislation, has allowed blacks to become a more active and fluid, if still significantly disadvantaged, part of the labor force. The result is that the Southern workforce is now just over one-third white female, just under 10 percent black male, and just under 10 percent black female. In the words of one historian, Numan Bartley, summing up the changes of the recent past, in 1995:

A dynamic free-flowing workforce unburdened by labor union membership, unity, or much in the way of state protection or social legislation complemented the drive for

economic growth while it undermined family, community, and the spiritual aspects of religion.⁶

Another historian described this transfer to the market economy, and commodification, of most of the adult population of the South much more succinctly; the South, he said, was now “a conservative capitalist’s dream come true.”

“Southerners feel,” the social scientist Charles Lerche observed in 1964, “that they are struggling against an open conspiracy and a totally hostile environment.” A similar point was made by another commentator, Sheldon Hackney, five years later: “the Southern identity,” he observed, “has been linked from the first to a siege mentality” – and continued to be. Comments like these, made usually but not always about *white* Southerners, suggest that forms of Southern self-fashioning founded on resistance, aberration, and deliberate anachronism continue to flourish, even in a world of surfeit. This was a point made, in more detail, by the sociologist John Shelton Reed, when he came to write a concluding note to a new edition of his survey of Southern attitudes, *The Enduring South*. Reed found, he said, powerful feelings of being marginalized and even threatened still at work among the – mostly white – Southerners surveyed. More to the point, the data accumulated for this new edition only confirmed what he had claimed when *The Enduring South* had first appeared fourteen years earlier. “Cultural differences that were largely due to Southerners’ lower incomes and educational levels,” Reed declared, “to their predominantly rural and small-town residence” and “to their concentration in agricultural and low-level industrial occupations”: all these, he said, “were smaller in the 1960s than they had been in the past, and they are smaller still in the 1980s.” “A few” of these differences “have vanished altogether,” he pointed out; and, as a result, “there are important respects in which Southerners look more like other Americans, culturally, than they have at any time for decades, if ever.”⁷ On the other hand, those differences that Reed labeled “quasi-ethnic,” because of their putative origins in the different histories of the American regions, had, many of them, persisted. On the matters of localism, attitudes towards violence, gun ownership, and religion, white Southerners still revealed themselves to be distinctive, different.

In fact, if there appeared to be any significant change in mental maps between the 1960s and the 1980s, Reed commented, it was among non-Southerners. “Non-Southerners are becoming more like Southerners,” Reed concluded, “in their tendency to find heroes and heroines in their local community, or even in the family . . . the conviction that individuals should have the right to arm themselves” and in their tendency “to have had the sort of religious experience that is theoretically central to Southern Protestantism.” What has been called “the Southernization of America,” by the historian John Egerton among others, suggests that one response to commodification, and the globalization of the material life, is resistance and even a kind of cultural reversion. Americans, and not just Southerners, seem to have reacted to the blanding of America, over the last two or three decades, by subscribing to cultural values that simultaneously register their anxiety about change and measure their

difference from the corporate ethos. “The ‘primitive’ attitudes that east-coast liberals used to sneer at,” a 1994 article in *The Economist* proclaimed, “are now those of America.” That is surely too sweeping, but it underlines the point that surrender to the laws of the global village is not the only available option. On the contrary, Southerners have always shown how one viable response to feelings of being marginalized is to *build* on the margins, to root one’s thinking precisely in the sense of being disempowered and different; and some non-Southerners, at least, appear to be imitating them. John Shelton Reed put it more wryly. “I do not want to suggest that Americans are becoming privatistic, born-again gun-slingers,” he declared, “or that Southerners are.” Nevertheless, he added, “perhaps there is a pattern here”:⁸ a pattern of convergence, that is, quite different from the one that anticipated an economically resurgent South simply becoming more like the rest of America.

Even a phrase like “the Southernization of America” is too simple, however, and, in the end, no more satisfactory than “the Americanization of the South.” In its own way, it prescribes a model for understanding recent social change in the region that is just as monolithic and disablingly unitary as other terms that have become part of the currency of this debate: terms or phrases like, say, “the lasting South,” “the everlasting South,” “why the South will survive” – or, alternatively, “this changing South,” “an epitaph for Dixie,” “look away from Dixie.” Non-Southerners have certainly gravitated towards Southern thinking in many respects. They range from the anonymous people surveyed in *The Enduring South* or the millions of non-Southern voters involved in what political scientists have called “an issue-driven switch” to the Republican Party, to a distinguished historian from the political left, Eugene Genovese, who then turned to the tradition of Southern conservatism as the only serious challenge – with the collapse of communism – to what he called “market-oriented bourgeois ideologies.”⁹ But several further twists are given to an already tangled situation by two other factors: the selling of the South, as a kind of giant theme park or American version of the heritage industry, and our greatly enlarged sense of the pluralism of *any* culture, including the Southern one. As for the selling of the region: in *Oral History* (1983) by Lee Smith, the old family homeplace still stands, but it has become an appropriately decaying part of a successful theme park called Ghostland. In the state of Mississippi, observes the central character in *Hey Jack!* (1987) by Barry Hannah, “I find there are exactly five subjects: money, Negroes, women, religion, and Elvis Presley. The rest are nothing.”¹⁰ And, as if to prove the truth of this observation, it is possible to go to Memphis, not far from where Hannah lives, and find “Negroes, women, religion, and Elvis Presley” all being turned into “money.” Jostling close to each other are such signs of the times, and the new Southern tourism, as Presley’s Graceland with its nine gift shops – or Beale Street reconstituted as a heritage site with the W. C. Handy statue, restaurants and shops selling African-American memorabilia, and the Center for Southern Folklore.

“This is America, where money’s more serious than death.”¹¹ Harry Crews’s sardonic comment alerts us to a problem. There are no doubt noble motives at work in the construction of Southern tourist sites, among them the desire to make

the past more accessible. But a tourist site is, pretty obviously, a way of making money and generating trade for the area; it belongs as much to the culture of consumerism as, say, a shopping mall. This is a very particular kind of commodification that turns the South itself – or, to be more exact, an idea or image of the South – into a product, a function of the marketplace. Like all good products, it has a clear identity. As movies such as *Driving Miss Daisy*, *Doc Hollywood*, and *O Brother, Where Art Thou?*, or advertisements for Jack Daniel's whiskey, tell us, the South is registered in popular perception and marketed as a desirable other, one potential, purchasable release from the pressures of living and working in a world governed by the new technologies and international capital. History is thereby displaced into aesthetic style. Via cultural work that Adorno called “receding concreteness,” any possibility of a lived encounter with the past slips away, and we are left with a marketable artifact, a copy. What appears to be a process of remembering turns out, in the end, to be one of forgetting, since the realities of economic change, structural transformation, are masked, for the purposes of making a sale, by an image of cultural continuity. The ironies of Southern history have always run deep, and surely one of the deepest in recent times is this curious case of change within continuity within change. Some aspects of the South retain their grip on the imagination despite the economic metamorphosis of the region, but then that drift towards the past, the undertow of resistance itself becomes a saleable asset. The legends of the South are not necessarily dying, in other words, nor being fiercely protected or even resurrected; in some cases, they are merely being turned into cash.

The responses of Southerners themselves to this particular irony are perhaps worth measuring. After all, they are consumers too, and can be included among those to whom the South is being sold. One measurable reaction is resistance. “I wasn't into jazz as a kid” in New Orleans, the jazz musician Wynton Marsalis told the British Broadcasting Corporation in 1993, “I thought it was just shakin' your butt for the white tourists in the French Quarter.” And, given that the director of the New Orleans tourist board once boasted, “Music is integral to our marketing plan,”¹² Marsalis's initial reluctance to become involved in a music to which he was so obviously suited seems understandable. Another reaction, its opposite, is to buy into the Southern performance of the good life. That buying ranges from the huge commercial growth of country music or what has become known as “Southern rock,” in the United States generally but especially in the South, to a publishing phenomenon like *Southern Living*. Initiated as a magazine in 1966, out of a column that had run for many years in *Progressive Farmer*, *Southern Living* reinforces and defends an image of the region as a place of downhome securities, safe harbor for all those for whom, in the words of one commentator, “the South *is* distinct, *is* special, perhaps even chosen.” With its articles on such traditionally Southern obsessions as hunting and fishing, entertaining and etiquette, tasteful decorating and dining, it offers a fantasy conduct manual – a guide to behaving well in a blessed, glossy landscape of gracious homes, immaculate furniture, and manicured lawns. The president of the company that began *Southern Living* said in 1985 that his company's mission was “to

give people in the South a sense of pride in being Southern.” This the magazine does by offering to its readers’ gaze the promissory image of a place free of social anxiety or economic insecurity, in which the greatest problem becomes how to choose the right pattern for the silverware. The elusive object of desire here, to be claimed at the point of purchase, is the image of “Southern living” itself: what one analyst of the journal has called its construction of

a South without memory of pellagra or racial unrest, a South where none of the parents are divorced, where burglary and street crime are unknown, where few have Hatteras yachts but one and all play golf and tennis at the club – and in the right outfits.¹³

Issues of class and race appear only in subtly coded, disguised form – in, say, articles about black college football players; the project is to reassure the mainly white, middle-class, Southern consumer by offering him (or, more often in this case, her) a familiar regional version of the culturally counterfeit – a copy of a world of easy but mannerly living for which, it turns out, there has never been an original. That project has been remarkably successful. By the middle of the 1990s, *Southern Living* could boast nearly two-and-a-half million subscribers; of these, over 80 percent had well-above average incomes and, more to the point, over 80 percent of them also lived in the South.

Another, more complicated reaction to the selling of the South is described in *The Revolution of Little Girls* (1991) by Blanche McCrary Boyd. The novel charts the growth of a young girl called Ellen Burns out of South Carolina and into womanhood, feminism, and a discovery of her own lesbianism. What is of special interest here, however, is one moment in her youth when, thanks to her workaholic father, the Burns family move out of a modest house on the outskirts of Charleston into “an old plantation out in the country” known as Blacklock. “I had never seen a house like the one at Blacklock, except in the movies,” Ellen explains. “Each time *Gone With the Wind* was rereleased, our family, minus my father, went dutifully to see this tribute to what we had lost” – although the notion of loss is cultural rather than familial since, as Ellen points out, “my father had grown up poor.” “We were minus my father,” Ellen adds, “because he was tied up making money... so we could do things like move to Blacklock.” “When ‘Dixie’ played,” in the movie, she remembers, “I cried every time.” “And when Scarlett O’Hara said, ‘As God is my witness, I’ll never be hungry again,’” she adds, “I’d think, *yeab, me [n]either*.” Come the day the family move to Blacklock, Ellen is struck by the fact that, although “it didn’t look like Tara,” it has all the crucial paraphernalia of that Old South sold to an eager public in popular films and fiction, including slave cabins, huge oak trees, “a set of white columns” at the entrance to the estate, and “a white oyster-shell road that circled in front of the house on top of the hill.” “I’ve seen this movie before,” Ellen shouts out as they approach the house; and, although her father tells her to “Hush, Ellen,” she cries out again, “I’ve seen this movie before!”¹⁴

Ellen Burns comes across in Boyd’s novel as an edgy, sophisticated, often subversive person; and her immediate response to the plantation heritage that her family has, in

effect, bought is characteristically subtle and self-conscious. With one, particularly ironic eye she can see how she and her family have been sold a product, through movies like *Gone With the Wind*. They have, she can appreciate, been taught what they have “lost,” shown a gap in their lives that can supposedly be filled by the purchase of Blacklock and other gracious appendages of “Southern living.” She can even perhaps perceive the irony of gazing at a relic of the past in terms of mediated images of that past, as if it were an imitation of an imitation, since in this world the authentic and the replica become interchangeable as products, transferable commodities. Nevertheless, Ellen also looks at this site of desire with genuine excitement, even elation; the fact that, as she sees it, she is moving close to a familiar movie set is an occasion for delight as well as wry humor. She is, in short, not only amused but also pleased. She soon comes to think of Blacklock as “cursed”¹⁵ and is relieved when eventually, due to a downturn in the family fortunes, the estate is sold – to a group that want to replicate another image of traditional Southern living, by hunting wild duck in the rice paddies. But that is only a further element in what Fredric Jameson would call the logic of late capitalism: the climax is a matter of exchange, not of use. And it is a climax that Ellen enjoys, for all her irony: she looks at Blacklock, when she arrives there, with the gaze of the knowing consumer who desires no less because she understands the crude mechanisms of consumerism – that her desires have been generated by the marketplace. This self-aware, self-reflexive form of consumption is arguably the norm now. When we watch films like *Gone With the Wind* or, say, *Fried Green Tomatoes*, we are probably aware that we are looking at a counterfeit, a projection of our own culturally formed desires on to a particular location in Southern space and time. Still, we receive momentary satisfaction from it; we accept the counterfeit *as if* it were true currency. It is in these curiously hybrid terms that many non-Southerners currently buy the image of the South – just as Ellen Burns does when she arrives at “this movie” she has seen, she says, many times before. And that perhaps is what most contemporary Southerners do as well, including many of those subscribers to *Southern Living*.

All this, of course, begs the question of just what *kind* of South any of us may be trying to renew, transform, preserve, or purchase. Is it the South, for instance, of Wynton Marsalis or Blanche McCrary Boyd that is in the process of being sold? Or, perhaps, the South enshrined in *Southern Living*? Is it the South of those predominantly white Southerners for whom the Confederate flag is a proud emblem of regional heritage? Or of those, both black and white, for whom that same flag is a symbol of racial hatred? Questions like these have always hovered behind any attempt to chart Southern thinking, but the drawing of the mental maps of the region has become peculiarly challenging in the past few years with the growth of cultural pluralism. Makers of the South and things Southern whose work previously tended to be ignored or minimized, often for reasons of caste or gender or both, now come much more into debate and play.¹⁶ They range from popular novelists like Margaret Mitchell, through blues singers and jazz musicians, film directors and country songwriters, to those numerous and frequently anonymous women and men who have resurrected and reshaped the traditions of African art in the region. Just as much at issue here is

our vastly expanded sense now of precisely what “making” a culture involves: the recognition that a culture identifies and in fact creates itself by a variety of means – means that include the individual book or essay, of course, but go far beyond this to incorporate the artifacts of everyday life and the potentially endless products of mass culture, the voice heard perhaps in passing on the radio or images flickering on a screen. What emerges with particular power from all this is the possibility that even the process of commodification, the turning of an image of the South or regional icon into a marketable asset, could be regarded as playing an integral part in the making of a culture. After all, whether anyone likes it or not, Southerners are “known” to themselves and others through the mass media, among many other forms of communication. And what emerges with even more power is the fact that our perception of the South must now, more than ever before, acknowledge the various and often antagonistic influences and energies that go to make it up: we are faced, not so much with Southern culture really, as with Southern *cultures*.

Even within the relatively limited playing field of the novel, the variety – and, in some cases, mutual antagonism – of the influences that go to make up Southern culture(s) now is clear. “We need to talk, to tell,” William Faulkner observed of Southerners once, “since oratory is our heritage.” Old tales and talking have, in fact, long served as both a local art and a preservative tool – a customary, carefully cultivated skill and a vital medium for the transference of custom. Southerners talk; in doing so, they continue a tradition of storytelling and they sustain the substance of that tradition, its memories and legends – they speak, in short, both *out of* the past and *of* it. But exactly what past do they speak from and about? The answer to this, if we look at fiction of the last thirty years or so, turns out to be intriguingly mixed: once, that is, we go beyond certain obvious boundaries, points staked out by the major crises in Southern history. Take two books that have as their narrative pivots a heroic act of storytelling: *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman* (1971) by Ernest Gaines and *Oldest Living Confederate Widow Tells All* (1989) by Allan Gurganus. Both revolve around an old woman recollecting and reshaping the past. Both could be described in the terms Gaines used for his novel, as “folk autobiography” or, equally, in those Gurganus chose for his, as the revelation of a secret history “truer than fact.” For that matter, both draw some of their energy and inspiration from the same sources – interviews conducted in the 1930s by the Federal Writers Project. The fact remains, though, that the two women have a fundamentally different story to tell. Jane Pittman, whose recollections just about begin with the whipping she received for refusing to acknowledge the name “the master and the rest of them”¹⁷ had given her, talks of a past that is another country, not only from the present, but from the relatively, racially more privileged past of Gurganus’s Lucy Marsden, the wife and then widow of a Confederate captain. Jane Pittman may see connections across the racial divide – and, in particular, the common interests poor black and poor white have in the face of “the rich people” – but connection never becomes coincidence of interest. A simple, seminal choice of pronoun says it all: her fellow blacks she includes in “we,” all others are “they.”

“Granny . . . would lean back in her chair and start reeling out story and memory,” recalls the protagonist, Ruth Anne Boatwright (known as “Bone”) of *Bastard Out of Carolina* (1992) by Dorothy Allison,

making no distinction between what she knew to be true and what she had only heard told. The tales she told me in her rough, drawling whisper were lilting songs, ballads of family, love and disappointment. Everything seemed to come back to grief and blood, and everybody seemed legendary.¹⁸

The older generation hand down stories of the past and, in the process, hand on its burden and inspiration: that is a common motif of Southern books, including recent ones, even when there is not one dominant voice. In *For the Love of Robert E. Lee* (1992) by M. A. Harper, the heroine Garnet Laney talks of a “genetic memory” that seems somehow activated by *her* grandmother, who tells her stories of the Civil War and the Lee family; while in *A Childhood: The Biography of a Place* (1978), Harry Crews recalls his upbringing “in a society of storytelling people” where, he tells us, “nothing is allowed to die . . . It is all . . . carted up and brought along from one generation to the next.” There are the several people in *The Crossing* (1994) by Cormac McCarthy (a book that secretes a story of the South in a story of the Southwest) who dramatize and reveal what they, and surely the author, see as the fundamental fact of human life: that “things separate from their stories have no meaning” because “all is telling” and “therefore we can never be done with the telling.” And then there is the character called William Wallace in *1959* (1992) by the African-American novelist Thulani Davis who, the narrator remembers, was so old that he “had more recollections of slavery than of freedom” and would repeat stories and speeches from the old times that everyone ended up learning, “like a blues song passed down the hands on the levee.” The common threads running between oral histories like these are clear, but so are the differences. The past that is spoken into the present here is of a variable, plural kind. For Garnet Laney, for instance, the memories are spellbinding and romantic. They seduce her into the belief that she is actually playing a part in the Old Southern family romance, and in love with General Robert E. Lee. For Ruth Anne Boatwright, on the other hand, as for the young Harry Crews, the old tales are of dispossession, wanting and wandering, the plight of the landless and intermittently workless. There is no dear particular place as such that is recalled, only a general locality, as the Boatwrights and their kind “moved and then moved again” – “sometimes before we’d even gotten properly unpacked,” Ruth Anne remembers – in search of a means to live.

“It’s strange what you don’t forget,” begins *Machine Dreams* (1984) by Jayne Anne Phillips, before moving into an account of the indelible nature of memory, and how memory charges that elaborate network of feeling and faith we call the family. Similarly, early on in *The Annunciation* (1983) by Ellen Gilchrist, we learn of the memories the young central character “must carry with her always” because they are her “cargo,” as she sees it, part of her that she carries *inside* her. This is a past of the bloodstream, kin, and instinct rather more than storytelling, but it carries with it

the same burden of communality and difference – the same feeling that now, more than ever, the South needs to be read in plural terms. Most obviously, there are differences of racial memory. Jane Pittman tells of another country from the one mapped out by Lucy Marsden, peopled by what Gaines himself has called the “Black ‘peasantry,’” “the blacks of the fields” whom “white writers” can only present as “caricatures.” William Walker, in 1959, tells stories of how he and his family were quite literally bought and sold, their bodies along with their labor made the subject of exchange. “He went to the white man’s court to get his wife and children out after buying their freedom,” Walker tells the several generations of his audience, “and the white man told him point-blank, ‘You may say they are wife and children to you, but they are property still. Possession is nine-tenths of the law.’”¹⁹ These are recollections inscribed in race, whose main cultural work is to identify what it means to be a *black* Southerner. As such, they are determinately other, outside and apart from the remembrances of whites – even the white dispossessed. And, in the same way, the instinctual past, the secret memories of African Americans, tend towards difference. Even a relatively privileged African-American character, like the main figure in *Meridian* (1976) by Alice Walker, is haunted by ghostly voices and presences that mark her off from the young white female protagonists of *Machine Dreams* and *The Annunciation*. “But what none of them seemed to understand,” Walker says of her character,

was that she felt herself to be, not holding something from the past, but *held* by something in the past: by the memory of old black men in the South who, caught by surprise in the eye of the camera, never shifted their position but looked directly back, by the sight of young girls singing in a country choir, their hair shining with brushings and grease, their voices the voices of angels.²⁰

Walker, like Gaines or Davis, is speaking of the South, certainly, but of a South that has disentangled itself from many of the threads of white culture(s). It has its own projects and pieties, issuing from its own store of memories. So, much of the time, it writes its own separate history.

“The world is here,” Ishmael Reed, the African-American writer born in Tennessee, ends one of his essays: “here” being, as the title of that essay makes clear, “America: The Multinational Society.” That remark brings us right back to the problem, and the promise, of cultural pluralism. Even talking about the past, that old Southern pastime, suddenly becomes tricky when that talking takes place as Reed’s does, in the mobile marketplace of modern culture, with its mix and occasional collisions of race and class. And gender: the shifting patterns of work practice among Southern females are clear. By 1970, women made up 39 percent of the workforce in the South, and by 1980 it was 43 percent. Affirmative action increased work opportunities, particularly for educated women, to the extent that one historian, writing at the end of the 1980s, could describe the change in the work and family patterns of Southern women as “a revolution.” “The economic, demographic, and social changes that have

occurred since World War II," she declared, "have diminished the differences between women in the urban South and women in other American cities."²¹ Or, as one of Bobbie Ann Mason's characters snappily puts it, "Times are different now, Papa. We're just as good as the men." Not all women live in the urban South, however, even now. And even those that do find, like many of their country counterparts, that changes in labor practice do not necessarily equal changes in belief and behavior. "Men could do anything," the narrator of *Bastard Out of Carolina* recalls of her upbringing, well after World War II, "and everything they did, no matter how violent or mistaken, was viewed with humor and understanding." "What men did was just what men did," she adds. "Some days I would grind my teeth, wishing I had been a boy." The same wish, to become a member of an exclusive club of male privilege, prompts the more middle-class heroine of *The Revolution of Little Girls* to insist on playing the boy's parts in all her childhood games. "After the Tarzan serial at the movies every Saturday afternoon," she remembers, she insisted on playing Tarzan because "Tarzan had more fun." Unfortunately for her, though, "the real world was suspicious of girls who did not want to play Jane."²²

And in the real world of the South many women continue to "play Jane." They remain wedded to a particular regional mystique, roles that slyly or more obviously are forms of subjection. "The past – not the one validated in schoolbooks but another kind, unanalyzed and undefined – hangs upon Southern women as if they were dispossessed royalty," Shirley Abbott has observed in *Womenfolks: Growing Up Down South*. "I never learned," she adds ruefully, "to construe the female sex as downtrodden and disadvantaged."²³ Abbott is talking, in particular, of her own conflicted role as an educated Southern white woman. The situation is all the trickier, however, and the conflicts even more conflicted, because many of the old divisions between women of different classes, and in particular between black and white women, remain. A measure of the grip traditional female roles still have on the Southern imagination is that ten of the fifteen states that never ratified the Equal Rights Amendment in the 1970s were in the South. And a measure, in turn, of the degree of tension *between* and *within* Southern women is that many of those Southerners opposed to the Amendment – maybe seeing it, as one of them put it, as a piece of "country club feminism" – were female. "Most working-class women . . . will never fall prey to the media-created fads which advertise themselves as 'women's liberation,'" a female labor activist from the South declared shortly after the Stop ERA campaign began in 1972. "Middle-class women's lib is a trend," a working woman in the region commented during the same period, "working women's liberation is a necessity." An African-American woman put it even more baldly and, besides, registered some of the resentment that strict demarcation between traditional white and traditional black female roles in the South has tended to produce. The women's movement, she insisted, "is just a bunch of bored white women with nothing to do – they're just trying to attract attention away from the black liberation movement."²⁴

"It is going to take time," one social observer of Southern white women has argued, "for them to catch up to women in other parts of the country": catch up, that is, in

terms of customary assumptions and social roles. Even professional women in the region, the evidence suggests, are less directed towards personal achievement and career goals than they are elsewhere in the United States; and for many other Southern women the pull towards the past is doubly powerful because there has been less of a significant *economic* advance. "I was raised in southern Georgia where any female past puberty was referred to as a lady," Harry Crews confesses in one of his essays. "You may by now have recognized in what I've written thus far," he goes on,

that I've referred to the other half of the human race alternately as woman, lady, and girl. There is great confusion on the part of some men – and certainly I am one of them – about just what the hell we should call females.²⁵

The confusion that Crews admits to, about the right names and roles for women, is something shared by many other Southerners, male *and* female. And it can be crippling. It has led some critics to suggest, for instance, that Crews himself is incapable of creating plausible women characters in his fiction. It can also be frustrating, especially for those many women in the South who experience division actively within them, in their understanding of themselves as well as in everyday social exchange. But sometimes it can be useful, even fruitful, provoking imaginative analysis of just what has caused the confusion; it may encourage those caught in the slippage between old beliefs and new behavior to think carefully about their plight.

What all this comes down to, really, is that Southerners are living *between* cultures. Some are living there more openly than others, and with more sensitivity to the problems that come with the territory; among these are Southern writers. All of them are living there, too, in a double sense. In local terms, Southerners are caught between the conflicting interests and voices that constitute the region and the regional debate. Similarly, on the national and even international stage, they betray intense uncertainty about whether to assimilate or to resist. Southern books, in particular, very often become a site of struggle between, on the one hand, the culture(s) of the South and, on the other, the culture of the global marketplace. As a matter of general practice, or even regional history, this is not quite as unusual, as extraordinary, as it may sound. The South as a term of self-identification was, after all, born out of crisis; and the area known as Southern has remained almost continually in a critical state. All that has happened recently is that change – and, especially, the information and consumer revolutions of the past few decades – has made things even more acutely critical than usual; there is a difference of degree, fundamentally, rather than of kind. Besides, no society anywhere is immune from crisis or exempt from the conflicting practices and interests that promote it. The South now is not a monolith but, then, no historical epoch is. On the contrary, as Fredric Jameson has argued, *any* social formation is a complex overlay of different methods of production which serve as the bases of different social groups and, consequently, of their worldviews. And in any given epoch a variety of kinds of antagonism can be discerned, conflict between different groups and interests. One culture may well be dominant: but there will also

be – to borrow Raymond Williams’s useful terms – a residual culture, formed in the past but still active in the cultural process, and an emergent culture, prescribing new meanings and practices. Southerners, in effect, like any other members of a society, are not the victims of some totalizing structure, since – to quote Williams – “no dominant culture ever in reality includes all human practice, human energy and human intention.” Nor are Southern writers: they have the chance, maybe even the obligation, to insert themselves in the space between conflicting interests and practices and then dramatize the contradictions the conflict engenders. Through their work, by means of a mixture of voices, a free play of languages and even genres, they can represent the reality of their culture as multiple, complex, and internally antagonistic. They can achieve a realization of both synchrony and diachrony: a demonstration, on the one hand, of structural continuities between past and present and, on the other, of the processes by which those continuities are challenged, dissolved, and reconstituted. So they have a better opportunity than many other members of their society have of realizing what Hayden White has called “the human capacity to endow lived contradictions with intimations of their possible transcendence.”²⁶ They have the chance, in short, of getting “into” history, to participate in its processes, and, in a perspectival sense at least, getting “out” of it too – and so enable us, the readers, to begin to understand just how those processes work.

About midway through *Edisto* (1983) by Padget Powell, the narrator of the novel, Simons Everson Manigault, describes how his mother, known locally as the Duchess, refuses to have a faulty air conditioning unit in their rundown “Southern barony” replaced. “Honey, when I was little, we didn’t have all this,” she tells her son. “Just consider we’re going back through Margaret Mitchell’s wind.” The men who remove the unit refuse at first to believe that she will not order a new one. “They didn’t know she was one of those readers of Southern literature who talk about progressive light changes at dusk,” says Simons by way of explanation, “and how the air in the country is different than in the city, and how country crickets sing a different, more authentic tune than city crickets.” The sort of “Southern literature” the Duchess favors is clearly not the sort in which she appears. *Edisto* begins on an old estate, “reduced . . . to a track of clay roads cut in a feathery herbaceous jungle of deerfly for stock and scrub oak for crop.” And it ends in the suburbs, with Simons and his “vestigial baroness” of a mother moving into a place where, he says, “the oaks are all pruned . . . so they look like perfect trees in cement zoo cages.” “It’s somehow pleasant enough here,” Simons comments, “. . . Condominia are all over, roads deliberately curve everywhere when they could go straight, the tinkling postcard marina, lobbies, lounges, links, limousines.” “All the Negroes are in green landscape clothes,” he observes, “or white service jackets, or Volvos with their kids in tennis togs.” “It’s the modern world,” he concludes, “I have to accept it.”²⁷ It is this kind of registering of pluralism and alteration in the contemporary South – “new Negroes in Volvos,” others less privileged in mass-produced service outfits – that marks out much of the best recent Southern writing. And, in distinct contrast to Simons Everson Manigault, acceptance is not the right word for what writers like Padget Powell do. They do not “accept” the

contemporary South; they take the measure of it by being a part of it and apart from it, and working at the consequent tensions. Writing both in and about their culture(s) and the changes, people like the author of *Edisto* – and there are many of them – dramatize what it means to be a Southerner now. In the process, they tell us what it means to live in history, Southern or otherwise, and potentially out of it; they offer the possibility of experience with understanding.

Of course, there is no single model of Southern writing now, any more than there is a singular frame for present or recent Southern culture(s). There are any number of strategies for dramatizing the slippage between old and new and the edgy, protean character of the contemporary South. Notably in fiction, where even traditional themes and familiar writing practices are given fresh and often unexpected twists. The small town social comedy that was a particular skill of earlier novelists like Ellen Glasgow, for instance, is still alive – in books like *Raney* (1985), *Walking Across Egypt* (1987), and *Killer Diller* (1991) by Clyde Edgerton; *A Short History of a Small Place* (1985), *The Last of How It Was* (1987), and *Call and Response* (1989) by T. R. Pearson; *North Gladiola* (1985) and *Modern Baptists* (1989) by James Wilcox; and even *Family Linen* (1985) by Lee Smith, *July 7th* (1992) by Jill McCorkle, and *A Good Scent from a Strange Mountain* (1993) by Robert Olen Butler. Only now the small town is a place like Listre, North Carolina, in Edgerton's fiction, Neely, North Carolina in Pearson's work, or the eponymous North Gladiola, Louisiana: a place, not too far from the Interstate highway, "jacketed with golf links and shopping centers,"²⁸ where the young eat Big Macs crouched in front of the television, while the well-healed older folk are rich enough, not only to join the country club, but also to travel regularly to Europe. Or it is a place like Lake Charles, Louisiana, in Butler's stories – or, for that matter, Galveston, Texas in *Boat People* (1995) by Mary Gardner or Falls Church, Virginia in *Monkey Bridge* (1997) by Lan Cao: the site of a new community, in this case Vietnamese Americans, adding a fresh ingredient to the rich cultural mix of the region. Sometimes, every other Southern novelist seems to be commemorating another regional fictional tradition – that of, say, Thomas Wolfe – by producing something that might be subtitled "growing up in the provincial South." Examples here, among many, are *Ride With the Horseman* (1982) by Ferrol Sams; *The Cheer Leader* (1984) by Jill McCorkle; *Edisto* by Padget Powell; *A World Made of Fire* (1985) by Mark Childress; *Ellen Foster* (1987) by Kaye Gibbons; *1959* by Thulani Davis; and *Father and Son* (1997) by Larry Brown. To mention *Edisto* and *1959* together, however, is to measure the difference between these novels: one the story of an exceptionally sophisticated, fatherless white son of a college professor, the other the tale of a motherless young African-American woman, growing up in a place where "there really wasn't anyplace a boy could take a girl"²⁹ – that is, if the boy and girl in question are black.

It is worth, perhaps, saying just a little more about the issue alluded to just now: that influx of new people into the South from other parts of the world, such as Vietnam, which has served still further to subvert, not just a monolithic reading of the region but any tendency to adopt a simply bipolar, biracial model. The impact of

the hispanic presence was always to be felt in some parts of the supposedly solid South, for instance; and that presence has been enlarged by the several waves of immigration from places like Cuba. The literature written by and about Cubans in the South, particularly Southern Florida, includes *Raining Backwards* (1988) by Roberto Fernandez, a surreal tale of exile in Miami, *Dreaming in Cuban* (1992) by Christine Garcia and *The Perez Family* (1990) by Christine Bell. "I need a map," admits one Cuban immigrant in *The Perez Family*: a book which tells the story of a "family" that is not, strictly speaking, a family at all, but a makeshift group of refugees put together to gain priority for sponsorship. Needing a map to chart their way through the strange land of southern Florida, these characters offer a different angle of vision on their Southern surroundings, turning them sometimes into dreamscapes. Here, for instance, is Miami as seen by one of the members of the Perez family, the self-appointed leader and matriarch called Dottie:

Miami in the afternoon sun is crayola and bright. Like a child's drawing, the city is imaginatively colored and unimaginatively out of proportion. Slender palms stand in disbelief against giant lego constructions. Soft clouds float by garish concrete. Rows of aqua and pink houses insult the shimmering sea and the sky they frame. The streets themselves parallel and intersect with the simple logic of a child's board game. Miami fit Dottie's idea of freedom perfectly – it was simple, gaudy, and close at hand.³⁰

"The alienated city is above all the space in which people are unable to map (in their minds) either their own positions or the urban totality in which they find themselves," argues Fredric Jameson. That may be true of these characters to begin with. But, as this passage intimates, many of them find a means of locating themselves in their new Southern space by relocating the emotional and metaphorical baggage they carry with them – together with a familiar cluster of tropes gathered around the notions of a lost childhood and a dreamlike paradise. Needing a map, they make one for themselves: one that recharts their new home, using fresh but somehow familiar coordinates. In the process, they offer altered geographies, another perspective on the mixed, plural medium that the South and Southerners now more than ever inhabit.

"The day of regional Southern writing is all gone," a writer of an earlier generation, Walker Percy, claimed in 1971. "I think that people who try to write in that style are usually repeating a phased-out genre or doing Faulkner badly."³¹ That claim, however, rests on a familiar and surely tendentious premise – the one ingrained in that claim made by John Peale Bishop to Allen Tate to the effect that "With us Western civilization ends." The South is perceived as a cultural monolith, under threat and perhaps faced with imminent collapse. It follows from this premise that the Southern writer, if he or she exists, is defined as someone writing from within that monolithic structure; if nobody exists like that, then there can be no such thing any more as Southern writing. But the culture that, as a matter of self-identification, has defined itself as regional and Southern, has always been more mixed and fluid than this

argument allows. The South has always represented itself historically as different, deviant, and (usually) in danger; and it has been marked, for good or ill, by its own sense, at any given time, of what it was different and deviating *from* and what it was in danger *of*. Southern writing, in particular, has consistently been produced by writers who resisted the monolith – not least because they worked from both inside and outside of their culture. That situation, of historical contingency and writerly resistance, has been exacerbated by the mix of recent social changes, but it has always been there. To assume otherwise is simply to accept a reading of Southern literature that equates it, more or less, with the Agrarian project. What we have now, in short, is an extension of what we have always had: different, developing social formations that those writers who are experiencing them choose to identify in regional terms – or, at least, choose to mark out using “South” and “region” as part of their fictional vocabulary. “With us Western civilization ends”: Southerners, some of them and Southern writers especially, may be haunted by the imagination of disaster and the sense of an ending, but what the story Southern self-fashioning tells us, if it tells us anything, is that endings are also beginnings and that it is possible to survive and even triumph over disaster. Or, as the greatest of all Southern writers had the most autobiographical of his characters put it: “Maybe nothing ever happens once and is finished.”

NOTES

- 1 To Allen Tate, August 25, 1931, in *The Republic of Letters in America: The Correspondence of John Peale Bishop and Allen Tate*, edited by Thomas D. Young and John J. Hindle (Lexington, KY, 1981), p. 48. See also, Allen Tate, *Jefferson Davis: His Rise and Fall* (New York, 1929), p. 301.
- 2 To John Peale Bishop, early June, 1931, in *Republic of Letters*, edited by Young and Hindle, p. 34. See also, to John Peale Bishop, April 7, 1933, p. 77.
- 3 John W. Du Bose, *The Life and Times of William Lowndes Yancey*, 2 vols. (New York, 1942), I, p. 301.
- 4 Anwar Abdel Malek, “Orientalism in Crisis,” *Diogenes*, XLIV (1963), 107–8.
- 5 Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (London, 1991), p. 6.
- 6 Numan V. Bartley, *The New South, 1845–1980*, Vol. XI (1995) in *The History of the South*, edited by Wendell Holmes Stephenson and E. Merton Coulter, 11 vols. (Baton Rouge, LA, 1947–95), p. 468. See also, Ernest J. Gaines, *Catherine Carmier* (New York, 1993), p. 174; David R. Goldfield, “The City as Southern History: The Past and the Promise of Tomorrow,” in *The Future South: A Historical Perspective for the Twenty-First Century*, edited by Joe P. Dunn and Howard L. Preston (Urbana, IL, 1991), p. 34; James C. Cobb, “The Sunbelt South: Industrialization in Regional, National, and International Perspective,” in *Searching for the Sunbelt: Historical Perspectives on a Region*, edited by Raymond A. Mohl (Knoxville, TN, 1990), p. 39. Along with works already cited, useful recent discussions of the developments described here include Jacqueline Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow: Black Women, Work, and the Family from Slavery to the Present* (New York, 1985); Pete Daniel, *Standing at the Crossroads: Southern Life Since 1900* (New York, 1986); *The Evolution of Southern Culture*, edited by Numan V. Bartley (Athens, GA, 1988); *Southern Women*, edited by Caroline M. Dillman (New York, 1988); Priscilla C. Little and Robert C. Vaughan, *A New Perspective: Southern Women's Cultural History from the Civil War to Civil Rights* (Charlottesville, VA, 1989); Robert Weisbrot, *Freedom Bound: A History of America's Civil Rights Movement* (New York, 1990).

- 7 John Shelton Reed, *The Enduring South: Subcultural Persistence in Mass Society* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1986), pp. 91–2. See also, Charles O. Lerche, *The Uncertain South: Its Changing Patterns of Politics in Foreign Policy* (Chicago, 1964), p. 243; Sheldon Hackney, “Southern Violence,” *American Historical Review*, LXXIV (1969), 925.
- 8 Reed, *Enduring South*, p. 100. See also, John Peet, “A Survey of the South,” *The Economist*, December 10, 1994, p. 14. Also, John Egerton, *The Americanization of Dixie: The Southernization of America* (New York, 1974).
- 9 Eugene D. Genovese, *The Southern Tradition: Achievement and Limitations of an American Conservatism* (Cambridge, MA, 1994), p. 8. See also, Marjorie R. Hershey, “The Congressional Elections,” in *The Election of 1996: Reports and Interpretations*, edited by Gerald R. Pomper (Chatham, NJ, 1997), p. 229. Also, *The Lasting South: Fourteen Southerners Look at their Home*, edited by Louis D. Rubin, Jr., and James K. Kilpatrick (Chicago, 1957); Francis B. Simkins, *The Everlasting South* (Baton Rouge, LA, 1963); “Fifteen Southerners,” *Why the South Will Survive* (Athens, GA, 1981); John H. MacLachlan and Joe S. Floyd, Jr., *This Changing South* (Gainesville, FL, 1956); Frank E. Smith, *Look Away from Dixie* (Baton Rouge, LA, 1965); Harry S. Ashmore, *An Epitaph for Dixie* (New York, 1957). In 1983 the critic Fred Hobson observed “if pondering and examining the mind and soul of Dixie had seemed a Southern affliction before 1945,” since then it had “assumed epidemic proportions”: *Tell About the South: The Southern Rage to Explain* (Baton Rouge, LA, 1983), p. 297; and these, among many books, appear to prove that.
- 10 Barry Hannah, *Hey Jack!* (New York, 1988), p. 13. See also, Lee Smith, *Oral History* (New York, 1983), p. 292.
- 11 Harry Crews, *Florida Frenzy* (Gainesville, FL, 1993), p. 55. See also, Theodor Adorno, *Minima Moralia* (London, 1974), p. 235.
- 12 Connie Z. Atkinson, “‘Shakin’ Your Butt for the Tourist’: Music’s Role in the Identification and Selling of New Orleans,” in *Dixie Debates: Perspectives on Southern Cultures*, edited by Richard H. King and Helen Taylor (London, 1996), p. 154. See also, p. 155.
- 13 Sam G. Riley, *Magazines of the American South* (New York, 1986), p. 240. See also, Diane Roberts, “Living Southern in *Southern Living*,” in *Dixie Debates*, edited by King and Taylor, pp. 87, 90. On *Southern Living* see also, Peirce Lewis, “The Making of Vernacular Taste: The Case of *Sunset and Southern Living*,” in *Dumbarton Oaks Colloquium on the History of Landscape Architecture: XIV*, edited by John Dixon Hunt and Joachim Welsschke-Bulmahn (Washington, DC, 1993), pp. 107–18. On Southern “performance,” see Eric Sundquist, *To Wake the Nations: Race in the Making of American Literature* (Cambridge, MA, 1993), p. 273. On the popularity of country music, see Bill C. Malone, *Southern Music, American Music* (Lexington, KY, 1979); James C. Cobb, “From Muskogee to Luckenbach: Country Music and the ‘Southernization’ of America,” *Journal of Popular Culture*, XVI (1982), esp. 82, 88. On “Southern rock,” see Paul Wells, “The Last Rebel: Southern Rock and Nostalgic Certainties,” in *Dixie Debates*, edited by King and Taylor, pp. 115–29.
- 14 Blanche McCrary Boyd, *The Revolution of Little Girls* (New York, 1992), pp. 77–80.
- 15 Boyd, *Revolution of Little Girls*, p. 120. See also, Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism; or, The Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (London, 1991), p. 19. In this context, Jean Baudrillard’s analysis of “the liquidation of all referentials” and the process of “substituting signs of the real for the real itself” is also relevant: *Simulations* (New York, 1983), p. 4.
- 16 One clear illustration of this is the range of material covered in *Encyclopedia of Southern Culture*, edited by Charles R. Wilson and William Ferris (Chapel Hill, NC, 1989).
- 17 Ernest Gaines, *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman* (New York, 1972), p. 9; see also, p. 151; William Faulkner, “An Introduction to *The Sound and the Fury*,” *Mississippi Quarterly*, XXVI (1973), 412; *Conversations with Ernest Gaines*, edited by John Lowe (Jackson, MS, 1995), p. 61; Allan Gurganus, *Oldest Living Confederate Widow Tells All* (New York, 1989), p. xix.
- 18 Dorothy Allison, *Bastard Out of Carolina* (London, 1993), p. 26; see also, p. 64; M. A. Harper, *For the Love of Robert E. Lee* (New York, 1992), p. 37; Harry Crews, *A Childhood: The Biography of a Place*

- (1978), in *Classic Crews: A Harry Crews Reader* (London, 1993), p. 21; Cormac McCarthy, *The Crossing* (London, 1994), pp. 143, 155; Thulani Davis, *1959* (London, 1993), pp. 35–6.
- 19 Davis, *1959*, p. 35. See also, Jayne Anne Phillips, *Machine Dreams* (London, 1984), p. 3; Ellen Gilchrist, *The Annunciation* (London, 1984), p. 15; *Conversations with Gaines*, edited by Lowe, pp. 7, 17.
 - 20 Alice Walker, *Meridian* (London, 1983), p. 14.
 - 21 Julie K. Blackwelder, "Race, Ethnicity and Women's Lives in the Urban South," in *Shades of the Sunbelt*, edited by Miller and Pozetta, pp. 78, 88. See also, Ishmael Reed, "America: The Multi-national Society," in *Writin' is Fightin': Thirty-Seven Years of Boxing on Paper* (New York, 1988), p. 12.
 - 22 Boyd, *Revolution of Little Girls*, p. 3. See also, Bobbie Ann Mason, *Shilob and Other Stories* (London, 1988), p. 110; Allison, *Bastard Out of Carolina*, p. 23.
 - 23 Shirley Abbott, *Womenfolks: Growing Up Down South* (New Haven, CT, 1983), p. 31. See also, for accounts of themselves by Southern women, *Speaking for Ourselves: Women of the South*, edited by Maxine Alexander (New York, 1977).
 - 24 Helen H. King, "Black Women and Women's Lib," *Ebony*, March, 1971, p. 70. See also, Donald G. Mathews and Jane Sherron De Hart, *Sex, Gender, and the Politics of ERA: A State and the Nation* (New York, 1990), p. 145; *Hillbilly Women*, edited by Kathy Kahn (New York, 1973), pp. 19, 183; Dolores Janiewski, *Sisterhood Denied: Race, Gender and Class in a New South Community* (Philadelphia, PA, 1985), pp. 152–78.
 - 25 Crews, *Florida Frenzy*, pp. 33–4. See also, Caroline M. Dillman, "Southern Women: In Continuity or Change?" in *Women in the South: An Anthropological Perspective*, edited by Holly F. Mathews (Athens, GA, 1989), p. 17. On the problem of the relationship between material change and changes in perception, see also Susan Middleton-Deirn and Jackie Howsden-Eller, "Reconstructing Femininity: The Woman Professional in the South," in *Women in the South*, edited by Mathews, pp. 59–70. On the particular problems faced by black women, see Jones, *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow*. For a critique of Harry Crews's fictional representations of women, see Patricia V. Beatty, "Crews's Women," in *A Grit's Triumph: Essays on the Work of Harry Crews*, edited by David K. Jeffrey (Port Washington, NY, 1983), pp. 112–23.
 - 26 Hayden White, "Getting Out of History," in *Tropics of Discourse: Essays in Cultural Criticism* (Baltimore, MD, 1978), p. 17. See also Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature* (New York, 1977), p. 120. Also, Fredric Jameson, *The Political Unconscious: Narrative as a Socially Symbolic Act* (Ithaca, NY, 1981).
 - 27 Padget Powell, *Edisto* (New York, 1985), p. 182; see also pp. 9–10, 104–5, 177–8.
 - 28 Fred Chappell, *The Gaudy Place* (Baton Rouge, LA, 1994), p. 6. Clyde Edgerton, *Raney* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1985), *Walking Across Egypt* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1987), and *Killer Diller* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1991); T. R. Pearson, *A Short History of a Small Place* (New York, 1985), *The Last of How It Was* (New York, 1987), and *Call and Response* (New York, 1989); James Wilcox, *North Gladiola* (New York, 1985) and *Modern Baptists* (New York, 1989); Lee Smith, *Family Linen* (New York, 1985); Jill McCorkle, *July 7th* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1992); Robert Olen Butler, *A Good Scent from a Strange Mountain* (New York, 1993); Mary Gardner, *Boat People* (New York, 1995); Lan Cao, *Monkey Bridge* (New York, 1997). On those elements, old and new, in the cultural mosaic of the South that make it much more than a bipolar, biracial society, see George Brown Tindall, *Natives and Newcomers: Ethnic Southerners and Southern Ethnics* (Athens, Georgia, 1995); Eric Gary Anderson, "Native American Literature, Ecocriticism, and the South," in *South to a New Place: Region, Literature, Culture*, edited by Suzanne W. Jones and Sharon Monteith (Baton Rouge, LA, 2002), pp. 165–183; Maureen Ryan, "Outsiders with Inside Information," in *South to a New Place*, pp. 235–252.
 - 29 Davis, *1959*, p. 17. Ferrol Sams, *Ran With the Horseman* (New York, 1984); Jill McCorkle, *The Cheer Leader* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1984); Mark Childress, *A World Made of Fire* (London, 1985); Kaye Gibbons, *Ellen Foster* (Chapel Hill, NC, 1987); Larry Brown, *Father and Son* (London, 1997).

- 30 Christine Bell, *The Perez Family* (New York, 1990), p. 40; see also p. 57; Fredric Jameson, *Postmodernism, or, the Cultural Logic of Late Capitalism* (Durham, NC, 1991), p. 90; Roberto Fernandez, *Raining Backwards* (Houston, TX, 1988); Christina Garcia, *Dreaming in Cuban* (New York, 1992).
- 31 Interview with Walker Percy, in *Conversations with Walker Percy*, edited by Lewis A. Lawson and Victor A. Kramer (Jackson, MS, 1985), p. 69. See also William Faulkner, *Absalom, Absalom!* (New York, 1936), p. 261. It is, of course, Quentin Compson who observes: "Maybe nothing ever happens once and is finished"; and while it would be wrong to identify character and author, the points of coincidence – and the relevance of this observation to Faulkner's narrative habits of repetition and revision – should not be overlooked.

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