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Writing against the Odds: The South's Cultural and Literary Struggle against Progress and Modernity

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“Well, in the South we had so many servants. Gone, gone, gone. All vestige of gracious living! Gone completely! I wasn’t prepared for what the future brought me.“

Amanda Wingfield in the Glass Menagerie
by Tennessee Williams

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Introduction: Resisting and Loathing Modernity

"The past is never dead. It is not even past" (Faulkner 1976: 81), the lawyer Gavin Stevens unforgivingly says to Temple Drake in William Faulkner's *Requiem for a Nun* during the trial against her maid Nancy, who is accused of killing Temple's child.[1] Temple has told him, "Temple Drake is dead" (ibid. 80) to emphasize her allegedly changed and improved self and to express her determination not to take any responsibility for her actions in the past. She wants to put everything that has happened behind her and open a new chapter in her life. Stevens can neither accept nor understand such an attitude. For him, Temple's plan to entirely leave the past behind is futile and impossible to ever become reality. Nothing is ever forgotten or overcome, and the past will influence and haunt anybody trying to escape. The past not only won't but can't be subdued.

The ever-reappearing topic of the past overshadowing the presence and determining the future is a Southern subject *par excellence*. A persistent urge to look back and an almost loathing attitude toward progress and the modern way of life and fast-paced society are omnipresent in Southern culture, literature, and life. Author Allan Gurganus[2] says about his childhood and youth in North Carolina in the 1950s that it was like growing up in the nineteenth century. The South's past is in its present almost to the point of complete denial of the latter (see Grant 105f.).

The Civil War and the Reconstruction Era left the South economically and culturally isolated. But the War Between the States only finished what had started much earlier. The Southern claim to a special position, its feeling of moral and cultural superiority and distinctiveness, and its chosen isolation have its roots as early as in the beginning 18th century. These feelings and the need to cultivate and preserve a certain type of community and individual perceived as being superior only recurred even stronger after the shameful defeat the

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[1] *Requiem for a Nun* is the sequel to *Sanctuary*. Eight years have passed since Temple Drake, the daughter of a rich judge who ended up being a prostitute, was raped and abducted by the psychopath Popeye. She now is married with two children. Her nanny Nancy is tried and sentenced to death for murdering Temple's infant daughter.

[2] Allan Gurganus (1947-) is a contemporary author from North Carolina. His best-known novel is *Oldest Living Confederate Widow Tells All* (1984).

South suffered. The gap between the North and the South deepened tremendously, and soon the extreme isolation and seclusion became both voluntary and involuntary. The downfall and the exploitation during the era of Reconstruction left a scar that has been hurting until this present day. The unique situation first brought forth a literature that was mainly concerned with the conflict caused by a vicious, mostly Northern, antagonist but soon shifted to looking inward for the source of conflict, despair, and misery (see Tate 1968: VII). Literature became the expressive means of the peculiar Southern situation and its history of the war that had left the inner and outer Southern landscape wounded and drained.

Reviewing Southern literature and the cultural development of the last century, formulating a set of typical characteristics, and investigating the changes and developments, one will soon find that the works of contemporary authors like Barry Hannah, Larry Brown, or Cormac McCarthy[3] still circle around and debate the old themes and issues already disputed during the *Southern Renaissance.* They are in their core entirely unchanged presenting themselves traditionally in form of the novel and short story.

In my thesis I will argue that while modern society was on the rise and literary cosmopolitism was in full bloom in the rest of the United States, the South not only persistently ignored this, but also actively resisted and opposed such contents and agendas. Instead of too many choices, opportunities, and responsibilities, the Southerner is confronted with an impermeable, rigid society that draws both its pride and dysfunctions from its history and constant perpetuation thereof.

In a first step I will shortly review the Southern literary tradition with its historical, cultural, and literary roots. Then, in a second step I will put analytical focus on the constantly perpetuating choice of theme and form of the period examined, which hasn’t undergone any noteworthy changes for the last century. This constant perpetuation results in a stubborn state of keeping alive the old motifs, ideas, and issues, and essentially in not overcoming the paralyzing state of guilt, depravation, and misery seasoned with a pinch of pride and a feeling of exceptionalism and peculiarity. In a third step I will investigate the literary and cultural reasons for the stagnation described and examine the Southern identity that derives from the living in the past on every level possible and its continuous melancholic look over the shoulder.

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[3] Barry Hannah (1942-), an author from Oxford, Ms, is a renowned author awarded with numerous prices, whose work was nominated for the National Book Award and the Pulitzer Price.
Larry Brown (1951-2004) was an author from Oxford, Ms whose work was coined *Grit Lit* due to its down-to-earth and realistic Southern content and language.
Cormac McCarthy (1933-) is a native Tennesseean and the winner of the 2007 Pulitzer Price for his novel *The Road.* He is the author of *The Border Trilogy*.

Formally, the center of examination will be novels and short stories, which are to be analyzed regarding both literary and cultural background and origin. William Faulkner, Barry Hannah, Cormac McCarthy, and contemporary anthologized authors of short stories will be the main focus.

The most prominent representative of the Southern literature and flagship of the *Southern Renaissance* is William Faulkner of Oxford, Mississippi, but the works and ideas of contemporaries and other representatives of the *Renaissance,* e.g. Allen Tate, Eudora Welty, or Flannery O'Connor[4] are similarly important. From the end of that literary period in the 1950s until today many authors like Barry Hannah, Cormac McCarthy, Larry Brown and others, also show the specific characteristics defined by their predecessors. These unchanged choices and their reasons and consequences will be the main subject of this thesis.

The answers to the question where the literary and cultural reasons and roots of this backwardness, this longing, melancholic living in the past lie, are of utter importance to reach a deeper understanding of both Southern literature and culture of the last century and the present, with all its symbols and extensive use of myths. Both the historical and cultural circumstances create a very fertile breeding ground for a unique type of literature; they form, define and distinguish it, setting it apart from literature from other parts of the United States or Europe. This distinct atmosphere creates a certain type of self-perception, which draws a lot of its pride and identity from an inferiority complex paradoxically mixed with a sense of moral and cultural superiority.

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[4] Allen Tate (1899-1979) was a Southern poet, essayist, and literary critic from Kentucky. He was a member of the group of the *Fugitive Poets* and the *Southern Agrarians* at Vanderbilt University in Tennessee.

Eudora Welty (1909-2001) was an author, photographer, and literary critic from Mississippi. Her novel *The Optimist's Daughter* won the Pulitzer Price.

Flannery O'Connor (1925-1964) was a Southern Gothic novelist, short story writer, and essayist from Georgia with strong Christian tendencies in her writing.

This cultural and historical environment and its consequences lead to an innate melancholic longing for the bygone, for the South as it once was. May the missed have really ever existed or not.

For Allen Tate the Old South was “the last great moment in culture” and “all that was left was […] to commemorate its glory” and realize the “loss and […] failure” (Gray 3). Such a heavy historical baggage has been academically described from several different angles and in diverse contexts. Wolf Kindermann examines the historical reflections and references in Southern literature and its genealogy from the early 18th century until the *Southern Renaissance*. He argues that historical references are one of the most important constituents of Southern literature. They do not only occur after the Civil War but go back to the very hour of birth of the United States (see Kindermann 12). James C. Cobb describes in his *Most Southern Place on Earth* the construction of Southernness employing music and literature as an expressive means of its uniqueness. Cobb concludes that history has been shaping the South until this present day and declares the Mississippi Delta, *the* Deep South, even though seemingly “a most unlikely literary oasis” (Cobb 306) to have brought forth more writers than any other region in the South or the United States. In *Writing Southern Culture* Richard Gray attests to the South the gloomy celebration of the Southern past and sees an avid drawing towards and longing for the gone and lost. In addition to this he identifies its large influence on both cultural and literary development.

Even in the seemingly modern and modernist[5] development in the South, the rise of the *New Criticism* with its core group of the Southerners John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate, and later also Cleanth Brooks, many traditionalist and reactionary notions can be identified (see Halfmann).[6]

I will combine all these perspectives: identity defining, isolating, and gloomily commemorating, historical, cultural, and literary to attain a multilayered viewpoint. This will serve the purpose of showing the strings that constantly pull the South back, and to illuminate the cultural and literary paths trodden by the sorely historically aware Southerners.

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[5] I will use the terms *modernism* and *modernity*, the former describing “aesthetic modernity“ the latter being “the modernity of technology and social life” (Whitworth 3).

[6] I will elaborate on this in Chapter 3 when I talk about the evolution of the reactionary group of *Southern Agrarians* from the seemingly progressive and cosmopolitan movement publishing the magazine *The Fugitive* at Vanderbilt University.

It cannot be my intention to broadly trace all these arguments, but I will bundle them to exclusively put emphasis on the reach for history for the definition of identity and culture and the defiance of progress and modernity in the South, and to show it on all levels mentioned. For this, I will employ the examination of novels and short stories from the *Southern Renaissance* until today. Then I will identify characteristics and traits, such as the South's relationship with nature and animals, its sense of place, and its use of humor to deal with despair and brutalization, to find a way to live with the lethargic remaining in an unsatisfactory, wearing situation leading nowhere. These characteristics all point to the past and serve the treatment and processing and in the end the perpetuation of an unresolved historical burden and cultural heritage.

1. Southern Literary Tradition

Southern literature can be described as literature about the Southern part of the United States or as literature by authors from this region. As important geographical location is for Southern literature, it is not merely the geography of the birthplace that matters. Southernness is an inner place and an outlook on life as much as it is home soil.

Features of Southern literature include a recurring focus on the common history, sense of family, community, and the role of the individual within. Slavery[7], the Civil War, the *Lost Cause*, and the Reconstruction Era are common subjects and also constitute the Southern individual's identity, due to its internalization of these issues. These subjects recur often mythologized and altered, having entered the collective memory as universally valid and applicable. Barry Hannah, for example, extensively uses myths and mythologized historical events, while Elizabeth Madox Roberts interweaves Greek legend, ballad and folk songs, Scriptural stories, and well-known tales (see McDowell 30). She thought of the "wandering tenant farmer [as] a symbol for an Odyssey of Man as a wanderer buffeted about by the fates and the weathers" (ibid. 37). These images of the Odyssey, of the journey of man, and the mixture of historical images with myths are often used in Southern literature to emphasize both the trial and hardship of the South and the universality of the issues addressed.

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[7] Including both pro- and anti-slavery novels. For example Harriet Beecher-Stowe‘s *Uncle Tom‘s Cabin* (1852) and the responding so-called *anti-Tom novels.*

The look over the shoulder to the past had already begun with the Southern literature of the early 19th century, which was heavily influenced by classicist ideals of the old world. This literature always had an eye on Great Britain, for both audience and models (see Schulze 106). An educated class of planters determined the taste. After this early period, the Southern historical novel emerged, introducing the typical cast of the Southern belle and her male equivalent, the Southern gentleman. The historical novel has strong romantic tendencies and is socially and politically very traditional (see ibid. 107). Even in this time before the Civil War, the picture of the South as a unique place with a certain type of inhabitants and a special role within the United States was beginning to evolve, or in other words, its construction had begun. The South felt its people, way of life, gender roles, and cultural norms to differ from other regions' and it thought them worthy of prevalence and preservation.

After World War I a new literary period emerged: the *Southern Renaissance*, a period of bloom for Southern literature and the emergence of many Southern writers with recognition lasting to this day. It is a term used for the literature of the American South in the 1920s until the 1940s. It is called *Southern Renaissance* to indicate a height in productivity and popularity of the literature of the South. The choice of name is somewhat surprising and misleading, the term *Renaissance* implying a previous high time of Southern literature, which did not exist. For this reason Allen Tate even argues to call the *Southern Renaissance Southern Naissance* (see Tate 1968: IV).

Thematically, the *Southern Renaissance* is deeply rooted in the literary tradition of the South: its past, the defeat, and common guilt are on the plate (see Kindermann 1f). Before the *Southern Renaissance* Southern literature mostly glorified the antebellum period and the plantation tradition. Especially the Northern audience was merely interested in historic novels with beautiful and morally strong Southern belles and virtuous Southern gentlemen glorifying the old Southern way of life. During the *Renaissance* this had made room for a guilt-ridden, mythologized portrayal of Southern society, using nature, culture, and history as tools to perpetuate the innate longing for a long lost past and social order. This longed for society and history may even have never existed in the way it is portrayed. In the process of reproduction, mythologization, and instrumentalization there must occur deformation and reshaping according to the respective needs and perspective. It is always partly constructed once it is handed over to retelling and remembering of following generations. Walker Evans stressed this notion when he said to the art critic Hilton Kramer, „You can't write anything but lies about the past" (Kramer 16). During this process of tradition the past and historical baggage and heritage become the very own of every generation. While it is not overcome and readily incorporated into the present, it is nevertheless always partly constructed.

Although the literature of the antebellum South is not as widely acknowledged as the literature of the period after the Civil War, there are strong indications that the literature of the *Southern Renaissance* draws from the pre war-period thematically, figuratively, and narratively (see Kindermann 2). War, defeat, guilt, and racial conflicts are dominant themes of the Southern literature of this postwar period, and this presentation is in an obvious tradition of Southern literature presenting and describing history and constantly reflecting upon it (see ibid.). There are indications that building a communal spirit and the sense of belonging and social distance from other regions began in the Southern states as early as the beginning 18th century (see ibid. 3). References to the past on all levels, thematically, symbolically, and literary, are omnipresent.[8]

Leading figures of the *Southern Renaissance* are William Faulkner, Katherine Ann Porter, Caroline Gordon, Allen Tate, Robert Penn Warren, Eudora Welty,

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[8] Literary Modernism, emerging in the first half of the last century at the same time as the *Southern Renaissance,* is founded on the idea of an autonomous language without any reference. It tries to shed the historical baggage in favor of a fast, exciting, unpredictable present. This clearly is not the case with Southern literature, which is deeply embedded in history on every level.

Carson McCullers, and Elizabeth Madox Roberts (see Tate 1968: IX). William Faulkner can be rightly called the most prominent and most influential representative of the *Southern Renaissance* and beyond. One has a hard time finding a Southern author who doesn't state Faulkner as influential personally or artistically, or who doesn't mention him explicitly or implicitly either directly in his or her work or talking about it.[9] He is exemplary for the South of his time and due to the continuous thematic and formal perpetuating until the present, his is still the important vanishing point contemporary writers draw towards, or least have to acknowledge and find their position in relation to. William Faulkner is the flagship of the *Southern Renaissance*, the period when Southern literature was paid attention to countrywide and internationally, and the subjects of literature shifted from unquestioned glorification of the old ways and the planter tradition to dealing with the defeat, guilt, and the loss of the world once praised. Faulkner has been and remains a major reference for Southern authors, for example Larry Brown, whose literary well of inspiration is "sunk deep in the same ground Faulkner once called his little postage stamp of native soil" (Watson XIV), Barry Hannah whose stories have both by "psychological content and the language […] a clear connection to the wider scope of Faulkner's fiction" (Weston 25), or Cormac McCarthy who "is one of the very few writers to walk through the shadow of Faulkner's high style and survive the experience […] and yet, his style is hugely indebted to Faulkner's" (Bell 4). He took "the long circuitous route Faulkner took" (Arnold 1). Faulkner's unyielding importance for Southern authors is symptomatic for the actuality of the past. In his story *The Agony of T. Bandini* Barry Hannah describes Southern college students in the state of New York, who "were crazed over the work of William Faulkner, and even more crazed as their homesickness grew" (Hannah 1996c: 127f.). William Faulkner is the South, and he and his subjects are not overcome; they are still perpetuated by contemporary authors. Literary magazines like the *Oxford American* "are still riding the crest of the wave created by the [Southern] Renaissance"

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[9] Often contemporary writers will link themselves or advert to other Southern writers, the rootage in the literary past being a very important defining constituent. The protagonist in Lee Smith's story *The Bubba Stories* is an aspiring writer and says about her reading experiences that she has read Joseph Heller, Kurt Vonnegut, and Thomas Pynchon, but Flannery O'Connor became her favorite. She writes her senior thesis on O'Connor's work „feeling a secret and strong kinship" (Smith 18).

(Wittenberg 21). Faulkner is so important because his situation is typical for the tension and strain the Southern author felt and still feels. While Faulkner's contemporary Ernest Hemingway was part American part cosmopolitan, Faulkner himself was part American part Southern. He surely does address American themes and subjects, but is sure to come back to the great division of America, the Civil War and its aftermath. Born twenty years after the end of the war, he grows up to recognize and address in his work the "unresolved and ambiguous issue of Southern attitudes to modernism, chiefly its fierce opposition to modernization as a kind of foreign intrusion" (Karl 3). The South he and the authors who followed him portray presents itself as though the war was not over, yet. Violence permeates everything: marriages, attitudes, racial relations, and conflicts of all kinds attempting desperately to preserve the known and to hold on to the dwindling (see ibid. 5).

The tradition and pattern of Southern literature since the beginning of the *Southern Renaissance* in the 1920s need to be systematically examined in order to constitute a background to which the new Southern literature with its continuing melancholic look over the shoulder to the past can be compared to.

In the following chapters I will identify its roots and a set of defining characteristics in Southern literature during and since the *Southern Renaissance* and discuss its perpetuated motifs, strategies, and most importantly its almost non-existing divergence from the traditional *Southern Gothic*.

1.2. Historical, Cultural, and Literary Roots

In Southern literature, as I will present, life, lifestyle, language, and culture are inseparably entwined. The home soil with its history and the language of the native people is not just inspiration but driving force for the Southern author. Often motifs, such as heavy drinking, a melancholic longing for the past childhood, a mythological approach to the historical baggage of the South, a connection and infatuation with nature and the wilderness, and last but not least, the perception of personal and collective history as formable and subject to interpretation and enlargement, essentially as the very beginning of storytelling, are repeated biographically and literarily. Just like Faulkner who turned his native Lafayette County into his mythical Yoknapatawpha County (see Taylor 137), first introduced in his novel *As I Lay Dying*, Barry Hannah said he had breathed Southern history all his life and turned it into literature (see Weston 45). James Dickey[10] even lived the reckless destructive life of his characters himself. Southern history is the ghost that is ever present in their literature, even when it is not explicitly addressed. It is the mythologized and constructed Southern history that for its authors is simultaneously curse and blessing. It is told and retold, and therefore subject to further alternation. For the Southern storyteller this does not even exclude personal history. Faulkner and Dickey have both enlarged and modified their personal history to create a persona they feel fit. Faulkner added the letter u to his name, invented an honorable military career for himself, sometimes spoke with a false British accent, and even walked with a cane for a while, implying a war injury. Dickey also enlarged his military history, turning his position as a radar operator into a pilot in a night-fighter. His son Christopher writes about him, “my father had begun to make himself up. […] He would not tolerate for a minute the world as it was” (C. Dickey 30).

1.2.1. Historical Roots

The Civil War did not end the conflict between the former Union and Confederates. The emancipation of all slaves shook the white South to its core. White former mistress Gertrude Thomas emphasizes the depth of the gap when she writes in 1865,

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[10] James Dickey (1923-1997) was educated at Vanderbilt University, home of the Southern *New Critics*, and is a winner of the National Book Award. He is a renowned poet and novelist, his most famous novel being *Deliverance*, which was published in 1970.

> the war is over and again we become a part of the United States – how united will depend alone upon treatment we receive at the hands of the North. It will prove to their interest to be very discreet for the South will prove a smouldering volcano requiring but little to again burst forth (quoted in Harris 229).

Reconstruction proved tumultuous and full of conflicts, but the volcano did not erupt as Thomas predicted, but kept smoldering for the years to come. The Civil War, the Reconstruction, and its aftermath left the relations between the former war parties tense. This tension and the following events and conflicts had great influence on the effort to preserve, cultivate, and praise the damaged social order. The influx of Northern "carpetbaggers"[11] angered Southerners and pressured them into a defensive position. It aroused the wish to clearly distinguish the South from so-called "foreign intrusion". Modernity, modern society, and modern way of life were identified with the Northern intrusion and thereupon despised and averted. Allen Tate describes this historical situation with the following words:

> [t]he destruction of the Old South released native forces of disorder and corruption which were accelerated by the brutal exploitation of the carpetbaggers and an army of occupation; thus the old order of dignity and principle was replaced by upstarts and cynical materialists (Tate 1966: 276).

Foreign intrusion is despicable, but intrusion from Northerners is even worse. It is the symbol of defeat and can hardly be stood. In Faulkner's *Light in August* Joanna Burden, isolated in her large decaying house, is from a family who had moved to Jefferson after the Civil War. The community sees in her the enemy and punishes her with exclusion (see Lloyd-Smith 119).

The cultivation of historical memory, namely of the prewar era and the Civil War itself, also plays a great role in the coming into being of the – also partly constructed - picture of the South. The South perceived and still perceives the war as the most important event in American history. One hundred years after the end of the war, Robert Penn Warren wrote that the "war still grows in our consciousness […] larger than life, massively symbolic in its inexhaustible and sibylline significance" (quoted in Grant 93).

The preservation and cultivation of Southern antebellum culture and historical memory is closely connected to commerce and tourism. It is the commercialized “celebration of the South’s architecture, landscape, and history” (Brundage 184). At first appealing to the Northern tourist because of its mild climate, the railroad and growing numbers of paved streets, the tourist sector evolved into one of the most important economic branches. The late 19th century witnessed a sudden change in the perception of the South’s climate from contagious and deadly to therapeutic and healthy, which triggered a great interest in the South as a vacation destination. After the period of slow reconciliation after the Civil War and Reconstruction, the Northern traveler focused more on the “sublime, romantic, [and] serene” (ibid. 186) of the Southern towns and landscape than on animositous feelings. A tourist infrastructure had to be built when the demand and change in perception became obvious, because none had ever existed, not even before the Civil War. In the beginning the focus of tourist promoters lay on the climate, but soon it shifted to nostalgia with Charleston as the leading city in this approach (see ibid. 194). Soon historical associations, the celebration of historical events or sightseeing, and the general reference to the “Old South” in advertisement, became a large part of the tourism industry in the Upper and Deep South.[12] The commercialization of the recent history - slavery, the microcosm of the plantation, the Civil War – combined with the advantage of the beautiful landscape and the mild climate was perfected by the “modern comfort [of] the paved highway” (ibid. 198). Now everything on display was also easily accessible. Soon a re-evaluation of this recent history took place (see ibid. 199). Racial issues were covered up, and the picture of the childlike black in need of guidance with the benevolent Southern gentleman to readily provide it was perpetuated. The institution of slavery was glorified and said to have made the Southern civilization, culture, and morale what it is. The common tourist attractions and advertisement portrayed race relations as harmonious, and this fact was taken as factual proof of the benevolent white rule during slavery. Nevertheless realities were very different; white supremacy was continuously ensured through dishonest practices. Black elected leaders were driven from office and massive fraud took place to anticipate democratic victory in districts with a black majority (see Harris 246) and to guarantee "the fundamental socioeconomic supremacy of all whites over all blacks" (Cobb 184).

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[11] „Carpetbaggers" is a term used for Northerners who came to the South during the Reconstruction Era, bringing only a carpetbag, a type of medium-sized travel bag, hoping to make a fortune and to gain political power exploiting the defeated South without intending to stay.

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[12] The Azalea Festival in Charleston, launched in 1934, makes clear “the shift away from the climate“ and scenery the tourist machinery had undergone. It is a nostalgic spectacle focusing on “local color” (Brundage 219).

Northern tourists in the South were often under the impression of the migration of African Americans from the South to their own home states, which had created social tensions there. They often found the portrayal of the bygone situation convincing and had the impression that it had not been so bad after all. The tourist industry was very racist and instrumentalized "picturesque" market women and servile workers, while it completely ignored the black middle-class and tried to hide it from the tourists' eyes (see ibid. 212). Its existence didn't fit in the picture of blacks being inferior, childlike, and content in serving positions. The tourist industry was in white hands from the very beginning and in Charleston and elsewhere it triggered segregation and the dominance of whites over the public space and the interpretation of history (see ibid. 221). It clearly were "whites, not blacks, who looked back with nostalgia on" the old days (Harris 247). Even the centennial celebrations of the Civil War seemed very much to be only a celebration and commemoration of the Confederacy and its cause (see Grant 93). The advent of tourism in the South gave the white elites even more of a platform to present, defend, and preserve "their version of the past" and at the same time "renew their cultural power" which was left broken or at least injured after the Civil War (see Brundage 224).[13] The privileged group of the white part of the Southern people is "privatizing the past" (ibid. 342). Until today, the question if white Southerners are willing to accept an "inclusive version of the past" (ibid. 317) is continually raised on many different occasions. At the moment, two different versions are still paralleled and no integration of the two is in sight, while both sides work agitatedly to promote their interpretation (see ibid. 327).

The "old ways" were romanticized, memorialized, and bemoaned. The "romance of the Old South" was and is being exploited. Racial harmony, grand impressive colonial architecture, nostalgic atmosphere, and the famous Southern hospitality were put on display and up for sale for tourists (see ibid. 201). It was a "mix of nostalgia, revelry, and boosterism" (ibid. 221). History was boiled down to romantic remnants and only those aspects of the past that suited the purpose of the romanticization of the South were honored and remembered. A certain idea and image of the South was turned into a commodity (see Gray 8).

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[13] In 1921 the town of Colfax, La, erected a monument that read „In the loving memory of the three heroes [who had fallen] in the Colfax Riot fighting for White Supremacy" (Harris 248).

Soon there was the need for an even more commercialized preservation and presentation. The late twenties of the last century witnessed a shift from women-led private volunteerism to male-led government initiative for the presentation of the historic heritage. The city of Charleston in South Carolina serves as an outstanding paradigm of the exploitation of history and the entrepreneurship described. Interestingly, in midst of this creation of such a modernizing and revolutionary new economical branch, there was a strong anti-modern sentiment in the arts and architecture. No cubic forms, no "form follows function", clear lines, or merely functional and rational buildings can be found. Southern architecture is inspired by classical motifs, has strong playful elements and many details such as pillars and picturesque decoration. Southern paintings showed natural settings, hunting motifs, horses, game, dogs, or untouched landscapes. People were depicted stereotypically regarding race, class, and gender.

The preservation movement served the purpose of preservation and celebration of the old ways, and the defending and glorifying of them for Northern tourists, and if there was money to be made while doing so, the better. Charleston more and more turned into a museum; a historic district was created in 1931 (see ibid. 203). The "restored" Charleston evoked in the tourists a feeling of regret for the "vanished old way of life" (ibid. 208), which was innate in the Southerner all along. The preservation of Charleston was supposedly not only for the sake of Charleston but also for the entire United States. It was supposed to portray and educate about a superior social structure, order, and functioned as a "protocol […] of the past" (ibid. 209). Modern life had deprived the people of such an easy, relaxed, and classy way of living and substituted it with the hassle of a rushed and stressful life. The lost art of living was supposedly still preserved in the South. This version was over time also accepted by most Northerners and foreigners (see Harris 248), and displaced other possible interpretations and depictions (see Fuller 40). The preoccupation with the history and making it central in the tourist industry was a means "to escape the banality of modernity" (Brundage 222), and artifacts by African Americans found great popularity among tourists serving as "antithesis of machine-age production" (ibid. 212).

Even today the South holds pride in having resisted the unhealthy and disturbing modern ways. The city of West Point, Mississippi, advertises itself on its website by saying it is a place that has defied modern society and still upholds last generation's values. Life is simple but the best kind to be found. "West Point captures a simplicity of life rarely found in today's fast-paced society. [It] embodies what was best about America a generation ago" (www.wpnet.org). Editor Ray Wittenberg writes in *The Oxford American* that Southerner "must foster Southern culture, one of the grand achievement in [the] region's history" (Wittenberg 21).

The South has tried to preserve and perpetuated an image of culture, honor, bravery, and manhood from the antebellum era and war times. Andrew Lytle's[14] novel *The Long Night* is a novel about such values, about a frontier set of attitudes towards justice, community, honor, revenge, and family, which are threatened by modernity. Andrew Lytle had himself called modernity a state of only "artificial pleasures" (Owsley 2f.).

Reconstruction has left the white South drained and with vanishing economical and political power (see Harris 247), and it was never was ready for the end of its grand time of bloom. Amanda laments about this in Tennessee William's *Glass Menagerie,* "Well, in the South we had so many servants. Gone, gone, gone. All vestige of gracious living! Gone completely! I wasn't prepared for what the future brought me" (Williams 50). Or as the narrator in James Dickey's *Deliverance* puts it more harshly,

> "You would think that the South did nothing but dose itself and sing gospel songs; you would think that the bowel of the southerner were forever clamped shut; that he could not open and let natural process flow through him" (J. Dickey 33).

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[14] Andrew Lytle (1902-1995) was a poet, novelist, and playwright from Tennessee. He was educated at Vanderbilt University, a recipient of the National Book Award, and was the youngest of the *Southern Agrarians* (see Owsley 5).

1.2.2. Cultural Roots

Since and even before the Civil War the history of the relationship and perception of the Northern and the Southern states of the United States have been marked by stereotypes and prejudices. But one can rightly claim that some “traits and details are purely Southern” and some “are open to a broader arena of people” (McCorkle VII).[15] “There is an innate awareness of ‘the war’ even when you are liberal minded and very relieved about how it turned out” (ibid. VIII). Along with this comes a great sense of nostalgia and melancholy already planted in small children. The unspecific feeling of an unnamable loss is a large part of Southern self-perception and state of mind, and as a result it holds crucial parts of literature. This lamenting of the lost, the better past, is expressed in numerous stories. In *The Faithful* Paul Prather[16] depicts a sad last gathering of a small Southern church, while in Stephen Coyne’s[17] *Hunting Country* an old man bemoans the deep and untouched woods he used to hunt in (see Coyne 200), and in Lucia Nevai’s[18] *Faith Healer* a man criticizes modern people’s nonexistent patience when it comes to food and its preparation (see Nevai 225).

Cynthia Shearer,[19] who names her teacher Barry Hannah as the most important catalyst of her writing, says in an interview

> I think this world is full of books written by people who want to whine about how their parents failed them. I wanted to write about how the world failed my parents, and how their children got caught in the crossfire between history and my parents’ marriage (www.shs.starksville.com).

Shearer does not blame personal failure for her family’s misery but history itself. The world failed her parents; history did them in.

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[15] Naturally, this, to a certain extent, also applies to the Northern or Western part of the United States, and although an examination of the set of Northern traits and details and their differences to the Southern set would be interesting, they cannot be subject of discussion here. I argue that the South has a special position within the United States and therefore its stereotypical presentation and actual peculiarities have a somewhat broader range than their Northern counterparts. I will restrict my inquiries to the Southern set and will only contrast them to the Northern correspondents when helpful for my argument.

[16] Paul Prather is an award-winning contemporary Southern author, minister, and newspaper columnist from Kentucky.

[17] Stephen Coyne is a contemporary Southern author and professor of English.

[18] Lucia Nevai is a contemporary author of short stories and one novel so far.

[19] Cynthia Shearer (1955-) is a novelist from Oxford, MS and former curator of Rowan Oak, the home of William Faulkner. She has published two novels, *The Wonder Book of the Air* (1996) and *The Celestial Jukebox* (2005).

The South as a poor and somewhat isolated region with the cultural humiliation of the lost war has, as any other such group, a great need to tell its story. This need has not yet subsided and is perpetuated and kept alive through constant retelling. Southern literature is about despair, tragic comedy, destruction and longing (see McCorkle VII). All of these traits make Southern identity, outside perception, and its literature very unique. Southern literature receives a lot of praise and attention and it is widely celebrated. It is the South's special situation that brings forth a special type of literature and a large body of work by Southern authors.[20]

The question remains unanswered to what extent this identity and these widely known stereotypes are based on literary and cultural constructions and to what extent on actualities and real experiences. It is a given fact that construction and re-construction is inevitable and the picture of the South right and left of the Mississippi is sketched partly by its literature and art. The photographer Walker Evans has heavily influenced the image of the South with his work and in particular with the book *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, on which he collaborated with the journalist, poet, novelist, and critic James Agee.[21] They worked for *Fortune* magazine and were supposed to portray sharecroppers during the Depression (see Mellow 309). They portrayed white, poor tenant farmers in the Deep South showing their hard lives, simple houses and belongings. Walker Evans's pictures show run-down shacks, people dressed in rags, bare wooden rooms, filthy children, and plain schoolhouses looking like small barns. Prematurely aged faces showed poverty and hardship, children had the serious faces of adults.[22] Evans and Agee managed to walk the thin line between exposure and the satisfaction of voyeuristic wants, but portrayed the people and their desperate situation respectfully. With Evan's disdain for "artiness" and anything fashionable about photography he showed the poor South with attempted objectivity and a "hard-edged and no-nonsense approach" (ibid. 24). Even before Evans worked on *Let Us Now Praise Famous Men*, which was published in 1941, he illustrated a book about Southern antebellum architecture in 1935 (see ibid. 625). He traveled the South visiting mansions, most of them in ruins and abandoned (see Appendix, picture 1). He portrayed "moldering and romantic plantations" (Mellow 238), some of them deserted, some of them still inhabited like the Belle Hélène plantation house (see Appendix, picture 2). It was in

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[20] A symptom of this phenomenon is that there has not yet emerged a successful and enduring Western or Northern counterpart to the celebrated annual series of short fiction *New Stories from the South* (see Gatreaux VII). During my research I encountered the annual series *Best of the West*, featuring short stories about or by authors from the West. Apparently this Western series wasn't very successful, subsiding after only four issues in the late 1980s and early 1990s. Allison Graham argues that this is the case because the West has overcome its status as an imaginary stereotypical landscape, which is clearly not the case with the South (see Graham 335).

[21] Cormac McCarthy took bricks from the house James Agee grew up in and built a wall in his own house with them (see Arnold 4). This could be seen as a metaphorical attempt to incorporate the other writer's spirit and genius in his own life and work, or at least as an honorary gesture. This is a pattern to be witnessed with much of Southern literature and many authors. As much as they share a body of themes, ideas, and formal characteristics, they are also often educated at the same universities, have the same attitude towards literature and the role of the poet, and a lot of times identical references.

> incipient decay but still occupied by the remnants of the once-prominent du Plessix family. The chicken coop and hen yard […] indicated how low the family fortunes had fallen. A more commanding […] metaphor was the huge dead tree that had fallen, uprooted, in front of the once-grand but rotting colonnade – the ruin of a gone society (Mellow 235).[23]

In 1936 Evans traveled the South for the Farm Security Administration (FSA) with, as an agency member advises him, the purpose of "showing the relationship of the land to the cultural decay" (ibid. 287). A similar project was Erskine Caldwell's[24] 1937 documentation *You have Seen their Faces*, which also showed the South's misery in gloomy and hopeless pictures (see Schulze 448). He emphasized the importance to maintain and support the people's connection to the earth and soil expressing his skeptical view on industrialism (see ibid.).

Twelve years later, in 1948, *Vogue* hired Walker Evans to photograph for a six-page spread for an article called *Faulkner's Mississippi* (see Mellow 514). Again, the subjects were "ruined plantation houses, muleteams in the plowed fields, tenant farm houses with dog-trots, crossroad stores, […], cemeteries and stone monuments" (ibid. 515). Evan's illustrations of the South, even Faulkner's South, were obviously not only a documentation of architecture and landscape but also one of the passed culture and its remnants. They

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[22] The Report of the President's Committee on Farm Tenancy in 1937 stated that 1.1 million white families in the South were tenant farmers or sharecroppers, which forced them to live in extreme poverty with little hope of improvement (see Kidd 110).

[23] Often impoverished planters held onto their property, most of them never reconciling „themselves to the challenge of the new society" (Harris 247).

[24] Erskine Caldwell (1903-1987) was a Southern author who addressed the problems and issues of so-called white trash people in Georgia (see Schulze 447).

documented the decaying beauty and the miserable status quo and shaped the picture of the South both within and outside of its borders. Evans's choice of objects is a statement in itself, something the assignment not necessarily had called for, and actively both mirrors and shapes the perspective on Southern culture, its defeat, and the necessity to turn to the past to utterly understand it. This pattern of reference and cultivation has started even before the Civil War, as early as the demarcation of the states of Virginia and North Carolina in the mid-18th century. The South started very early to draw the line between itself and regions that developed differently especially regarding ethics, gender roles, and morals. While this was perceived as isolationist tendencies and regression, the South tried even at this early stage to protect its ideals from progress perceived as deterioration (see Kindermann 15).

This awareness, this melancholy, and the picture of the South within and without its borders reflect upon literature and have immense impact on it. The social and cultural environment and the vivid oral tradition that helped preserve remnants of old ballads, tales, and myths from the times of the frontier and the antebellum period full of metaphors, irony, and melancholy resulted in richly mythical poetics (see Cowan 7). "There is still, even in twenty-first-century America, a quality unique to the South that permeates much of its fiction" Tyler writes when asked whether there still is a specific type of Southern literature (Tyler VII). This was a phenomenon that defies the coordination of America, she states, even contemporary fiction "has a Southern feel to it" (ibid.) that rather grows stronger in Southern literature instead of vanishing, as she had thought ten years ago (see ibid.).

1.2.3. Literary Roots

The genre of *Southern Gothic*, which is very typical for Southern literature, is a subgenre of the *Gothic Novel*. Just like the gothic style of architecture, gothic literature is often perceived as being inscrutable, obscure, deceiving, unpredictable, and dizzying. Traditional gothic literature is full of supernatural occurrences, and it tries to revive and incorporate folkloristic, mythic, and supernatural elements, which the modernity of the 18th century has tried to eliminate. Dark and gloomy castles are popular gothic settings, preferably wholly or at least partly ruined (see Blair X).

Horace Walpole is said to have invented literary gothic in 1764 with his novel *The Castle of Otranto*. It is set in medieval times, the dark ages from an enlightened point of view. His novel features fantastic, oversized occurrences, the obscure, and dark magic. The appearances and encounters with ghosts very much frighten the characters and spread fear and horror, but everything frightening happens outside of the human body or mind (see ibid. IIX). A ghost haunts a princess, an oversized helmet appears spontaneously in a courtyard, but the horror remains an outer horror, a fright of something other than horrific facets or perceptions of oneself one cannot cope with. Then, during the 18th century, with the shift from the beginning of Gothic literature to the classic Gothic novel, credited to Ann Radcliffe, we see a sudden change in the location of horror: it had moved inwards, it had a more psychological context (see Ringe 105). Weird occurrences now only may seem supernatural, but they are not; it all happens within the mind and imagination of the protagonist (see ibid. X), and has a firm basis in reality. The early European Gothic literature is defined by a set of characteristics, which can be found in *American* and *Southern Gothic* in different shapes and disguises, among them "extreme situations, anxiety, darkness, threat, paranoia; […] ancient houses, castles, monasteries, dungeons, […] ghosts, monstrous and grotesque creatures; pain, terror, horror, and sadism" (Lloyd-Smith 133).

Gothic literature being a European phenomenon deriving from England, the American Gothic novel had to adapt to its own situation, nature, and environment, and the American Gothic novel evolved with Edgar Allan Poe and Nathaniel Hawthorne as its most prominent representatives. Charles Brockden Brown introduced in 1844 with his novel *Castle Dismal* the classic American Gothic novel (see Schulze 108) and the American romanticism grew darker and crueler.[25] William Gilmore Simms (1806-1870), a poet, novelist, and historian from South Carolina, exemplifies this in his work. He already addresses Southern tradition and history (see ibid. 109).

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[25] Hawthorne's and Poe's prose, is a form of *Romantic Gothic* (see Baudelaire 8), influenced by the German Gothicists. During the period of Romanticism the noticeably darker Gothic romance emerged. Edgar Allen Poe can be called the first short story theorist and one of the first American Gothic writers.

In the American Gothic genre the reader encounters ruined lives instead of ruined buildings, and the bizarre and the obscure in the American landscape provides the setting (see Blair XV).[26] The reader doesn't encounter mad monks, flying dead virgins, or appearances of any other sort, but "madness, persecution, violence and spiritual desolation" (ibid. XV). The American Gothic "setting is the place of self-haunting and self-destructiveness" (ibid. XVI f.). Decaying houses, personal lives, morals, and communities are the common backgrounds and subjects the *American Gothic Novel* deals with. But it didn't just substitute the remote house for the castle, American cities and wilderness for the monastery; it used the Gothic elements in fiction to express the differences in the American situation and conditions. These differences include the frontier experience with extreme uncertainty, violence, and loneliness, racial tensions evolving from slavery and the conflicts with the Native Americans, and the absence of a developed society. Even in obviously non-Gothic texts, authors, such as James Fenimore Cooper, use Gothic elements to address such conditions. They do not only adapt the Gothic mode because it is fashionable, but because the described situations call for it (see Lloyd-Smith 4).

The past and the dealing with and overcoming it, is a major subject in American Gothic. The past repeats itself in the individual inevitably, caught in a net of repetition caused by its own unawareness of its needs, drives, and traumata. Alan Lloyd-Smith compares this to Freud's *Nachträglichkeit*, a reaction to trauma, in which an experience can only be fully felt and understood while reliving it at a later time (see ibid. 2f.). The very American notion, of the past overshadowed and eventually overcome by the present, in which anything can happen and every wrong can be turned into a right of some sort, is overruled by the relentless *return* of the past, of the repressed and denied, of the buried secret that subverts and corrodes the present, of whatever the culture does not want to know or admit (see ibid.). This, of course, is the reason why the Gothic mode appealed to such an extent to the Southern literature.

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[26] It is almost impossible to find a benign depiction of nature. In *Southern Gothic* literature nature is always portrayed as overbearing, overwhelming, harsh; an antagonist, if not enemy. This will later be discussed with the examination of the relationship between man, nature and beast; especially in Cormac McCarthy's *Border Trilogy*.

Southern Gothic, American Gothic literature set in the South, combines the elements of traditional Gothic literature with mythological symbols and the memory and dealing with the collective traumata of the lost Civil War, poverty and depravation, and the social heritage of slavery. Since the beginning of the 19th century, a common Southern community is beginning to develop and with this the glorifying of the so-called "Southern ways" makes its arrival. This ends with the defeated South in the Civil War and thus, a Southern type of Gothic literature emerges, addressing Southern topics in front of Southern backgrounds with Southern characters. The Gothic mode addresses fear, passion, cruelty, violence, and these subjects tend to reinforce cultural standards. And again, ruinous is the atmosphere and the surroundings; "Southerners are fascinated by almost anything in ruins, be it graveyards, mansions, barns, or cars, and [the] literature reflects that fascination" (Rash 67). Southern social order has failed to prevail, and symbolically the outside is in ruins, too. The "imagination of disaster" is one of the great " constants of Southern self-fashioning" (Gray 4).

In Mark Richard's[27] short story *Memorial Day* "[d]eath stood leaning against a tree scraping fresh manure off his shoe with a stick" (Richard 66). Here death, waiting in front of a poor family's small house, is the *Southern Gothic* version of the apparition of giant warrior helmets in court yards of half-rotten English or Italian castles. He is personalized and the young boy for whom he has come, talks to him mistaking him for the landlady's son. The way death is portrayed in this story, ironically and rather human, both uses and persiflages the Gothic mode at the same time, arriving at a new Southern Gothic.

Southern journalist S.L. Price writes about his first impression of Memphis that it had "the high rhythm of melodious rot. You could almost hear the termites chewing away" (Price 124). But even in this seeming state of discomfort, the city is "only half-disappointed that progress had passed it by" (ibid.). Disdain for modernity leaks out of every pore of the city of Memphis, making it, the rotten once glamorous place, the perfect breeding ground and scenery for Southern Gothic. The stringency, the legacy, becomes quite clear if one juxtaposes Faulkner's sets of rotting towns and communities with McCarthy's likewise desperate backgrounds with rundown farms, abandoned buildings and smothering social circumstances. Although forty years have gone by, there is little indication for that. Comparing these two similar settings and presentations of ideas of community and the individual in it, the innate horrors of life itself, and the inevitability of fate with Price's 2007 account of a first visit to Memphis reveals that another forty years after McCarthy, there again is no change to be witnessed.

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[27] Mark Richard (1960-) is a short story writer and novelist from Louisiana.

Horror, decay, and neurosis are in- and outside, and the strong Gothic elements in *Southern Gothic* clearly shine through. One half of Flannery O'Connor's stories end with a shocking death, be it suicide or a vicious murder. Other themes include madness, alienation and the dark abyss of human nature (see Paulson IX). In her story *A Good Man is Hard to Find* escaped convict the Misfit kills a whole family. Foreshadowing, the owner of the diner where the family eats dinner before they head out towards their death says, "Everything is getting terrible. I remember the day you could go off and leave your screen door unlatched. Not no more" (O'Connor 116). Those good times are gone and now everything is uncertain and dangerous. In *Southern Gothic* people are spooked, haunted, hunted, despaired, disturbed. In Peter Taylor's[28] *A Spinster's Tale* old Mr. Speed who monster-like drags himself past the house spooks young Elizabeth several times a week, closely watched by the teenage girl. The reader is left alone with neurotic Elizabeth pacing the house scared and psychologically prematurely aged, "afraid for Elizabeth, afraid for everyone, afraid for ourselves" (Carverlee 129). Elizabeth is afraid of Mr. Speed, men in general, afraid of herself. She is secluded in a huge mansion in Nashville and roams the house with nothing to do but circle around herself (see ibid. 130). She is the *Southern Gothic* equivalent to the princess in distress, her mansion is the Gothic castle, and the horror is in her triggered by Mr. Speed's appearances.

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[28] Peter Taylor (1917-1994) was an author from Tennessee. He was educated at Vanderbilt University and was John Crowe Ransom's student. He received the Pulitzer Prize for his novel *A Summons to Memphis.*

While the subject in modernism collapses faced with the anonymity and overwhelming size and pace of the modern city and mass society, the Southern city plainly refuses to even become such a place, not being able to let go of the past, leaving its subject with quite a different set of problems. The Southern society is non-permeable, controlling, and invasive and puts a lot of pressure on its subjects. This pressure and confinement are the equivalents to modern anonymity. The confining situation and historical burden produces ulcerous growths, such as pathological behavior of all kind, fear, and misery. The authors of the *Southern Renaissance* are anti-modern; they “chafed against Modernity” (see Underwood 144).

Although the surrounding often cries doom and disaster, the action is still placed inside the characters, not so much outside. Southern Gothic fiction evolves from an inner conflict not from one with an antagonist (see Tate 1968: VII).[29] The individual’s internal conflict with its surrounding, society and its role within replaces the fight with an opponent. The horror will be where it is most harmful and not to be eliminated or escaped, within the person, in his or her mind, thoughts, visible sometimes through poise, diction, and behavior, and written in tortured faces. The horror is inside a person, inside a family, inside a community or society. An example for a symbol of intruded evil is the psychopath Popeye in William Faulkner’s *Sanctuary.* Impotent, he rapes Temple Drake with a corncob; she has thought he was locked out of the barn, but he was already inside. He, the harmful evil without any conscience had found a way inside, even when he was thought to be banned and locked out (see Lloyd-Smith 145).

In the 57th issue of the literary magazine *Oxford American* writers were asked to write an ode to the South. The South and these odes are already on the introductory page described as “mysterious, weird, yummy, sublime, and unexpected” (*Oxford American* 49). That is *Southern Gothic* in a nutshell. It is the perfect mixture between Gothic and South, the Gothic elements applicable tools to convey the issues dealt with by Southern literature.

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[29] Mark Twain’s *Huckleberry Finn,* set in Mississippi at the beginning of the 19th century is the first novel to actually make this shift (see Tate 1968: VII).

In *Southern Gothic* literature the individual is comparably small and incapable when it is faced with its uncanny environment, nature, and society. This can be observed very well in Faulkner's *Light in August* where protagonist Joe Christmas is isolated from small-town life, the community, and himself. Faulkner is fascinated with the outsider, his or her struggle and the reactions and behavior he or she encounters. He discusses imprisonment, literally and figuratively, and describes the protagonist, who is, released from incarceration, rejected again and struggling. He describes crippled people, mentally limited characters, and emotionally broken children who never have a chance in life.

Lester Ballard, the protagonist in Cormac McCarthy's *Child of God*, is also an isolated individual to the extreme. He is almost beast-like, severely disturbed and perverse. His career as a criminal outcast starts when he is clubbed over the head when he tried to stop the auctioning of his farm. This can be seen metaphorically for his expulsion and isolation (see Grammer 30). He begins to collect dead bodies, only half-consciously, and definitely without any form of guilt or remorse. From the very start he is psychologically dysfunctional and personally and emotionally miserable. He lives in a community that rejects him, and again decaying houses, run-down estates, rusty cars are the background for Ballard's gruesome roaming and killing. While he wears his victims' clothes, the reader witnesses the dump keeper's deranged family. They live in unimaginably filthy conditions in a hopelessly crowded house. Unnecessary cruelty towards animals completes the Southern Gothic picture *par excellence*. Cows are shot, their heads ripped off, and toddlers eat baby birds alive. Their world has fallen apart.

Estrangement is one main subject which is widely dealt with. Mental or physical differences or difficulties set the main character apart from his or her environment, and cause tensions, misunderstandings, hurt feelings, or even violence.

As seen with many Faulkner and other *Southern Gothic* novels, the decay permeates everything: the inner and outer landscape, townscape, housescape. It creates a helpless paralysis in which the community stays phlegmatically, without the capability of change. The most horrible acts occur inside the community, the person itself, and also in the home, a place that needs to be a secure and healthy place to bring forward mentally, emotionally, and personally healthy individuals. Is this refuge endangered or even broken, devastation spreads and social decline will proliferate. In Sigmund Freud's essay *Das Unheimliche* the unhomely is described, "the domestic terror, which so aptly describes much of the American Gothicist" (Lloyd 75). The house, substitute of the castle, becomes the site of abuse and trauma. The terror is trapped in the very inner unit of society and deprives the individual of any retreat. The inhabitant of such a confining unhomely place is full of neuroses and often has what Freud calls a "divided self"; he or she is not whole (see Paulson 5). Many applicable parts of Freud's psychoanalysis make it so appealing to the critic of *Southern Gothic.* Freud uses myths and incorporates them into his theory, e.g. the narcissistic personality, the Oedipus complex, etc. Freud's and also his French co-psychoanalyist Jaques Lacan's theory prove rather fruitful analyzing Southern Gothic elements of the uncanny and horrific (see Lloyd-Smith 141). Lacan divides the human mental experience in three parts, the Imaginary, the Symbolic, and the Real. The Symbolic takes the largest part of the experience and since language is the primary determining factor of human experience, literature becomes very important. Language is the human means to structure everything, conscious or subconscious. A misalignment of those three parts can produce a strong sense of the uncanny (see ibid. 143). Inspired by de Saussure, Lacan uses his concept of signifier/signified and links it to psychosis (see Rabaté 15). In Lacan's theory, insanity and psychosis erupt when the signifier, the describing word or notion, and the signified, the described, break apart (see Lloyd-Smith 146).

Southern Gothic does no longer address antebellum Southern themes such as reinforcing images of slaves/blacks as being childlike, immature, and in need of paternalistic guidance. It doesn't use the figure of the modest Southern belle waiting in a beautiful mansion on her prince charming, her Southern gentleman. It much rather uses personal or familial constellations to drag the inconvenient and embarrassing reality into the limelight, exposing structural, personal, and communal depravation and deficits. The antebellum set of stereotypes has made way for a new conception of the South, one quite different from the one common before. The hero/heroine is often isolated and controversial, and the horrific facts and scenes do not serve the purpose of building up suspense, but more to underline and stress the potential horror of life in general, or of the specific Southern situation. The bad does not only appear blatantly labeled and easily recognizable as the horrific, but can also appear as seemingly good.

Breaking of taboos, especially concerning violence and sex, is another important feature of *Southern Gothic* literature. It is displayed in horrible rape scenes in William Faulkner's *Sanctuary* or in Barry Hannah's short stories.

2. Southern Avoidance of Progress and Modernity

The Civil War and the following time of Reconstruction stirred up the South's loathing for the North. What wasn't destroyed by the Union troops, the influx of modern development, cold capitalism and the decline of what was perceived as the South's superior moral and culture. Faulkner wrote about the Cumberland Presbyterian Church in his hometown Oxford, Ms, which was demolished in 1940 due to dwindling members, that it "had survived when most of the buildings near the square were destroyed by Yankee troops in 1864, it could not withstand the power of commercial interests and the quest for profits from the sale of 'toilet papers and bananas'" (Taylor 26). What the first wave of Northern intrusion hadn't done, the second did. One can clearly recognize a deep distaste for the modern development of capitalism that went hand in hand with the decline of the church. Modern life and its literary development, modernism, are fast-paced and have their attention on "speed and the rejection of the past" (Gillies 1). The individual has to adapt to this new pace and get rid of any excess luggage. Life is fast and the change it undergoes even faster (see ibid.). This is the antithesis to the Southern view of itself and the way it sees its moral, culture, and society. Literary modernist characteristics include "the movement away from representational realism" towards the abstract, "an aesthetic of radical innovation, fragmentation, the breaking with familiar formal and linguistic conventions. […] It involves a deliberate and radical break with some of the traditional bases both of [...] culture and art" (ibid. 2), a conscious break with the past. This is far more than Southern authors did or do. Quite the contrary is the case, they do not want to break with traditions, but want to preserve them, literary and culturally.

Contemporary authors like Barry Hannah, Cormac McCarthy, Larry Brown, or the authors less famous, published in anthologies or magazines, cited in this thesis, ignore modernism and despise modern society and culture persistently. Although this clinging to the old tradition is quite obviously the case, it soon becomes clear that it is a new generation writing *Southern Gothic*. Brown, Hannah, and McCarthy exaggerate the known subjects and objects, contemporary Southern places will form the background, but over and over and over again there will be myths, mayhem, poverty, depravation, and misery creating the vanishing point it all draws towards. They vary these old themes, overdo, persiflage, exaggerate them, they take them apart and put them together in new shapes, but ultimately they refuse modernity and cannot break free from those old subjects. Ruth D. Weston writes in *Barry Hannah, Postmodern Romantic* that Hannah depicts the results of human dysfunctions in a way that parodies Southern Gothic (see Weston 3). In doing this, in my opinion, he doesn't deconstruct but rather uses its form as a means of reinforcingly work on old Southern Gothic themes. His description of the unpopular white trash *nouveau riches* in *Hey Jack!*, the Foot family, is a great persiflage. They live in a huge mansion built too fast, paid for by their cocaine-packing son Ronnie. Due to the bad substance and construction it is already falling apart. It is the new rotting Southern mansion, not expression of the old grandeur, but of a result of influx of new and dirty money into the region, which will not prevail (see Hannah 1987: 33).

Those authors loathe the progress and fear that it might pave over their beloved South and its odd distinctiveness. They want to preserve an idealized, mythologized South that only acknowledges extremes of superiority and desperate misery. They therefore perpetuate melancholy a South that never existed and their struggle really is one of a never-ending fight. They defend their privacy, their isolation, their South, their Southerness against any form of intrusion, the worst type being Northern. Such a modern, fashionable, social notion appears in Jill McCorkle's *Intervention.* An intervention is a therapeutic method for substance abusers and alcoholics. It is supposed to help the alcoholic and his or her family by raising awareness of the addiction and convince the addict to start treatment and acknowledge the family's caring but also its pain caused by the addiction. From the very first page on the protagonist, the alcoholic's wife, is not fully convinced that the intervention, started by her social working son-in-law, is a good idea. She first agrees but then regrets her decision. She looks down on such an outside intrusion of something so private and personal as her marriage. In the end she defies the intervention, protecting and excusing her husband once again. She protects him and their marriage against the modern invasion, and backs her husband up, even in his addiction (see Tyler X). If that is what it takes to shield the privacy, the Southerner is willing to remain in a bad situation with his or her unhurt pride and untouched privacy.

Southern literature has been marked by the myths deeply embedded in it. From the earliest days on, from the time of the expedition to define the dividing line between North Carolina and Virginia conducted by William Byrd until today there will be recurred to myths to describe and come to terms with the South. Already Byrd compared the wilderness he encounters and the task he faces with Hercules's tasks, the Argonauts' travels and Sodom and Gomorrah. Farmers and planters along the Mississippi have always thought that the river demands to be let to destroy the crops every once in a while to remain benevolent for the rest of the time. They compare their river with the Minotaur, symbol of destructive force (see Gwynn/ Blotner 101). Pictures of initiation and Odyssey comparisons are frequent in Southern literature, for example in Faulkner's *Soldiers' Pay* or McCarthy's *Border Trilogy*. Myths are much more than history, they are an element above history, which obtains universal validity. Myths, like many symbolic features, serve two purposes; they universalize common historic memory, and reflect upon defective myths of the American South, like the stations of the maturing of a man, such as sportsmanship, war, relationship with women (see Weston 3).

Not only classic Southern literature, e.g. by William Faulkner, Erskine Caldwell, Carson McCullers, but also the works of more recent authors such as

Dorothy Allison, Brad Vice, Hannah Pittard,[30] Paul Prathers, and others, should be regarded. These works are of high importance because they not only fit thematically and formally in the pattern described in the first chapter but also vary and playfully mix it. This latest generation of Southern authors is especially interesting and important for my analysis, since it is this generation that may be able to answer the questions about the unchanging themes. Why is there no renunciation, no overcoming, no solution, no rebellion, no further development? In the 2007 issue of the anthology *New Stories From the South* Edward P. Jones identifies the family in Cary Holladay's[31] story *Hollyhocks* as "Faulknerian". It is a family "weighed down by the past" (Jones 2007: IX). Faulkner's issues are apparently as burning as they were fifty years ago. In 1996, Barry Hannah in one of his short stories, *The Agony of T. Bandini* creates a Southern writer "who specialized in the burden of history" (Hannah 1996c: 130). It is merely not possible to live in the South without acknowledging its history, its burden of history. Bandini himself has moved from New York to the South to flee the guilt and shame of a fatal car accident he has caused while intoxicated. But hiding in the South doesn't come without a price tag. Tribute has to be paid to history, so Bandini goes out and attends a ruinous college with chipped paint and a drooping roof (see ibid. 128). He buys a large stack of history books and reads them all at once rather than one after another (see ibid. 135). There is no way past its history when it comes to living in and embracing the South. The very same year, in 1996, Sarah M. Zimmerman writes on Cynthia Shearer's *The Wonder Book of the Air* that "Faulkner's theme's and cadences live on in this tale of a Southern family fractured by alcohol, betrayal, and abuse" (www.bookpage.com).

The isolation to be discussed is, I will argue, chosen and unchosen at the same time, and the perpetuating traditional themes and forms are the central hypothesis that I will approach.

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[30] Dorothy Allison (1949-) is a renowned South Carolina author. Her first novel *Bastard Out of Carolina* was a finalist of the 1992 National Book Award. Her story *Compassion* was published in the short story collection *Trash* (2002) and was selected both for *Best American Short Stories 2003* and *Best New Stories from the South 2003.*
Brad Vice (1973-) is a contemporary author from Alabama and professor at the Mississippi State University.
Hannah Pittard is a young award-winning contemporary author from Georgia.

[31] Cary Holladay is a contemporary author of short stories from Virginia. She teaches at the University of Memphis.

2.1. Form: Novel and Short Story

Southern literature has a profound love of the short story form, because the American short story tradition with its themes of innocence or loss thereof, experience, and integration or disintegration caters to the needs of Southern authors (see Weston 44). Short stories, the term emerging at the end of the 19th century, for the South are the notion of life “as a sequence of short narratives stitched together” (Tate X), and like other culture’s it is deeply rooted in an oral tradition; authors write about what they truly know (see Brooks 251), about what they have learned. They retell, sometimes shortened, expanded or modified, the stories that have been handed down generation through generation. They depend on telling and retelling in order not to die out. In some stories, like in *Compassion* by Dorothy Allison the process is portrayed strikingly similar to the native American storytelling tradition which heavily depends on the handing down of stories and with them culture, ethics, and ways and customs. If the line is cut, there is no way back. The dying mother in *Compassion* starts talking at night once she thinks everybody is asleep. “It sounded as if she were retelling stories” (Allison 330). But she speaks in vain, the chance has passed, she hasn’t told her three, now adult, daughters everything she had wanted to. She was not able to complete her motherly task of handing down all the stories, her knowledge, her legacy. William Faulkner profoundly depended on retelling. For him, “time, memory, and historical sense became manifest through retelling, that accrual of past detail in present circumstances” (Karl 234). Repetition and retelling is an important narrative device for him (see ibid. 26), which he even applied to his own life. He constructed a past and persona he would change and rechange. For Cormac McCarthy oral tradition is even almost the only form of culture, which he unreservedly acknowledges (see Ellis 157). Telling and retelling, the relying on the instruments on oral culture is a mode of preserving and perpetuating the past and its burden. Elizabeth Madox Roberts also draws from the life of Kentucky’s rural folk with their legends and traditions (see McDowell 30).

When speaking of the difference of the novel and short story, William Faulkner states, asked during a class on contemporary writers in 1957 at the

University of Virginia, where he was a writer in residence, that there is no fundamental difference between the two. Any writer tried to say what he or she wants in the shortest amount of space. Conrad Aiken describes this notion of Faulkner as the „hurried despair to [...] tell us everything“ (Aiken 48). In Faulkner’s view the author’s choice depended on both how fruitful the subject turned out to be and how well it is mastered (see Gwynn/ Blotner 68). Here the use of the short story is identified with the need for condensation. But in Ruth Weston’s opinion Barry Hannah, for example, also chooses mainly the form of the short story to be able to use “flat characters”, which are characters, which do not undergo any development in the course of the story. This reflects the man who is at heart still a boy, who is still in a phase of boyish savagery and enthusiasm (see Weston 17) and underlines the important subject of the initiation of the boy into manhood and his introduction to certain manly and adult rituals like sport, violence, or hunting. It is again the underlying refusal to accept progress and development and the longing for the lost and bygone. The boyish man does not need to accept realities like a fully matured man or woman does and can refuse or ignore responsibility easier. He is caught in a web of identity crisis, disbelief, and the freedom to give up countenance and yield to instincts and temporary impulsive wants.

Formally, the newer and newest of contemporary Southern literature is also very traditional. Cynthia Shearer, for example, chooses the setting of a family history for her first novel *The Wonder Book of the Air* and the study of a small town in the Mississippi Delta slowly coming undone for her second work *The Celestial Jukebox*. Compared to writing a short story, the author of a novel has to obey more extensive conditions. The novel needs a structure that will lead the reader until the end. It cannot culminate into just one single moment like a short story ideally should, but has to epically work on building up tension, constructing a climax, and again decreasing the tension. It is a rather traditional form; it is slow, set, and structured (see Matz 215).

The Wonder Book of the Air begins with a description of the town, its train station, families, and nature from a boy’s perspective. This is very traditionalist and rather romanticist notion, also employed by Elizabeth Madox Roberts in her poetry. She often chooses the child’s perspective to portray its “concentrated and unconventional reactions to the world” (McDowell 29). This perspective allows an unreflected wondering about the world and unfiltered impressions and amazement. Just like the romanticist ideal of the naïve perception of the world through the eyes of an unspoiled child, young protagonist Harrison Durrance describes Alapaha, Georgia. He is full of hope, energy, and tender feelings that the reader is up for quite a shock to find out what a man this boy eventually will turn into. During the course of the novel there will be several changes of perspective to investigate the situation of the highly dysfunctional family from all the members' points of view, which is also rather traditionalist. It is a very sad, gloomy story Shearer tells.

The romanticist is always haunted by the gap between what man could achieve and what he actually does achieve. Due to this notion, romanticism "always tends […] to be gloomy" (Whitworth 2007b: 64). *Gothicism* being a part of *Romanticism* makes romantic elements a Southern author's first choice. It suits both subject and form well, due to the romanticist closeness to flora and fauna, and the naivety of a child's perception and perspective. Its symbolism often draws from nature, mysticism, and the subconscious, and it deals with the dark side of the human soul and what man is capable of (see Krell/ Fiedler 213). Romanticists long for the past, for bygone epochs idealizing it instead of choosing a scientific approach (see ibid. 215). This referring to the past to identify and express discontent with the present is another common subject of romanticists and gothicists. Romantic and romanticist elements and symbols are omnipresent in Southern literature, they even share their admiration and urge to preserve and cultivate oral traditions.

James Dickey's work, poetry and prose, in this respect are also very narrative and deeply rooted in oral tradition. "Unlike the Modernists [he] did not piece together his poems as if they were Cubist collages. He wanted to tell stories with beginnings, middles, and ends that would rivet rather than repel ordinary readers" (Hart 18). Dickey stuck to this method for the majority of his career, reacting to modernism in post-World War II poetry. When, late in his life, he tried to adapt modernism's original concept, he was unsuccessful (see ibid. 19). He is deeply rooted in the Southern tradition of story telling. He even applies this to all Southern literature: "Most Southern literature comes right off the front porch. [It arises] from people sitting and talking, long-windedly, but always willing to listen to each other’s stories because they’ve all got good ones to tell” (quoted in ibid.).

The Southern authors’ choice of form is very traditional, due to the traditional agenda, strong romanticist elements, and the regionalist tendency to strive for a portrait of their environment and situation. In addition to this fidelity to old forms, they use colloquialism and regional accents to accentuate the Southern picture.

2.2. Motifs, Themes, and Symbols

There are a lot of motifs, symbols, and themes in Southern literature as it is a type of literature full of pictures and mythologized cultural memory. The classic motif of *Ubi Sunt*, the contrast to a *Carpe Diem* theme (see Myers/Simms 198) is omnipresent in Southern literature. It laments the passing of something rather than to embrace the things left or new options.

I chose characteristic motifs and themes to illustrate my hypothesis that the literary South looks to the past, draws towards a pre-modern state while identity-building, reasoning, and in the field of emotions and feelings. The individual collapses faced with the enormous challenge of change and progress and as a reaction tries to hold on to its roots and avert change no matter how desperate the situation is.

The use and symbolic content of humor, despair and brutalization, place, nature, and the relationship between human beings and animals will be examined in the following chapters. The first is a traditional means of making the unbearable bearable; the desperate situation, personally, morally, and communal, in which the literary Southerner finds him- or herself in, and the reasons to stay in such a situation are as identity defining as the important literary notion of place. Nature and the relationship between man and beast both exemplify the traditional Southern connection to nature, the environment, and agriculture, but also serve as a surrogate ground to act out feelings and establish relationships as a last resort, when other fields were lost to the individual.

2.2.1. Humor

The love of humor displayed, the ability to "find what is comic in the midst of tragic" (McCorkle XI) is a form of keeping moving forward, of survival (see ibid. XI). Humor as a means of making the despairing bearable is a very important means in Southern literature that mostly engages in grave subjects and matters. This is not an accidental connection. Humor serves parallel as a lighter vehicle for the heavy load, as self-depreciating and reflection, and as means that adds another perspective to a certain situation or personality. This can be witnessed in John Dufresne's[32] story *Johnny Too Bad*, where the unusual, borderline disordered relationship between a man and his dog is humorously described to emphasize his lack of communication with his environment, a basically tragic situation. In Roy Blount's[33] *Gone off up North: Hot Pig! Hot Possum: Is Animal-Tossing an Art or a Crime?* he ironically turns the stereotypes of the South and its uneducated backwardness around to ridicule the holder of such stereotypes. In parody, in the exposition of the weaknesses of others, there is also a concealed aggression. Barry Hannah uses humor, parody and the *Gothic grotesque*, as a "lawless, subversive attack" using sexism, racism, and homophobia, to expose the holder of exact those stereotypes (see Weston 106). The seeming antagonists humor and despair go hand in hand in Southern literature, and humor sometimes is the light that illuminates the harsh and brutalizing reality even brighter. As the *comic grotesque* humor it is an essential part of the Gothic tradition (see ibid. 20), used with irony by Faulkner to emphasize his view on the deterioration of society's values (see Karl 195).

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[32] John Dufresne (1948-) is a novelist, author of short stories, playwright, and Creative Writing professor at Florida International University.

[33] Roy Blount (1941-) is a writer and humorist from Georgia. He graduated from Vanderbilt University, the home of the *Fugitive Poets* and the *Southern Agrarians.*

Apart from being a means of ease, humor is also one of the tools contemporary authors use to work on old, historical Southern subjects. In his story *Nicodemus Bluff* Barry Hannah humorously, but nonetheless critically, parodies Shreve's question to Quentin Compson in *Absalom, Absalom!*, why people lived in the South at all. He humorously uses colloquialism and the image of roadkill as just being suicidal raccoons and squirrels, but the core of the inquiry remains: the South as a desperate place that brings forth suicide and misery (see Weston 25).[34]

2.2.2. Despair and Brutalization

In his novel *Light in August* Faulkner paints a gloomy picture of the society and its numerous outsiders in Jefferson, Mississippi. Joe Christmas, an orphan, who may or may not be of mixed race, fails to find his place in society and is caught in the struggle of finding an identity for himself. In the course of the novel, he is abused, abuses, connives, starts a sexual relationship with a white woman, Joanna Burden, who also is outside of society, eventually murders her, and is murdered at the end of the novel.

The situation of indispensability has a tight grip on the group of people portrayed and poses the question if the fact of an inescapable fate bears insensitiveness and heartlessness in its subjects. Joe Christmas, the central character, is isolated from his surroundings, from society, from mankind, and he, as a figure, teaches the lesson of the inescapability from oneself and one's fate. He is unable to respond properly to other people or to react in appropriate ways to his environment.[35] Pregnant Lena Grove, although the father of her child left her and she is traveling by herself, is rather satisfied and content with herself and her life. She goes on a rather mythical journey: pregnant and barefooted. She accepts things the way they are and develop, while Joe Christmas always only sees how he is different from everything and everybody. He, and with him the entire society, is in a state of “passive suffering, the victim being destroyed either by society or by dark forces in himself” (Tate 1966: 275). The fatalism and the absence of feeling sorry for one’s wrong actions are due to the feeling that one is merely driven by fate and just treads a given path without having to take responsibility. Christmas behaves as if everything has already happened and therefore there is no reason to resist or make different choices. Alan Lloyd-Smith connects this thematically with the common guilt of the South, something has already happened there that makes everything afterwards inevitably its aftermath or associated with it in one way or the other (see Llyod-Smith 119). This laconic attitude toward guilt and the system of action and reaction is an important part of Southern literature. Things just happen, and there is no real culprit to be found. The whole society is in a state of complete absence of ambition, for the mere purpose of not having to be disappointed. Expect nothing, and you won’t be disappointed, that is the motto. There is no struggle or fight, just suffering and enduring. Change is loathed, for the situation is not expected to be getting any better, but it could get worse. The human being is boiled down to the absolute minimum, and life is raw and naked, undisguised. Faulkner shows what this state of minimal satisfaction of needs does to a group of people, a community and an entire society. Rage and violence is the characteristic that unites the society of Yoknapatawpha County, it is blind to class, age, gender, or race. Exemplary for the entire region, Faulkner’s imaginary county is in a state of exaggerated lethargy. Everything seems inevitable: the merciless Southern climate, death, and violence. Upward social mobility, the typical American notion of the potential permeability of American society and the potential to better oneself, is missing, very typically for the American South. Leaving the region and one’s situation seems not be an option, and guilt, left over from the period of slavery and the Civil War, has been cultivated into a part of Southern tradition. Faulkner said in one of his lectures at the University of Virginia that for the South to heal from this guilt and shame it must be left alone and somewhat isolated (see Gywnn/Blotner 106). It must not incorporate modern Northern custom and ways and give up its own old identity; it must deal with its wounds and its legacy on its own.

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[34] Another of Faulkner's story is also imitated in *Nicodemus Bluff*: the Southern initiation story *par excellence The Bear* (see Weston 25).

[35] Other examples of stories of the great isolation of man are Carson McCuller's *The Heart is a Lonely Hunter* (1940) and Eudora Welty's collection of interlocking short stories *The Golden Apples* (1949). Carson McCullers (1917-1967) was an author and playwright from Georgia.

Not leaving or even wanting to leave a struggling, poor, and deprived region is a rather untypical state for a community or society to be in. The South is pauperized, conservative, disrupted by unsolved racial issues and problems, nevertheless the question of leaving, of starting anew is rarely raised. If it was, the answers would range from “there are people who are worse off than we are” to “it could be worse somewhere else”. In James Lee Burke’s[36] story *A Season of Regret* a man outside a store asks protagonist Albert “What’s happening”, and he replies laconically “Not much outside of general societal decay, I’d say” (Burke 31). He does not complain, he just states a fact. It seems like he cannot even imagine it being differently. Misery has become daily routine. There is a profound fright of the unknown, of being among a different kind of people, of not being home, and as Barry Hannah puts it, there is “[s]omething about being alive next door to horror” (Hannah 1996b: 102). The inescapability of one’s faith is an accepted constant in the Southern society portrayed. “Much [is] inevitable and bound to the blind dice-thrower fate” (Hannah 1996c: 128).

The motif of guilt plays a major role both in Southern society and literature. The guilt of the Southern people has often been compared to the German people’s, which has also yet to overcome the guilt, shame and responsibility accruing from the Holocaust. The question if, how, and to what extend following generations can be held accountable, morally, but also economically, is discussed widely. Academically, this results in an almost excessive self-blame, but the average Southern citizen will refer to the absence of any guilt of their family and themselves dismissively.

Turning to Faulkner’s *Sanctuary* (1931) for an answer to the question of guilt, remorse and penance, to *Child of God* (1974) by Cormac McCarthy, or to Cynthia Shearer’s *Wonder Book of the Air* (1996), exemplary for many, will only provide an answer outside of any juridical category. The question is raised to what part the discriminating, excluding community plays a role when the outsider becomes an outlaw, becomes a violent criminal? Guilt is a crucial notion for the entire form of the novel, not just the American, or Southern, but the authors of the *Southern Gothic*, and authors like Faulkner, McCarthy, and

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[36] James Lee Burke (1936-) is the author of twenty-six novels and two collections of short stories. His novel *The Lost Get-Back Boogie* was nominated for the Pulitzer Price.

Lytle spread guilt in their work so widely, omnisciently, and indiscriminately, that no one or no certain group can be singled out and identified as the only culprit. Also, there is no clear line between good and evil. Since the chain reaction of violence and counter violence is endless, the distinction between perpetrator and victim becomes blurry and overlaps. It is individual versus communal, collective guilt. Joe Christmas was not born bad, but racist society that calls for clear categorization, and a depriving, cold, loveless environment contributed massively to the person he eventually becomes.

Southern communities are the complete opposites of modern, fragmented society. They are, or at least seem solid, impermeable, and inflexible. Even though they might be fragmented and distressed underneath the surface, everything is done to uphold a picture of a homogenous, functional community. Dissents will be socially persecuted, and when necessary, also excluded. Under this impression, the individual finds itself confronted with not too many overwhelming, but too little, confining options to chose from. Immense social pressure results in dysfunction, inhibited communication, suppressed creativity and isolated groups or single individuals. Already the Southern family inhibits personal growth and contributes decisively to the individual's insecurity and its alienation from the larger social unit, from the community. This isolation is as unhealthy as the exaggerated dependence (see Paulson 46).

The dysfunctional groups, the hopeless situations described in Southern literature inevitably bring forth and/or are the result of inhibited or completely absent, impossible communication. Cynthia Shearer describes this comprehensible in her *The Wonder Book of the Air,* where she puts strong emphasis on the futile attempts of communication. Shearer presents all dialogue with a dash, italics, and indented. Although she states in an interview that the absence of quotation marks in her writing is just "a nerdy thing" (www.slushpile.com), it is quite obvious that this method puts stress on the spoken word. It is a disruptive means of disturbing the expected presentation of spoken language. It stresses the human interaction and at the same time underlines the recurring misunderstanding between the speakers. The futility of dialogue, of communication for solving problems contrasts its emphasis due to the uncommon typeface. Unsuccessful communication leaves the individuals powerless, frustrated, and above all, isolated. The isolated, misunderstood individual is a very important, recurring motif in Southern literature, such as in Elizabeth Madox Robert's work. Her characters are as alienated from their surrounding as Faulkner's, they have retreated into their self (see McDowell 27). These individuals are rejected on every thinkable level, in personal interaction and relationships, by their family, their community, their society. As I will later elaborate on further, it will react to this rejection in several ways, with violence, withdrawal, by turning to alternative fields of connection and communication, by turning to nature and/or pets and animals, to more rudimentary bonds.

The symptomatic violence in Southern literature brings forth the desperate, brutalized situation. Violence is omnipresent: violence against women, children, animals, oneself; beatings, manslaughter, rape, murder. Southern society is small and tightly knit, and it presents itself toward the North and toward itself as thought the war is not over, yet. Violence permeates everything: marriage, attitudes toward the Southern woman, racial relations, and conflicts of all kind. Barry Hannah in *Hey Jack!* even goes as far as present the reader with soldiers in Korea who couldn't wait to get home "where the real wreckage" was (Hannah 1987: 24). This Southern recourse to violence is a desperate force of preserving the Southern way of life, to keep it all from coming undone (see Karl 4). Frederick R. Karl sees the violence in Faulkner's novels " as a way of dealing with the rage he felt […] and which he interpreted as representative of the Southerner's response to what he could neither control nor resolve" (ibid.). Faulkner had witnessed violence everywhere he turned, be it family life or public history. Rage and violence are also everywhere in Barry Hannah's works, they are an expression of the character's insecurity, of the "search for absolutes" (Weston 2).

2.2.3. Place

The Southern writer has always had a peculiar relationship towards place and location and their respective peculiarities, and it has been widely academically discussed. The protagonists of Southern novels speak with a drawl, farm, live in small towns, and while the men drink a lot of liquor in hot humid nights in front of the town store or gas station, the women prepare iced tea and okras. Larry T. McGehee, writer of the newspaper column *Southern Seen,* published in many newspapers throughout the country, writes about the South not shying away from stereotypes. The -incomplete- list of titles of Larry T. McGehee's column illustrates extremely well the obvious relation to place, namely the Southern home place: *Backroads, Poison Ivy, Birddogs, Fishing, Snow and Pecans, 'Possums, Squirrels, Skunks, BB Guns, Cemeteries, Americanized South, Southern Dialect, Manners, Small College and Big-Time Sports, Confederate Flag Controversy, Pigs, Spitting, Satan,* and *Baptism.*

And while McGehee contemplates on subjects like these, Larry "Brown's characters get drunk in local bars, gamble, fight, hunt, […] and shoot each other" (Gretlund 234). Brown writes about the type of experiences involving tobacco-chewing, guns in the backseat of a 1958 Impalla, and hunting squirrels for dinner (see Brown 14).

Heavy drinking in general is such an extensively used subject that the references from Faulkner to Barry Hannah and Larry Brown are numerous, biographically and text immanently. Drinking is symbolic on many levels. It is a realm of virile display of manliness and male refuge. It is an insignia of the lonely, hurting poet, withdrawn into his pain and art, and at the same time it is a symbol for the moonshine drinking South, with redneck stills in the mountains, and drunken bar fights. James Dickey describes the alcohol-abusing poet in an interview in 1973, "In order to create poetry, you make a monster out of your own mind. […] Poets use alcohol, or any kind of stimulant, to aid and abet this process, then eventually take refuge in the alcohol to help get rid of it" (quoted in Hart 21). Alcohol is the poet's cure and curse at the same time, and the Southern author drinks and lets his characters go on alcohol binges, the former to cope with his occupation, the latter to illustrate Southern life and social misery.

Small towns or even the wide country often constitute the setting of the Southern short story or novel. In Cormac McCarthy's first part of his *Border Trilogy*, *All The Pretty Horses*, the two protagonists John Grady Cole and Lacey Rawlins, more boys than men, are in search for the long lost old ways, for the lost true country life. "How the hell do they expect a man to ride a horse in this country? said Rawlins. They don't, said John Grady" (McCarthy 1992: 31). The country they live in is changing and they try to escape, which only leads them into hardship, makes them suffer and in the end leaves them without a country of their own. Being the product of an environment full of symbols of manliness, male rituals, full of the ideal of the macho cowboy they set out to find a better place to live. John Grady's grandfather after whose funeral John decides to leave Texas, on one occasion "leaned back and crossed his boots on the desktop" (ibid. 11). The two sixteen-year olds just want to be cowboys like him. After the grandfather's death Cole's mother inherits the farm but has no interest in it whatsoever, she plans to sell it. John Grady's father, psychologically and physically dysfunctional after his World War II experience, leaves him with only a saddle.

> Don't go crying on me now.
> I aint.
> Well dont (ibid. 12).

That is when he takes the great step and leaves for Mexico, accompanied by his best friend Lacey. Mexico provides the wilderness and adventure where young men can still be tested. It still provides something close to a frontier experience (see Owens 70). A coming of age story unravels, the saddle the symbol for graduating into man- and cowboyhood (see ibid. 13).[37] After a time of great hardship in Mexico he returns home to Texas, but still does not find his true home there. He is left even more clueless and alone with no place to go. "Where is your country?" he is asked by Lacey after his return. "I don't know, said John Grady. I don't know where it is. I don't know what happens to country" (McCarthy 1992: 299). He doesn't know about his future, he hasn't found his place, yet. After his odyssey, he is left with nothing. He feels even more uprooted, his lover is in Mexico, and there is no hope for him to ever see her again. The issues and problems that made him leave Texas in the first place are still unresolved. He is left with no country or place to call home. The entire novel is "permeated with a sense of loss, alienation, deracination, and fragmentation" (Morrison 175).

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[37] Coming-of-age stories and the process of initiation for young men, such as the leaving home only with a saddle to one's name, are very present in Southern literature. In Barry Hannah's work adolescence initiation is also a major theme (see Weston 2). To what extent this leaves out women and girls is an interesting question, which unfortunately cannot be under further examination here, due to the limited scope of this thesis.

> You could stay here at the house.
> I think I'm going to move on.
> This is still good country.
> Yeah. I know it is. But it aint my country (McCarthy 1992: 299).

John Grady is by himself and uprooted. His quest for himself as a man and untouched country, where a man can live off the land and his labor on ranches, ended in disaster. The death of his grandfather and the sale of the ranch, the changed land, modern developments have driven him out of Texas. He is deeply rooted in his old country, in the way it used to be, or supposedly was. He misses the old type of manhood, the security to know one's place in society and the world. "Perhaps the most disturbing loss of all for John Grady is the destruction of the old chivalric code" (Lilley 273). When it all began to vanish there was nothing that held him back. McCarthy's four Appalachian novels *The Orchard Keeper, Outer Dark, Child of God,* and *Suttree* are "preoccupied with nostalgia for a receding paradise" (Wallach XV), while the *Border Trilogy* has a "mythic/mythologized national/cultural nostalgia […] for a vanished pioneer lifestyle of the cowboy" (ibid.). What remains is the original Southern lament for the lost, for the past mixed with a mythic connection and glorification of nature and country.

In many stories, such as *Ode to Catfish House* by Katherine Whitworth[38] or *Ode to Snoballs* by Donn Cooper[39], Marcia Guthridge's[40] *The Host,* or Stephanie Soileau's[41] *The Boucherie* a general celebration of food can be seen, especially of that which is unique to the region, for example catfish, shark, biscuits, or okra. A little girl tells the reader in Nanci Kincaid's[42] *A Sturdy Pair of Shoes That Fit Good* about her breakfast habits "We hated oatmeal. Mother almost never fixed it since we hated it so much. Slimy oatmeal with sugar and milk on it. Even Walter said it was Yankee food. What he liked was grits. Us too" (Kincaid 73). In addition to the South's specialties the proverbial Southern hospitality is praised. "It's been a wonderful evening, Mrs. Wingfield. I guess this is what they mean by Southern hospitality" (Williams 66), Jim O'Connor says to his host before he leaves her and her daughter disappointed and on the edge of utter desperation.

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[38] Katherine Whitworth is a young contemporary author from Arkansas.
[39] Donn Cooper is a young contemporary author.
[40] Marcia Guthridge is a contemporary author from Texas.
[41] Stephanie Soileau is a contemporary author and English professor.

But this described uniqueness and its celebration creates an enclave that is seemingly impermeable and difficult to access for outsiders or to leave behind for insiders. Intriguingly, Southerners often call Americans from non-Southern states foreigners. Amongst "their own kind" people always feel safe, the situation becomes predictable for them. James Dickey describes such an insider/outsider situation in *Deliverance.* Having just killed a man in self-defense up in the Georgia mountains Lewis says to his friends

> We ought to do some hard decision- making before we let ourselves in for standing trial up in these hills. We don't know who this man is, but we know that he lived up here. He may be an escaped convict, or he may have a still, or he may be everybody in the country's father, or brother or cousin. I can almost guarantee you that he's got relatives all over the place. Everybody up here is kin to everybody else, in one way or another. […] These people don't want any 'furriners' around (J. Dickey 106).

The Southerner's self-definition works only with an antagonist "other" (see Gray 4).

Moving to North Carolina for a Massachusetts native is a "cataclysmic event" and for David Gessner's family whose moving he describes in *The Dreamer Did Not Exist*, it "assumed a mythic quality in family history". They experience it as a "massive uprooting and exile" (Gessner 115f). Southern journalist and writer Hal Crowther describes his experience at a New England college as an "exile" which evoked in him a strong "need to water his roots". He had an "appetite for dead poets and distilled spirits" (see Crowther 26) he called "hillbilly homesickness" and "displaced-Southerner angst" (ibid. 27). These accounts are proof for the fact that the South is just not just another region in the United States but has heavy impact on the ones within and without, both negatively and positively. The South is more than a geographical place, it is also an inner place. Simply moving away cannot shed it. Just like in the old saying, you can take the boy out of the country, but you cannot take the country out of the boy. In *Dress Your Family in Corduroy and Denim* by David Sedaris[43] the protagonist moves from New York to North Carolina as a young boy. His mother befriends a woman who brings baskets of okra "as a kind of test" (Sedaris 4). She tests the family's compatibility with the South. When the young boy in George Singleton's[44] story *These People are Us*, just moved to South Carolina "from an exotic heathen place" in California by his disabled father, tries to fit in, he joins a Baptist Sunday school (see Singleton 243). Religion and food seems the best method to blend in and enter a Southern community.

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[42] Nanci Kincaid is a contemporary author from Alabama. She has published three novels and several short stories so far.

But Southerness being a state of mind, willingly or not, it is not only something one acquires by being born on the right side of the Mississippi River but also something that can be inherited. A character is "forged in the South, the place […] is in his blood" (Jones 2007: IX). In his story *Marie* Edward P. Jones describes an old woman who has internalized Southern values that will never fade away even after years on strange soil (see ibid. VII). She slaps a receptionist at the Social Security Office after having waited hours and hours in vain, but feels guilty afterwards, always thinking to herself, "[y]ou whatn't raised that way" (Jones 2003: 236).

Although being born in Washington D.C. Jones claims to be Southern by inheritance, because his family is originally from the South. He writes, "[i]t does not matter where Washington fits on the map; I was of the South because that was what I inherited" (Jones 2007: IX). Through speech, superstition, and food it was passed down to him (see ibid. VIII f.). The superstition the modern subject tries to leave behind is a constituent in the Southern tradition and way of life, for Jones it defines the "Southernness" that was handed down to him even while growing up in Washington, D.C.

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[43] David Sedaris (1956-) is an author and humorist from New York, who was raised in North Carolina. In his mostly autobiographical work he speaks intensively about his upbringing in a Southern suburb.

[44] George Singleton (1959-) is a contemporary author from South Carolina.

In Southern literature the focus on marginal details is supposed to represent the world as such, and the detail is exemplary for an entire cosmos, or as Faulkner puts it, "in all lands and throughout all epochs men are essentially the same. [One can] find even in Yoknapatawpha County a sufficiently full representation of the human predicament, examples of man's virtue and of his baseness" (Brooks 251). Authors write about what they know best and pay close attention to detail and local specifics, but at the same time represent humankind. Only through this authenticity really convincing representation can take place, or in Eudora Welty's words, "one place comprehended can make us understand other places better" (Rash 68). Man is quite the same everywhere, his problems, peculiarities, relationships, and feelings. "Universality" is achieved "through fidelity to the particular" (ibid. 67). Although the Southerner's particular presents a representative set of human experience, it is nevertheless not interchangeable. The South and its historical and cultural peculiarities are decisive for its literature and urge to preserve the past.

The people living in the place described, the Southerner is often either a redneck or a gentleman or –woman of the old school. While the four suburban men, out in the middle of nowhere along a wild Georgia river, in James Dickey's *Deliverance* encounter "an old man with a straw hat and work shirt […] [looking] like a hillbilly in some badly cast movie" (J. Dickey 47) and another one "missing his teeth and not caring" (ibid. 92),[45] the two boys in Rick Bass's *Goats* meet a similarly old man who is described like a man from a Walker Evans picture, with yellow teeth dressed "in a pair of hole-sprung, oil-stained, forest-green workpants [with] dried-brown flecks of manure-splatter, and an equally stained sleeveless ribbed-underwear T-shirt" (Bass 11). James Dickey spent his childhood in the North Georgia woods with his father,

> a dilettante lawyer and devoted gambler who took his son with him to cockfights, or to watch raccoons chained to floating logs fighting off packs of hounds, or to just about anything else where blood and death had money riding on them (C. Dickey 30).

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[45] Teeth as a symbol are recurrent. In many stories missing teeth represent backwardness, secludedness from modern society, absence of health care or even proper hygiene. In Marcia Guthridge's story *The Host* the protagonist takes her husband to her small Texan home town, where they buy shrimp from a „fat woman who [...] had three fat children playing in the front seat of the van, no front teeth, and flip-flops" (Guthridge 7).

This dichotomist picture of the gentleman or the redneck hillbilly is widespread in large parts of pop culture and the general perception of the South nationally and internationally. Its perception of the Southerner as either belle and gentleman or white trash rednecks living in isolated mountain areas symbolizes the wide gap that runs through Southern society. Nevertheless, both the redneck and the gentleman are truly Southern. Both depended on slavery as a social stabilizer before the Civil War: the aristocratic planter class to secure their riches and standing, and the poor whites to keep them from being the lowest member of Southern society, their skin color alone upgrading them. After the war they cannot accept the loss and the difficulties adapting unites them in certain aspects. The Reconstruction is a time of hardship for all, and the shame of defeat burns in all their hearts. Thus, all Southerners have interest in the recognition of their uniqueness and the preservation of the memory of the "Lost Cause" and the great past. James Dickey is caught in this inner-Southern struggle: his mother identifies with the Atlanta aristocracy and his father with the north Georgia outback (see Hart 11). Therefore he is able to represent the South in an authentic manner.

Both stereotypical Southern pictures are cultivated and perpetuated in several magazines and movies, such as *Rambling Rose* (1996), in which a middle-aged man comes back to the South to visit his old father. The old house looks a little shabby and the son stands on the front porch reminiscing about the good old days, when his father was a great Southern gentleman and his parents both had outstanding moral values and a great sense of hospitality. The only dislikable person in the entire movie is an incompetent, condescending doctor with questionable intentions, who is eventually exposed by the parents. Of course, this man is a Northerner. The family takes in a poor girl as a maid from a very poor background, underlined by her very heavy accent. She is at risk to believe the wrong people and to being forced into prostitution. She is saved by the family's hospitality and their willingness to take responsibility for her, and she pays them back with fidelity and hard work. The family represents the rich, the girl the poor South. Ideally, they accept responsibility for each other for the benefit of all parties. It is a nostalgic perpetuation, which in a way is also distorting. It presents a picture of the South as historically accurate, although it shouldn't go uncontested. It is an expression for the better past that is lost, missed, and celebrated. The grown son drives home down South and when he turns around the corner and sees that run-down house he instantly begins longing for the South. Longing for the old South the way it once was, the way the people used to be. It doesn’t have to be explained what he is so longing for, the picture and myth of “the old South” has entered collective memory.

The lifestyle magazine *Southern Living* is a magazine celebrating Southern cuisine, home decorating, manners, architecture, and landscape. It is widely read and has a readership not just in the South but nationwide. It caters to the longing for the Southern stereotype of the great, lost Old South, which culture needs to be preserved. Local specialties are advertised, life and vacation in the South praised and the Southern dialect cultivated. This can also widely be witnessed in Southern literature. In “serious literature” local color and colloquialisms do not play a large role at all; this is different with Southern literature. Often dialect with its different pronunciation is masterly captured in written language by Southern authors, Faulkner being one of the first to employ such a mode for the South in not just a derogatory way. The strong sense of place in his novels is supported by the colloquialisms and the Southern speech, which is often spelled literally, as it is spoken. No apostrophes and slang, and the complete absence of quotation marks underline this. The Southern man is portrayed as one of few words. He does not show his emotions or feelings and is both unwilling and unable to utter or discuss them. Maybe he cannot even grasp them or put them in words.

Faulkner has a unique relationship with language. Very early did he encounter and experience several different kinds of language. His father, Murry C. Falkner, spoke rough Southern colloquial English, only insufficiently cleaned up in front of the children. His mother Maud, having had a college education, spoke more Standard English as he was also taught in school. In addition to these two sorts of speech and language he also soon acquired a literary, poetic language from reading indiscriminately every piece of literature he could get his hands on. This resulted in the effectual mixture of language Faulkner mastered in his novels and short stories (see Karl 68). His use of the mixture of colloquialism, vernacular and Standard English to create a certain atmosphere and elaborate characters is also a result of his youth, upbringing, and his environment, the South. He grew up in it, lives it, and uses it artfully, plays with it to portray, to uncover flaws and to underline beauty. He distinguishes between four types of Southern dialects. The Southern speech of the educated whites, of white trash, of blacks, and of blacks who have spent some time in the North or are from there (see Gywnn/ Blotner 154). The language literary characters speak does of course characterize and define them, for example the authentic speech of mountain people in Elizabeth Maddox Roberts's *The Time of Man*. Roberts uses colloquialism extensively. When Jonas Prather confesses to his future wife Ellen Chesser that he had visited a prostitute and that she claimed to have had his baby he says, "I been a sinful man, Elleen, low-down. My own mammy would cry if she knowed" (Roberts 162). Language places people economically, educationally, maybe even hints at gender and age. The Southern accent conveys even more, it reveals a person's Southern background and therefore possibly makes him or her a target of stereotypes but also a subject of evaluation and association. In Marya Hornbacher's[46] *The Center of Winter* the unfortunate mother of two children living in Northern exile, speaks with a slight Georgia dialect, which always evokes a feeling of security and comfort in her children. Even when she argues and fights with their father, they are surprised that one can say mean things with such a voice and slow and soft pronunciation (see Hornbacher 52). Barry Hannah also has a very special use of language and mixes academic, vernacular, and primitive voices. He doesn't just use dialect for direct speech but combines it with the descriptive narrative.

> "[They] come in and sit down in front of the video screen, all kinds of video tapes scattered around the VCR. Tonight they've decided they will have just some mashed potatoes with Mama's special heavy greasy gravy. While them 'taters is makin', they gone watch some young Ronnie on the box" (Hannah 1987: 33).

This special use results in an alienation of the reader and it raises the awareness of place and language on different levels. It makes the reader aware of the story just being a story, of it being art. It reminds the reader of the place and background of the narrative. It results in dissolution of the distinction between literary language, dialect, and direct speech.

The strong sense of place influences both content and form of Southern literature. When asked about the influence his land has on him, Larry Brown states that it is very private and rather ungraspable (see Brown 2). When he talks about his pond, cabin and the adjacent woods it becomes very clear how closely connected life, language, literature, and place are. Jonathan Miles says in his praise for *Billy Ray's Farm* that "man and place are inextricably entwined" in Brown's essays. Brown speaks so lovingly, dependently of his country, his place; his writing is unthinkable without the place he belongs to.

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[46] Marya Hornbacher (1974-) is a journalist and novelist, whose debut *Wasted* was nominated for the Pulitzer Price in 1998.

2.2.4. Nature

Himself a former scoutmaster for the Boy Scouts, an avid hunter and horseman (see Karl 191), Faulkner remarks 1957, in a course on contemporary literature as a writer in residence at the University of Virginia, about Southerners, that they have always had a close connection to nature since the early days. Faulkner himself was sorely aware of the progressing loss of wilderness and the retreat of untouched huntable nature and it had a great impact on him and on his attitude towards change, modernity, and his home state Mississippi (see ibid. 160). The historical close connection of the Southerner to nature dates back to the days of the frontier. Even the planter aristocracy of the antebellum South was, despite its interest in fine art, furniture, clothes, living in a pioneer's country, sometimes even directly along the frontier (see Gwynn/ Blotner 55). When Faulkner was born the South was defeated only 30 years earlier, and he was born in a transitory time when two eras met. Towns still appeared and vanished, politics were turbulent (see Karl 48), and a lot of his fiction deals with the pains and problems of transition and political change (see ibid. 82).

Literarily, nature constitutes the stage on which everything happens. May it be good, bad, horrific, exhilarating, or plainly normal, dull, or monotonous, nature remains indifferent or even threatening. The sun shines on a dying child, a brutal killing, and rivers murmur jollily in the background. Southern authors use nature to put stress on the inner or outer situation in different ways. It can be used reinforcingly, a thunderstorm accompanying a similarly dark scene, or grotesquely, grand spring weather for a hideous murder. When Albert, the old man in Burke's *A Season of Regret* heads out to kill a man, "[i]n the background the river is like black satin, the canyon roaring with the sounds of high water and reverberated thunder" (Burke 45), and when he pulls the trigger "a bolt of lightning splits a towering Ponderosa pine in half" (ibid. 46). When his wife has died and he comes home from her funeral "he can hear the wind coursing through the trees and grass, just like the sound of rushing water, and he wonders if it is blowing through the canyon where he lives or through his own soul" (ibid. 48). Gothic literature is also in the respect of nature the literary first choice of Southern authors, due to its emphasis on landscape as a symbol for the "exposed, inhuman, pitiless" character of nature (Lloyd-Smith 7).

But at the same time nature, the landscape, the climate is something the South takes pride in. Having continental, coastal, and mountainous region in its repertoire, there is much to praise and something for everyone to especially like and enjoy. Just as the weather and landscape serve as negative stress for some plots, mountains, valleys, rivers, and forests can emphasize solitude, peace, and serenity (see Reece 59). If it does, it is mostly to underline the seclusion, to portray the Southern countryside as simultaneous refuge and hideaway. Nature serves as protection from outside encroachment or influence. It is said about the South that the landscape, especially in the mountain area, is so rough, impenetrable, and inhospitable that people can hide permanently either from the police, school system, or personal enemies. Children are running wild, unschooled and untamed, uncontrolled abuse of all kinds being daily routine. Families are dysfunctional and breeding ground for hate and inhumanity. In Hannah's *Hey Jack!* Homer and his friends are speaking about Harmon, a guy not well-liked in their community. They state "that people like young Harmon would better serve each other by going back up in the hills and committing incest man on man" (Hannah 1987: 24). The so-called "hills" are an area where anything can happen, where incest is nothing unusual. It is the home of the untamed, uncivilized rednecks. Hannah Pittard plays with this mythos in her story *Rabies Do Not Talk of Love.* She lets two girls run wild in the woods at night full of hate for their neglecting family and full of fear of the threat of rabies. Those two girls are like wild animals out there in the dark. They roam the forest, hissing, playing, jumping, and biting (see Pittard 100).

Not quite so harmless and natural are the scenes in James Dickey's *Deliverance*. Four middle-aged friends set out to find their personal salvation in the untouched nature of the Georgia mountains. They are determined to go canoeing on a wild river, which is to be flooded by a dam soon (see J. Dickey 1). But for them the beautiful North Georgia river "runs straight to Redneck hell" (C. Dickey 14). They want to experience it before civilization pushes a little further into wilderness, before another idyllic spot has to give way for an industrialized, subdued type of nature, formed to fit suburban recreational needs. "This whole valley will be under water. But right now it's wild. And I *mean* wild […] We really ought to go up there before the real estate people get hold of it and make it into one of their heavens." (J. Dickey 1). What those men encounter is untamed, but not at all relaxing and refreshing. They encounter obviously genetically deficient children, due to inbreeding, they suppose. And, again, nature is presented as impenetrable, exciting and frightening at the same time. "[The rangers] said they hadn't been up in there, and the way they said "in there" made it sound like a place that's not easy to get to. Probably it isn't, but that's what makes it good" (ibid. 33). The four men leave their safe homeground for a mythical journey. They "suffer initiations and trials in the wilderness" (Hart 13), it is their rite of passage. In Andrew Lytle's *A Long Night* underlying themes of mysticism and religiosity are associated with nature. Pleasant McIvor, the son of murdered Cameron McIvor, becomes alienated from community and family on his murderous quest for revenge. He eventually finds refuge in the woods of Winston County in Alabama and nature serves for him as a type of cleansing and as salvation (see Owsley 3f.).

It is the myth of the impermeable wilderness where anything can happen that is expressed in *Deliverance* and *The Long Night*. This myth is also found in Barry Hannah's *Get Some Young*, where a couple of adolescent boys set out for the wilderness to drink, smoke, and enjoy their summer. An adult married couple and their strange sexual relationship suck them in. After the beautiful boy Swanly engages in an excessive orgy of drugs and sex, nothing remains the same. Their youth is finally over and the boys painfully notice their loss while they drag their drugged friend home.

The motif of untouched nature not only serves as symbol for a place one can hide children, fugitives, immoral or even criminal behavior but also for the yearning for a pre-civilized or at least pre-modern state. Tiger Bandini, the protagonist in Barry Hannah's story *The Agony of T. Bandini* falls in a bank of weeping willows during one of his nights spent drinking.

> A skinny cat came in there with him. Bandini took off all his stinking clothes, picked up the cat, and began weeping. This seemed a sad and wonderful place in here. He cursed the pavement and steel outside and did not come out of the trees until evening […] (Hannah 1996c: 129).

He longs for a more simple life; he wants to strip his problems like his soiled clothes. He blames the outside modern world for his failures and tries to refuse to go back to civilization for a short while.

In *I'll Take My Stand*, the manifesto of the *Southern Agrarians*, John Crowe Ransom states that the human destiny is "to secure and honorable place with nature" (quoted in Karl 230). It is necessary to protect the strong link with nature, which modern society has already severed (see ibid.). In his opinion, the South has an increased awareness and appreciation of nature and the natural order of things compared to the rest of the United States. This is one of the main reasons why the South is able to maintain a superior social order, which must under all circumstances be protected. This connection to nature is an expression of humility and recognition of the omnipresence of God and of the mystery of nature. "The enemies of [God and the mystery of nature] are everywhere: industrialization, modernization, progress, loss of community life, uncertainties in the individual" (ibid.). James Dickey, like Ransom educated at and connected to Vanderbilt University at Nashville, Tennessee, has an equal approach to the mystic of nature. He has a worshipping view on nature and its creator, and understands the Southern writer as a spokesperson for this cause (see Hart 20). This humble worship and acceptance of nature and the cycle of life is also expressed in Faulkner's *Light in August*. The novel has a circular structure, beginning and ending with Lena Grove. She is a very earthy young woman, very connected to nature and with faith in the good in life and fate.

Civilization as a threat to mankind and its physical, social, and psychological health is a recurring motif James Dickey stresses when protagonist Lewis asks his friend Ed where he would go "when the radios died. When there was nobody to tell you where to go" (J. Dickey 37), and Ed answers, "I would probably head south" (ibid.). When threatened by "the H-Bomb" (ibid.) Lewis, who believes that civilization is doomed and will soon come to an end, would retreat to the Appalachians, where he "could make a kind of life that wasn't out of touch with everything, with the other forms of life. Where the seasons would mean something, would mean everything" (ibid. 38). They long for the pre-civilized state of society and of humankind and hope to find it in the mountains and on the river. Compared to the people who live there, they perceive themselves as "lesser men" (ibid. 41), deprived of the connection with nature, with instincts lying idle. All of a sudden, having entered the mountain region on their trip back to nature, they are appalled even by plastic, with its bright, unchangeable colors, and its eternal life without decomposition (see ibid. 66). But soon, as it gets dangerous and the men are threatened and harassed by hillbilly criminals the spirit changes. When the assaulter asks Ed "You ever had your balls cut off, you fuckin' ape?" he answers "Not lately", […] "clinging to the city" (ibid. 97). The safe haven suddenly isn't untouched nature anymore, but the civilized city where a little politeness helps in almost any situation. This gloomy anticipation of what is concealed or hidden in nature and the wilderness is a central theme in American and Southern Gothic (see Lloyd-Smith 93). The frontier experience, the genocide of the Native Americans, the terror of slavery has its effect on the American mind and perceives nature as haunted, unpredictable, and possibly hostile. An ambivalent attitude toward and a special connection with nature arise and influence Southern literature, the type of nature portrayed, and the role its plays. Walker Evans says to Bill Ferris, a Southern writer, after his first extensive visit to the Deep South, "I can understand why Southerners are haunted by their own landscape and in love with it" (quoted in Mellow 293). The South's nature and their relationship of dependence on many different levels is one of intertwined love and hate; before his or her nature the Southerner is at awe.

2.2.5. Man and Beast

Man and beast, the human being and his or her relationship to animals of all kinds - pets, livestock, or wild animals - is a popular theme in Southern literature and a frequently used means of reflecting the emotions, feelings, and attitudes of the person involved. Very often the protagonist, primarily but not exclusively male, is in a disastrous emotional state and either projects his hatred and devastation on the animal and releases it through the display of cruelty and violence towards it, or bonds remarkably with the pet or even with the piece of livestock. The animal serves as a means to release anger and hatred and act out perversity; as a place where one can test emotions, and relationships and as a last resort for feelings, contact to another being, and feeling alive.

Animals are often perceived as more truth- and faithful, socially superior, purer, closer to God. John Grady Cole in *All The Pretty Horses* dreams of this superior order. He dreams of horses walking in an antique site where the written signs of a long gone civilization have been washed off the stones. “Finally what he saw in his dream was that the order in the horses’ heart was more durable for it was written in a place where no rain could erase it” (McCarthy 1992: 280).

Animals are supposedly easily deciphered, easily accessible, or as Howard, the protagonist of Barry Hannah’s short story *Dragged Fighting From His Tomb* says about his dead horse,

> What a deliberate and pure expression Black Answer retained, even in death. What a bog and labyrinth the human essence is, in comparison. We are all overbrained and overemotioned. […] Compared with horses, we are all a dizzy and smelly farce (Hannah 2004: 53).

Even when the communication between the individual and the world has broken down, he understands the beast, and is, or maybe just imagines himself, likewise understood on a higher and purer level than anyone of his own species would, could or bothered to attempt.

Animals stand for the natural part of life, and as such there are treated respectfully, even when used and killed. This notion is both represented in Marcia Guthridge’s *The Host* and Stephanie Soileau’s *The Boucherie.* In both the animals which are killed are honored and respected, in the second story, killing a cow even serves as initiation for a teenage boy (see Soileau 304). Killing an animal must not be in vain, one must eat what one kills, and only kill what is really needed. In *The Host* the protagonist takes her husband to her small Texan hometown and tries to relive her childhood memories and fascinations, including cherishing the caught seafood.

> I considered the shrimp. I was fascinated by them […]. I'd like to eat them with their skin still on. […] Eyes and all. […] They were pinker, done being cooked but each one still intact. […]. Two of them embraced a limp half-lemon, their legs twined about it on either side. […] I relented and did not eat the eyes and shells; but I refused to let him de-vein my portion. Happily, I ate what the shrimp had eaten. I tried not to chew too many times, as if they were holy things, and so I could imagine them coming to life and swimming in my gut, eating what I ate, pink parasites in a gracious host (Guthridge 7).

The eater imagines an almost metaphysical relationship with her food, and refuses to throw away more than necessary. During the course of the story she catches a big fish. Since it is not the type fish, which is usually eaten, a tarpon, the fishermen and her husband tell her to have it stuffed and put it on a wall as a trophy. At first she does not even understand what they mean, then she flat-out refuses, "I'm proud. I caught it. I'm going to eat it. […] This fish is too important to stuff" (ibid. 13). She finds killing for trophies not just ridiculous but morally wrong, her father having taught her so. He taught her that respecting what you kill and killing only for nourishment, "keep things right between us and the fish" (ibid. 4). It is the cycle of life that is honored in such notions, the respect for creation and the responsibility that comes with it.

Livestock, especially cattle and swine, horses and dogs, as man's faithful, understanding companions, represent the South as the part of the United States that has not yet been entirely paved over, industrialized, disconnected from nature, not yet modernized. Life goes at an organic pace, it listens to its inner natural clock, knows how to interpret signs of nature, that help us to orientate ourselves in the world and society. It serves as a symbol of being in sync with life itself. They are as representatives for a better, more natural social order and a connection to the earth and environment, a representative, a symbol, for the South. Many Southern short stories and poems deal with animals and their relationship with humans and their connectedness to nature. A majority of James Dickey's poems are thematically engaged with animals and nature, for example *The Heaven of Animals, For the Last Wolverine, The Sheep Child, Springer Mountain, Winter Trout, Goodbye to Serpents,* or *Listening to Foxhounds*. He was impressed and influenced by James Agee's *A Mother's Tale,* which talks about a cow that escapes from the slaughterhouse, and Jorge Luis Borge's *The God's Script,* which incorporates the idea of a secret written of the skin of a jaguar used symbolically for poetry (see C. Dickey 93).

Dickey's son Christopher writes in his memoirs that his father wanted to be like an animal. He didn't go hunting to kill them, but "to *be* them". "Try to get the sense of metaphor and of participation in the cosmos that an animal would have" (ibid. 92), he writes in his notebook on one of his hunting trips. He gives his son a bow and arrow to hunt deer with, and he praises the "mystical connection" between the hunter and the hunted this type of hunting evokes. "Hunting was about *instinct*" (ibid. 94), and guns suppressed any of it. The old-fashioned archery prevails over the more modern weapon.

Hunting is a rather manly activity and James Dickey took his son Christopher, although described by him as an otherwise rather absent father, on several camping and hunting trips. He expressed the need to pass something on to him that he had received from his own father. It appears to be an initiation process that is handed down generation for generation. This type of initiation theme is also omnipresent in Barry Hannah's work (see Weston 13). In his short story *Uncle High Lonesome* a young boy is almost shot while on his first hunting trip, the men in his family now think he is old enough and he is very proud to be asked to go (see Hannah 1996d: 213). Connected to the subject of boyhood initiation is a longing for youth, a melancholic yearning and celebration for the freedom and beauty of childhood, which is also expressed in the story *Get Some Young* (see Weston 64).

Animals are perceived by the Southern writer as mysterious, supreme, and in a way better human beings or at least a vehicle for the human being to connect with nature and the land and encounter its real self. Animals are perceived to have a more natural and supposedly more peace- and truthful social order, which the struggling individual, misunderstood and sometimes even cut off by his social environment, envies. There is no such communion as among horses and the notion that men can be understood at all is probably an illusion (see McCarthy 1992: 111). This envied social order, the beast's system of communication; its means of bonding seems unachievable amongst humans, and an essential part of the worldly order. Coyotes in *Hey Jack!* outsmart their hunters and build "a whole new society" (Hannah 1987: 32) and in *Blood Meridian* the kid and the ex-priest Tobin speak at night about the importance of this community, this order of beasts.

> At night, said Tobin when the horses are grazing and the company is asleep, who hears them grazing?

> Dont nobody hear them if they're asleep.
> Aye. And if they cease their grazing who is it that wakes? Every man (quoted in Bell 10).

The community of beasts, their spiritual bonds amongst themselves and with the human race may be concealed and underlying, but it will get noticeable and painful once it weakens or dies away.

Johnny, the protagonist in the short story *Johnny Too Bad* by John Dufresne has a rather close relationship with his dog, one that resembles a relationship among humans irritably. The connection to his dog Spot is deeper than to anybody of his own species, and communication works much better. Johnny treats Spot like a person, he apologizes to him when he plays a song Spot, as everybody knows, hates (see Dufresne 101). He endows him with human character traits, such as perceiving Spot as being a lover of theater and "quite a fine performer" himself […] "who brings clarity and dignity to every role he plays" (ibid. 110). At the very end of the story, after having survived being blown away by a hurricane, Spot even speaks to Johnny and his girlfriend Annick and tells them what has happened to him (see ibid 144). Spot, his character, his manners, his preferences and dislikes, and all the fantastic stories Johnny tells about his life with him, add a surreal edge to the whole story. Johnny is a highly unreliable narrator and the reader cannot be sure what the actualities are, what really happens and what is merely invention or fantasy. This impression of the protagonist's possible inventions and misinterpretations are underlined by his unorthodox relationship to Spot and their means of communication.

The bond between human and animal is strongly influenced by instincts and a special type of communication and tender compassion. This is especially true for the relationship between man and dogs or horses, but also for the relationship with livestock. The boys in Rick Bass's *Goats* enter a "new and alien fraternity of half-man, half-animal" (Bass 14) when the begin to buy calves for their hoped for cattle empire, and the little girl of the toothless, filthy redneck they buy their sickly calves from even bonds with her fish Goldy being deprived of a real family and any friends (ibid. 21). The two boys begin to raise sickly calves dreaming of a future in the cattle business. They enjoy fixing up one of their grandfather's farm, the connection with the land and following the

Southern tradition of farming. They feel that it is their start into adulthood, into manhood and independence.

Since Faulkner, Southern writers are nearly obsessed with horses (see Karl 14), representing hunting, a manly sphere, and a tender relationship not requiring many words.[47] "What do you think it does to waller all over a horse thataway?" (McCarthy 1992: 106) Lacey Rawlins asks his friend John Grady Cole in McCarthy's *All The Pretty Horses* watching him carefully petting a horse before saddlebreaking it. "I dont know […] I aint a horse" (ibid.), John answers. He cannot express in words what he does right instinctively. He has been around horses all his life and feels more comfortable among them, he even likes to sleep at the horsestable listening to the noises, feeling their presence (see ibid. 223). After having gone to Mexico, fallen in love, and been incarcerated, he lies in his cell, badly wounded, uncertain about the things to come and he thinks of horses to console himself, to remain sane (see ibid. 204). And even after he is released and free to go back to the United States he stays in Mexico because of "the girl and the horses" (ibid. 204) he is not willing to leave behind. The girl, he has to find out, is lost forever and he is devastated, but he is not about to lose the second being he loves, his horse. John Grady is on his way back to Texas, but he wants to get his horse Redbo back. "He sat a long time. He leaned and spat. […] The hell with it, he said. I aint leaving my horse down here" (ibid. 257). During the hassle and fighting of reaching and leaving with the horses, he gets shot and lies on Blevins's horse, preventing it from getting up, protecting it from the sniper who is shooting at them. While they are lying there wounded and scared "he found that he was breathing in rhythm with the horse as if some part of the horse were within him breathing and then he descended into some deeper collusion for which he had not even a name" (ibid. 266). The horses give his life stability and meaning. He has to take the police captain hostage to get his horse back, but he doesn't want revenge for what the captain has done to him and his friends, he plainly wants to get the three horses the three boys came with and go back home. "Quiero mis caballos, he called. Nada más“ (ibid. 264). The captain calls him insane, all of the bloodshed and the danger of getting caught over a horse are not comprehensible to him. But John Grady Cole is determined. The reason why the two boys are caught and put in Mexican jail was indirectly also a horse. While crossing the Texan-Mexican border, they meet an even younger traveler: a boy named Jimmy Blevins. He rides a very good horse and during the course of events it runs away, is kept by the finder, and retaken by Blevins. Men get shot and the three boys are sought after as horse thieves and murderers. Blevins is murdered by the police captain during his incarceration, and not a trace of him is left but his magnificent horse. John and Lacey are rescued by John’s lover’s intervening from certain death in Mexican prison. Rawlins blames Blevins’s horse for their misfortune, “all over a goddamned horse”, but Cole says “horse had nothin to do with it” (ibid. 185).

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[47] Faulkner's father Murry Falkner owned a horse stable in Oxford, Ms, and young William Faulkner as a child spent a lot of time there, watching the male bonding and drinking. This started his infatuation with horses, liquor and typical male activities (see Karl 31). He remained a horseman all his life and died from his injuries two weeks after he was thrown from a horse in 1962 (see Taylor 199). Wild horses are a recurrent subject in his fiction symbolizing untamed, untouched wilderness, manhood, and superior intelligence (see Gwynn/Blotner 135).

When he comes back home with the horses, he returns Lacey’s to him and finds that all the reasons he has left for still remain. He had to leave this woman, his best friend, and his innocence behind, and in the end he is left with nothing but two horses. He rides alone and without a plan into the wide-open country. While he travels through the wilderness he and his horses become one. “[A]nd horse and rider passed on and their long shadows passed in tandem like the shadow of a single being” (ibid. 302). They leave home once again to face “the world to come” (ibid). John Cole feels a strong kinship with nature and the countryside, although he feels alienated. His horses are part of this connection and with them he is on the journey that is his life (see Morrison 178f.). In McCarthy’s second novel of the *Border Trilogy The Crossing*, called a Southern tale in disguise of a Southwestern story by Richard Gray (see Gray 12), there are another two boys about to find out about their place in the world. In the seemingly endless prairie they lead a life of dirt, horses, dogs, and cattle. Billy, a teenage boy, catches a female wolf in a naïve attempt to do something manly, something of importance. He hunts her down and traps her, but after seeing her badly hurt, struggling but with unbroken spirit he wants to take her back to Mexico and set her free. He has her injured leg tended to, unaware of the paradox irrationality of his actions (see McCarthy 1994: 71). The wolves portrayed are equipped with a distinct personality, even emotions. When the male wolf is trapped he wants his female companion to leave him to save her own life. He is brave and calm and when the trappers come to kill him, he stands up to meet them (see ibid. 24). The reader feels compassion and doesn't want this strong, brave, loving wolf to be killed. Just as in *All the Pretty Horses* the beast, the wolf, "is a being of great order and […] it knows what men do not" (ibid. 45). Man does not understand the consequences of his actions for his surrounding and nature. He does not see the interconnectedness of things and does not recognize God in nature. On their journey to Mexico the boy and the wolf are alone in the wide country. "They rode off the plain in the final dying light, man and wolf and horse over a terraceland of low hills much eroded by the wind" (ibid. 73). Man and beast are again on a quest, another coming of age story unravels.

Another example of man-animal relations is the character of Kurt Schaffer in Brad Vice's story *Report from Junction*. He is the teenage son of a farmer and lives in a desperate situation. It is 1954 and an extensive draught has made life in Tennessee miserable and most of the cattle have died already (see Vice 149). Kurt's job in this long and hellish summer is to herd the remaining cows and end their misery when they are dying of thirst. While he is filling in at the feed store or working cows, he thinks about his first year of college on a football scholarship that is about to begin, and he is contemplating about leaving everything behind but at the same time he is much aware of the inescapability of his fate. Highly depressed he is doing depressing work, finding dead cows all day, shooting the half-dead. Vice's story is packed with gruesome cruelty towards or between animals, and it has a great impact on Kurt. He hurts his hand badly during the rushed attempt to shoot a dying cow. Buzzards have hacked its eyes out. Kurt is highly disturbed by this and is almost brought to tears. He shoots at the buzzards, killing one, but also scaring his horse so it crushes his hand. All Kurt could do was stare at his crushed hand pinned to the ground, and think to himself "*Oh, my God. She is still alive. She is still alive"* (ibid. 153). The days pass without change or even a glimpse of hope. This glimpse appears finally at the end of the story in the figure of a newborn calf. Cougan, a Texan, shows up at the feed store, bringing the baby bull on the bed of his truck. Kurt tries to feed it, is tender and loving and the reader believes, wants to believe, to find the story taking a happy turn. But this doesn't last long; desperate Kurt and the shocked reader learn that the tiny bull's eyes are full of screwworms screwing their way to his brain (see ibid. 161). The devastation this leaves the reader with is even larger than before, and for Kurt it is the last thing in a long list that was eating him up. Cougan wants to take the baby bull back with him, just for his daughter's sake, no matter how terminally sick he is. He doesn't want to end the calf's misery as advised. Kurt snaps. He threatens Cougan and his daughter with the gun he is been shooting cows with all those last weeks. He drives them off the premises, but being alone again he dully realizes that no matter what he does and what pain he goes through, his life will remain the same, his burden will not lighten (see ibid. 165).

Often the scenes on display are disturbing, sometimes stretching the limits of the tolerable. For example the explicit description of the burning of puppies in Allison's story,

> Those monsters get drunk, stoke up the fire, and throw in all the puppies they can't sell. Alive, the sonsabitches! Don't even care if anyone hears them scream.] Imagine it. Little puppies, starved in cages and then caught up and tossed in the fire (Allison 339),

or the suffocating of a horse with a plastic bag tied around its head in Burke's *A Season of Regret* (see Burke 34). After the horse is buried, a sow and her piglets and several bears die in a fire (see ibid. 43f.). In Faulkner's *Light in August* Joe Christmas brutally beats his exhausted horse in a useless attempt to escape himself and his fate (see Lloyd-Smith 118). Billy Parham in *The Crossing* brutalizes an old and crippled dog that seeks shelter with him in a way station. He tries to find him the next morning and sits down to cry when he can't (see Shaw 265). He is shocked of what he is capable of and most of all he is shocked and scared about his situation. Often the animal's pain hurts the human worse than pain inflicted on him- or herself, or maybe it is the pain that is more easily accessible, the grounds on which hurt can be acted out, or revenge can be taken. Own personal agony is locked away to poison slowly, it finds an outlet in compassion. It makes people then do irrational things. Jo, one of the daughters who take care of their mother in her last weeks, bombs the animal pond, and Kurt Schaffer, shoots at a father and his little daughter for not relieving the baby bull from his misery, John Grady Cole takes the police captain hostage to get his horse back.

Animals, their suffering, their mutilation and brutalization are transporter and catalyst to emphasize the desperate human condition. They bring out the worst and best in man. Tender feelings and love can be displayed and man is exposed as nothing more than a beast himself, or maybe as something even worse.

While the connection between man and beast is a battlefield for otherwise inexpressible emotions and a relationship that is still accessible and livable when the isolation from family and community is already permanent, the interconnectedness between man, beast, and war is also striking. Again, the isolated individual, coarsened and on the edge of psychosis, worn out by war and unable to communicate normally anymore, turns to the animal as a companion and partner who supposedly still understands. In *Dragged Fighting From His Tomb* by Barry Hannah the above-mentioned protagonist Howard is highly isolated and lonely, and he claims Macbeth-like that "[t]he only friends of the human sort I have are the ghosts that I killed" (Hannah 2004: 59). He doesn't even care about what side he is fighting on, as long as he is fighting. He kills "just for fun" (ibid. 55). His killing is not random, it follows a certain logic, but not one to be understood by anyone but himself. He has a distanced attitude towards life and death, also towards his own body and life. When he takes a shot through his neck he falsely thinks his time to die has come. He sits on his horse to wait on death, calmly thinking that dying is not too bad after all. At the end of the story, he laconically speaks of his - now actual - dying from emphysema. He is quite indifferent towards anything physical. During the Civil War he has been sent away by General Jeb Stuart, and he comes back in a union uniform to kill the General. "My uniform was blue. I did not care if it was violet" (ibid. 58). War for him has become an end in itself. On his side, fighting and supporting him and the Confederacy, is his horse Mount Auburn. "He wanted me as I wanted him. He was mine. He was the Confederacy" (ibid. 50). Howard speaks to his horse, "his friend" (ibid. 55), and warns him of upcoming danger. Mount Auburn takes the warning to heart and does as he is told, "'Roll down, Auburn!' I shouted. He lay down quick" (ibid. 55). When the horse still gets shot, Howard "overmurders" (ibid.) the man who did it and is "angry beyond [him]self" (ibid.). Mount Auburn is saved by Howard's quick first aid, and in 1900 Howard rides his grandchild. He has no friends in the world, and almost no social contact beside General Stuart's ghost who speaks to Howard when he is drunk (see ibid. 59). He rides the yet unnamed horse and "was waiting for him to say what he wanted, to talk", it turns out that "Christ is his name, this muscle and heart striding under" him (ibid. 60).

Before Mount Auburn, he had ridden a horse named Black Answer that had ran away from his former rider, knowing he was stupid. Howard explains, "the layman does not know how the currents of the rider affect that dumb beast he bestrides. […] *I am saying that a good animal knows his man*" (ibid. 52). He starts talking to Black Answer, and "*he knew what* [he] *was saying*" (ibid.). But the horse is killed by a cannon ball within the first fifteen minutes of Howard's ownership, and this raised his "anger about the war" (ibid.). What seeing "mortal torsos burst in the field in two days of sun" (ibid. 51) hadn't done, the death of his horse did.

3. Cultural and Literary Identity

The literary and cultural South of the last fifty years has widely tried to ignore and refused modernity and modern society both consciously and subconsciously. It consciously draws a dividing line between itself and the North, it is proud of being "the South", but at the same time there are collective traumata, that still move and agitate Southern authors and will not yet release them. Faulkner, as representative of a Southern author "reveals how history dooms one generation after another" (Karl 293); history is "ever-present" (ibid. 297). Southern authors could not proceed into Modernism or Postmodernism while the old themes were not old, while the forms were and still are not outdated. They could not accept modernity, as the perceivably most vicious outside intrusion. The Northern modernity and its modern, fast pace of every aspect of life has posed a threat to the South's cherished society, art, and way of life since the end of the Civil War. Social scientist Charles Lerche identifies this notion as the Southerners' feeling "that they are struggling against an open conspiracy and a totally hostile environment" (quoted in Gray 6). The South feels that to yield to the intruding modernity would be a surrender of the

Southern identity and deliberately chooses anachronism over progress. On the one hand the South does not want to give up this special position, on the other hand this clinging to the past, makes an overcoming of the traumata impossible and perpetuates the collective suffering. Symbolical for this perpetuated suffering that may be also due to a total refusal to accept change is Faulkner’s Compson family in *The Sound and the Fury*. Its “core fatality was that they still lived like it was 1859” (Gwynn/Blotner 33).

Literary and culturally, the past and the Southern history have become a major reference for the definition of Southern identity. They are glorified, mythologized, idealized, and mixed with the melancholic awareness of loss and depravation. The South’s past is not only a source of trauma, but simultaneously of pride. This mixture makes the turn to the past for answers about the present and future so resilient against any notions of change or replacement. To give up this major source of reference and constituent of Southern identity would completely undermine its whole self-concept. Both the positive and negative roots of the South lie in its past and the lost cultural and moral achievements. The pride and feeling of moral and cultural superiority and the shame caused by guilt and defeat make up a strong foundation. Such sense of cultural superiority is embedded in Southern literature and awareness. James Dickey says about the South, the region he calls home and the place he writes about, that it had an especially Southern “sense of kinship” (quoted in Hart 19). He says,

> I still believe in the things that Stonewall Jackson and Lee and those people felt were valuable: courage, and dependability and other old-fashioned virtues that go all the way back to the Greeks. I still think they’re virtues, and the sense of them has been strong in the South. There are a lot of crooked double-dealing people here, but the good human beings in the South have a degree of commitment to honesty and reliability that I have never seen in any other people (ibid.).

Here they are, the Southern values that still draw on an antebellum or even war ideal of man, of honor, and of virtue. The myth of the South makes its people honest, courageous and dependable, formed by hardship, not willing to give up what is left of them: their ideals and their honor.

Any intrusion and involvement of “foreigners”, of anyone who is not Southern, any interference from outside is viewed as fundamentally bad, to be avoided, and fought when needed. Jill McCorkle's[48] story *Intervention* shows this extended need and notion of privacy on the smaller scale of a marriage. Marilyn and Sid are in their mid-sixties with grown-up children, and they both are alcoholics, Marilyn dry, Sid far from it (see McCorkle 262f). Marilyn lets her children talk her into a family intervention, but feels guilty at every step of the endeavor, "knowing that she had made a terrible mistake" (ibid. 264). She lets the rest of the family plan and execute the intervention, holding the secret from her husband, which is almost unbearable to her. Not being able to pull through with it she eventually helps her husband to brush off any attempted intervention and makes the choice to continue being his "enabler" for the sake of their intimacy and privacy. The intrusion and the betrayal are intolerable, even if that means holding up the miserable status quo. This motif can be interpreted to be symbolic for the South as a whole. As described above, the rigid remaining in a bad situation without the intention to flee and leave derives from the innate conviction that a familiar misery is better than the unknown. This is to be protected under all circumstances and defended against intrusion.

The South defies modern society and modern ways; it perceives them as a threat to what the Southern society and cultural heritage supposedly stands for. It draws the clear line between itself and outsiders, foreigners, the perceived enemies. Even the smallest Southern unit, the biscuit, does not comply with the modern ways, as described in Jim Ruland's[49] *Ode to the Fluffiest Biscuit*. "Biscuit-making is messy as hell, which is why they are the anathema to the fast-food enterprise. […] biscuits cannot be micromanaged the way one would a box of frozen hamburger patties or a five-gallon bucket of fry oil" (Ruland 51). It resists the incorporation into mainstream America by not being fit for standardization and the industrialized fast food industry. If it is not treated traditionally, it will spoil.

This constant perpetuation of old issues and problems, this construction of an identity that is based on the presence and importance of the past and its overriding the present and determining the future result in an ambivalent self-perception. The defeat of the South in the Civil War brought forth a humiliation and inferiority complex, which was somewhat turned around and turned against itself. Negative features were stylized to become positive. The Southern identity-building and demarcation of the cultural home-ground happened somewhat differently from other identity-building processes because it used humiliation, defeat, inferiority, and marginality and turned it into something to be proud of, into a social and cultural order that is threatened and that deserves to be cultivated and preserved. This order supposedly is morally superior and the exact opposite of modern society and its fast-paced life, due to the strong religious social impact and the tightly knit society with an active and harsh control system. Thus traditions and the unique Southern way of life are continuously protected. Literary, this preservation uses symbols such as the connection to nature, animals, and a special sense of place, but also excessively draws on its problems violence, despair, and cultural melancholy. Negatively connotated stereotypes all of a sudden are reversed and become a source of pride and identification. Protagonist Claire Schiller in Marya Hornbacher's *The Center of Winter* sits at her husband's funeral and remembers a certain conversation with her Southern mother in her home state Georgia. "I remember the purple velvet settee, the tattered luxury I'd grown up with, the kind that seems to say, 'We're above new things'" (Hornbacher 98). The South is determined to be above modern development it perceives as immoral, unnatural, and disgraceful, and this proud withdrawal develops into a general attitude. The subordination of morals and religious conviction to the laws and demands of market and the discarding of historical awareness and preservation for the sake of the experiences and the fast ride of modern society seem unacceptable. It is better to have something old, that may be a little chipped, but is of sound quality, than to have something shiny and new, that only seems to be better but will not prevail. This rule is applied to anything from architecture, table manner, morals, and cultural codes.

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[48] Jill McCorkle is a contemporary author from North Carolina.

[49] Jim Ruland is a contemporary author who has published one collection of short stories, titled *Big Lonesome.*

I have shown that the South has its foot firmly on the cultural brake, but to claim the literary South's total avoidance of modernism would be to oneself ignore an important development, namely the development of the *New Criticism* in the South (see Cowen 2), its practice of *Close Reading*,[50] and also

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the use of certain new techniques employed by the authors of the *Southern Renaissance,* for example the extended, complex use of stream of consciousness and experimental narrative strategies, such as the mixture of prose and play in Faulkner's *Requiem for a Nun,* the formal experimentation in *The Sound and the Fury* (see Zender 333), or Barry Hannah's entire oevre with its mixture and dissolution of time and place. Although the stream of consciousness was perceived as something new and presumably modern, it could also be regarded as something very Southern. This associational style is related to the Southern oral tradition, it is its "narrative style [its] dreamlike interweaving of the past with the present" (Tyler IX).[51] This feature is still today characteristic for Southern literature and is used widely, e.g. in many stories by Barry Hannah or in the short story *Debra's Flap and Snap* by Clyde Edgerton.[52] First person narrator Debra talks about a man named L. Ray she used to know in school and who later in life became an evangelist.

> He killed a woman trying to heal her one time. […] What happened is that they were up on a pretty high stage and she walked backwards in ecstasy off the edge of the stage, hit her head on the base of a flag stand and died on the spot. Honest. Her husband sued L. Ray and lost. Think about the places they put American flags. At restaurants they fly them in the rain and at night. My daddy was always concerned about the flag. He fought in World War II (Edgerton 173).

Even if one did determine the use of certain new literary features as something modernist, one will hardly deny that this use does not go very far, not even close to what the modernist agenda calls for: radical breaks, fragmentation, shock, breaking with form and convention[53] (see Gillien 2). It ironically, anti-romanticist, intellectually, and skeptically towards religion calls for the riddance of the readers of myths and illusions to confront them with reality (see Schulze 368f.). The romanticist Southern literature calls for and works with the exact opposite.

New Criticism evolved almost parallel to the Russian Formalism, which developed in the early 20th century with the avant-garde as its most important

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[50] *Close Reading* is the *New Critic's* battlecry, which emphasizes the importance of meticulous analysis that can easily extend the actual primary passage. The mere attention is payed to the actual text and the author's intention, his or her time or biography is to be disregarded completely. Close reading refers to this close attention to the text only.

[51] This dissolution, the "fluidity of time" is also a characteristic Faulknerian feature (see Brooks 252).

[52] Clyde Edgerton (1944-) is an author from North Carolina and English literature professor at the University of North Carolina in Wilmington.

[53] As for example seen in Gertrude Stein's oeuvre. Stein (1874-1946) was an early modernist who broke radically with semantical and grammatical conventions.

influence. Both *Formalism* and *New Criticism* formulate the antithesis to 19th century view on art, which saw it as a didactic process of learning by experience. Up to that time, literary criticism focused on “romantic impressionism” and “historical scholarship” appearing objective (Cowan 2). Russian *Formalism* and its American version, *New Criticism,* can be regarded as the birth of modern literary criticism. The formalist *New Critics* regard the merely formal analysis as crucial to any critical approach to literature. They dismiss the 19th century method focusing on historical and impressionist analyses as *Affective Fallacy.* The unsystematic approach relying on preferences, feelings, and impressions is not able to cope with an analytical, scientific, and objective approach to literature. It supposedly misleads the critic inevitably, because it doesn’t centrally analyze the work itself and falsely assumes the dichotomy of form and content. It can be understood on its “own term, without depending to historical or biographical material for explanation” (ibid. 3). As I will later elaborate this approach will not hold entirely when applied to Southern literature, even by the *New Critics* themselves.

Although not named or identified as a school of criticism before 1941 (see Hobsbaum 243) the *New Critics* dominated the literary studies from the 1920s to the 1970s. With his book *The New Criticism* (1941) John Crowe Ransom coined the name (see ibid. 246). Ransom[54], a Southerner from Tennessee, can be regarded one of the founding fathers of this literary school, and many important poets and critics were among his students at Vanderbilt University in Tennessee, such as Cleanth Brooks, Robert Penn Warren, or Allen Tate[55] (see Cambridge 453), who all grew up and lived in the bluegrass region of Tennessee and Kentucky (see Cowan 6). The *New Critics* were active from the 1920s onward until the 1960s. They search for the literary in literature, for the elements that distinguish it from a non-literary text, and in this process formulate a large set of literary elements concerning form and language. Common, everyday-language is reduced to content, while literature emphasizes the word. While the former presents only one point-of-view, the latter is free to play with perspectives and several truths. To investigate how this is done, there is a need for a catalogue of terminology to describe how language makes the reader aware and how it distinguishes itself from scientific or everyday language. Many of today's poetic terms, such as juxtaposition, oxymoron, inversion, ellipsis, are owed to the formalist analyses at the beginning of the last century. The *New Critics* introduced literary criticism as a science into the universities (see Menand 8). The *New Critics'* focus was to read and interpret an individual text regardless of the author's life, background or intentions and to put great emphasis on style and language, almost to the point of disregarding content. The reader must not be distracted from the next by any unnecessary ballast (see Cowan 3). A text is to be read isolated from its context, historical or otherwise. An opposite approach, biographical or psychoanalytical for example, is called *Intentional Fallacy*[56] by the *New Critics.* To assume that an author's intention or biography could even be accessed is regarded as a fallacy in itself. Ransom divides a text in its structure and texture, the latter being dead weight under which the structure has to be identified.

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[54] John Crowe Ransom (1888-1974) was a Southern poet, essayist, social and political theorist, teacher of Brooks, Lytle, Tate, and Warren at Vanderbilt University, founder of the *Fugitives.*

[55] Cleanth Brooks (1906-1994), Southern literary critic. His major work is *The Well Wrought Urn: Studies in the Structure of Poetry.*

Robert Penn Warren (1905-1989), Southern poet, novelist, and literary critic, whose entire oeuvre is dedicated to the history of the South (see Schulze 375). He won two Pulitzer Prizes for his poetry and one for his novel *All the King’s Men.*

But interestingly enough, when Cleanth Brooks, the famous *New Critic*, deals with Faulkner's work, he will do so very differently than with others', diverging from the New Critic's credo to deal with a text solely text-immanently disregarding the author's situation, biography, etc. In *Toward Yoknapatawpha and Beyond* he claims to have to be especially fair while writing about *A Fable* because this was a novel Faulkner "put much of himself into" (Brooks 230) and that it meant a lot to the author, more than other novels (see ibid.). He then half-heartedly goes on to stating that Faulkner's judgment may not be true and he, the critic, would have to render his own conclusion, based on the text. Nevertheless, his first words give him away. "It is not easy to be fair to this novel. It was a work that evidently meant a great deal to Faulkner" (ibid.). He personally does not think *A Fable* to be the masterpiece Faulkner at first believed it to be, assumes to be able to prove this with the text itself, but has scruple doing so. Brooks even goes as far as to draw on Faulkner's infatuation with Dostoevsky to prove certain notions of *A Fable* (see ibid. 231). Generally Brooks's volumes on Faulkner demonstrate "that a proper attention to structural properties in a work of literature can lead to quite legitimate concerns in the ‘real’ world” (Cowan 70). A merely formalist approach apparently does not work too well anymore, when it gets close to home. Although the *New Critics* had the credo of text-immanent interpretation, the Southern literature, from the *Southern Renaissance* on until today, with its disregard and avoidance of modernity, is only to be fully understood and interpreted when taking into account the unique historical background and constellation.

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[56] *Affective* and *Intentional Fallacy* were both essays of the 1940s (see Whitworth 42).

Authors like William Faulkner are caught in the field of conflict between being a modernist author, but at the same time being persistently drawn back to their home place, thematically and formally. It is a dilemma most authors of the *Southern Renaissance* find themselves in (see Brinkmeyer 158). The South pulls Faulkner back even when he takes on general subjects and themes. His work, career, and private life was conflicted by the two contrasting notions of Southern regionalism, literary and culturally cosmopolitanism, and modernity (see Karl 7). Northern authors don’t find themselves in such conflicts. They are not tormented by the “clash of geography and personal beliefs” (ibid.). Even in the earlier days of his career, in his mid-twenties when he was still struggling for recognition and his family and community disapproved of what they thought idling and irresponsibly still living off his family, Faulkner stayed in Oxford (see Karl 174). He didn’t feel the urge to leave for a big city or the North, but remained on his home turf, where he felt he belonged. “Faulkner needed Oxford and Lafayette County far more than they needed him” (ibid. 176). Once, twenty-four year old, he left for New York accepting a job at a bookstore, but came back home only a few months later. “He could not function well in a large city, […] most probably he found it difficult to write” (Karl 180). Throughout his whole career he always came back home to Oxford, he never permanently left Mississippi. The South is his source of inspiration and provider of characters and topics to such an extent that he cannot even write well, when up North. Faulkner’s biographical stopovers and his persistent return to the South, again prove my hypothesis that both the Southern writer need his or her home place, and that logically Southern literature cannot be treated free of context, but has to be seen in the light of its cultural context. While authors like Ernest Hemingway can be considered being cosmopolitan

Faulkner remains, personally and literally, a Southerner. He uses modernist devices, such as interior monologue, “switching back and forth from third to first person, making narrative leaps and jumps, interrupting plot elements, [and] looping” (Karl 224). He incorporated them into his works but used them to actually mine modernism (see ibid.).

It is not mere coincidence that such an influential literary development such as the *New Criticism* is rooted deeply in the South. It is a Southern development that spread over the literary academia in the entire United States. This extremely innovative school of critics is very important for literary criticism in all the United States and even worldwide, evolving in the South out of all places. But it is more than a modern innovation. At the same time it works at the preservation of the South’s cultural and historical heritage, and it is much more traditionalist than obvious on first sight. In some respects modernity and modernism have certain points of intersection with the literary and cultural South and therefore appeal to it on certain levels and areas. The Southern *New Critics* for example, praised for their innovation, were “traditionalist in outlook though […] experimental in formal and technical matters” (Cowan 3). The *New Critics* defended “an old view of literature and of man with a criticism that was radically new” (ibid.). Having been raised in the South they all had experienced and internalized its conviction of tradition and community (see ibid. 7). Robert Penn Warren’s sources were for example the South’s myths, ballads, legends, and stories (see Schulze 376). He wanted to use the past to access the present, to develop a set of general, universally valid morals and values. He said “I should hope that the historical novel would be a way of saying something about the present” (ibid. 375). “*In praxi*” the *New Critics* tried to connect past and present and “*in theoria*” they introduced new criteria and a new explanation and justification to do so (see Halfmann 11). They bemoaned the loss of ethical traditions and of moral, due to the rise of materialism (see Schulze 352). The *New Critics* John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate, and Donald Davidson were the leaders of the group around the magazine *Fugitive*,[57] launched in 1922, and later of the *Southern Agrarians*[58]. In their manifesto *I'll Take My Stand* the latter define industrialism and technology as the major threat to religion, art, and culture (see Cowan 12). Even though the magazine seemed in some respects rather liberal and cosmopolitan, only four years later Tate, Ransom, and Warren started the openly traditionalist and anti-industrial Southern Agrarian Movement. Caroline Gordon[59], Allen Tate's wife, employed a similarly traditionalist conviction regarding poetic form and content and thought the defeat of the South to be a great historical disaster (see Schulze 507). Some critics identify an irreconcilable discrepancy between the two movements, the *New Critics* and the *Southern Agrarians,* but in fact there were more traditionalist elements in the group of the *Fugitive* than widely acknowledged (see ibid. 13). The profound continuing need and endeavor to link and legitimate the present to and with the past is omniscient, joined by the sense of the South's moral, religious, and social superiority. The manifesto was the belief in the "Edenic potentiality" (Karl 217) of the South and the entire nation. If one only could find a way back to the "real South" (ibid.), if one could only reach beyond the machine, beyond those Northern values, paradise was still within reach, with the help of church and religion (see Schulze 374). In 1929 Allen Tate had called the South "the last stronghold of European civilization in the western hemisphere" and its defeat the beginning of the decline of the West. In 1931, two years later, John Peale Bishop replied

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[57] *New Critical* Literary magazine founded by the group *The Fugitives* at Vanderbilt University.

[58] The *Southern Agrarians* were a group of traditionalist writers and poets from the South.

> I feel there is no hope for us, unless we are willing to go back, examining our mistakes and admit them. To go on the way of mechanization and progress to their ultimate destination […] is simply to applaud and hasten death. For death it will be, and no mistake (quoted in Gray 3).

Even though Ransom and Tate dismissed the Agrarian movement later, the traditionalist and conservative legacy and conviction were prevalent before and remained afterwards (see Cowan 28).

Modernism incorporates passed epochs, and traditions live on, embedded in modernism. It is up against history, but at the same time it portrays the past, which shows through at different points and on many levels (see Böhme 13f). Theorists only provide and use instruments to examine the modern, new, and revolutionary aspects of modernity, and not any to identify its traditional or classic facets Hartmut Böhme states (see ibid. 29). If these traditional constituents in modernism are taken into account, modernism in its core is not too remote from the subjects and matters of Southern literature. There are also certain points of intersection of literary modernism and Southern literature of the first half of the last century. The alienated individual and the use of myths appear in both categories. At first, this may seem a common choice of subject, but already a second look will reveal the differences. The isolated individual of modernist literature is overwhelmed by the changes in society, by unpredictable new developments, by the growing city and its suburbs. Modernist literature turns its back on history and rather uses a mythological approach to deal with the need of origin. It dissolves chronology and puts history and mythology mosaic-like together. The modernist individual suffers from the rapid development and the modern surroundings he or she lives in. It is its fate to live without references and attachments and relations. Quite the opposite is the case with the Southern subject, the protagonist of Southern literature. He or she, similarly shunned and stunned, suffers from the inflexibility, the decay both inside and outside of his or her society. It cannot separate itself from society's traditions and obligations. The impermeability, the cast society puts on its subjects is what makes life unbearable. Not too rapid a progress but no progress at all and no existing will to change is the burden for the Southern individual compared with its modernist counterpart. Although Barry Hannah, for example, disregards chronology more often than not, time, persons, and place are often hard to follow, but he does so not to make a farce out of history to overcome it at last, but to work on the ever-reappearing themes of the past. In his story *Midnight And I'm Not Famous Yet* Hannah blends element from both lost wars: the Civil War and Vietnam. He dissolves fact, history, and logic to expose universal feelings and truths. Not the fast-paced present is literary topic but, the overwhelming past, not yet overcome.

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[59] Caroline Gordon (1895-1981) is a Southern novelist and literary critic.

Ruth Weston calls her monograph on Barry Hannah's body of work *Barry Hannah, Postmodern Romantic* for a very good reason. It shows how difficult it is to label Hannah. His re-arranging of chains of events, motifs, and his experimental use of language might lead one to think he is a postmodern writer. One will discover that he may make use of certain techniques also employed by postmodernists, but for quite different reasons. He doesn't want to deconstruct in the manner of *anything goes,* but he works on the not yet overcome old Southern themes putting them into new garments. Not being able to call Hannah simply postmodern Weston calls him a postmodern romantic, mixing the predecessor of modernism, romanticism with its successor, postmodernism and even putting the emphasis on romantic. This drawing on romanticism, its subjects, and emotions and the eclecticism and somewhat anti-rationalist of postmodernism are complementary and mutually reinforcing sources and reasons to dismiss modernism and modernity. No matter which way one turns it Hannah is not modern and still closely attached to the South's past and its perpetuated themes and myths.

Speaking about his story *Ellen's Book* author Michael Knight[60] states that he "decided to go superpostmodern with it" (Knight 242). This first surprises the reader, having read his - not very postmodern - story. This surprise doesn't last long, because Knight admits that he has failed. He had to put the story down unfinished, and after picking it up again to give it a second try, he "discovered that lo and behold there was a simple story […] and I remembered that there is nothing wrong with that" (ibid.). He wasn't able to write a "superpostmodern" story, he had to discover his story underneath the postmodern clutter before it worked. After this excursion into postmodern writing, he knew "that simple stories" were his "favorite kind" (ibid.).

John Egerton sings the same song when he says about Larry T. McGehee, the author of a newspaper column on the South that appear in many several newspapers throughout the country,

> McGehee may seem to be lamenting the faded glories of a simpler time, but underneath all that I think he's thanking his lucky stars that he has the South to write about and not some other less turbulent, less hospitable, less intriguing, more orderly, more postmodern, and colder corner of the United States (Egerton XII).

Barry Hannah, for instance, in his work unites mythical, realistic and artful use of language. The myths are the South's very own, the Civil War, slavery, Reconstruction, but at the same time the past has taken on new shapes and forms over the years, they do not stay solid, but become fluid and change. Every generation keeps them alive but does something new with them, connects them to the present, they mean something slightly different to each and every generation. Hannah works on several levels with these myths. He turns hard facts, which still haunt the Southerner, into fluid ideas and notions. He uses parts of Southern collective memory but plays with inconsistencies and non-constants, and dissolves chronology and sometimes even logic. He merges the Civil War and the Vietnam War; the war-obsessed characters sometimes confuse and connect the two. For him both wars are connected; violence, confusion, and disorientation are symptomatic for the South. “To Hannah’s characters, [Vietnam] is one of the two ‘unfinished’ wars, in the sense of unresolved issues that continue to exert force over their lives” (Weston 44). War is talked about over and over again by Hannah’s characters hoping to makes some sense of it or at least find closure (see ibid.). While the poetry of modernist authors responds to the World War I and II, and the “machine-made terrors of modern warfare [which] demanded a new kind of poetry” (Gillien 9), Barry Hannah links the Civil War to Vietnam, omitting both World Wars in between. For the Southerner Barry Hannah this is a logical omission, the two World Wars being glorious victories for the United States. The war in Vietnam fits the Southern experience and its unresolved issues of shame and defeat, for it both was an unexpected, shameful defeat, and the Vietnamese jungle and guerilla tactics showed the limits of machine-based, modern warfare.

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[60] Michael Knight is a contemporary author from Alabama.

Often the reader is confused by the dissolution of time and place and it requires him or her to actively partake in the process of reading, story telling, understanding, and evaluating and re-evaluating of the ideas, traditions, and underlying emotions. On a second level he uses the language of the South not playfully but to create authenticity. Language constitutes identity to a large extent, and Hannah thus generates an authentic setting. On a third level he sticks, regarding the plot, to a tradition of Southern Gothic, describing gruesome scenes, often more gruesome than reality itself.

Both the perception of non-Southerners and the self-perception of Southerners are distinguished by romanticized notions, presentation, and interpretation of history, place, nature, and society. History continues “both to reflect and define the South” (Grant 94), and the conflict between North and South is not settled yet.[61] Just as the portrait of the typical Southerner and the

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[61] This becomes very obvious when one takes into account the numerous academic and literary publications still engaged in and dealing with this conflict, such as David Goldfield’s *Still Fighting the Civil War* (2002) or Alice Fahs’s *The Imagined Civil War* (2001).

South is sketched stereotyping, generalizing, and misconceiving, the typical Northerner is mostly not portrayed very benevolently in Southern literature. The old Kentuckian Sunday school teacher in Paul Prather's short story *The Faithful* tells the children about the Civil War during which she was a little child. She portrays Yankees as uncultivated and dumb, recalling an episode when Union soldiers raided her parents' house looking for meat. They found the ash-covered, moldy looking Kentucky ham, but disregarded it, thinking it was spoiled. They neither knew nor noticed the famous Kentucky ham (see Prather 210). If they had been used to the refined food and ways of the South they would have not mistaken it so blatantly. The Sunday school teacher reverts to her standpoint that Northerners are uncouth and ignorant and reproduces the stereotypes in telling her pupils. Stereotyping goes both ways, and with regard to the South there is a great deal of enforcing and stressing those stereotypes. In David Gessner's[62] story he tells the reader about pig picking and the eagerness of the Southern students to let their teacher in on this tradition talking to him like he was mentally (and culturally) handicapped. Gessner thinks back fondly to this episode, and says "if I sometimes stereotype the Southerners around me, then they stereotype me right back" (Gessner 115). The South is associated with backwardness, aristocrats falling from their thrown, gone riches, living in the past. In Marya Hornbacher's novel *The Center of Winter* a little girl asks her brother questions about their mother's past.

> Mother comes from Georgia. Down south, he said.
> Where's that?
> He nodded his head in a direction.
> […]
> Is she rich?
> Who, Mother? She was.
> Till when?
> Till she went to New York (Hornbacher 6).

Leaving or being driven out of the South is associated with the loss of a fortune, literally or metaphorically. When the mother moves to New York her misfortune begins to unravel. In her misery she grows to be an alcoholic, her marriage is a disaster, and her children grow up sad and her son even becomes insane. Her husband eventually leaves her by shooting himself, leaving her with nothing. Just like in Abraham Verghese's[63] story *Lilacs* the departure of the South is the beginning of the end, the corrupting environment finds a way into the lives and starts their decay. In *Lilacs* two men meet in a hospital waiting room, both are dying of Aids. They both come from small towns in the South and left for Boston only to find death. They wanted anonymity and freedom, away from the confinement of the rural South, but they only encountered HIV (see Verghese 43). Even harsher is the picture in *Hey Jack!*: a woman kills herself sticking a gun in her mouth "pointing it north" (Hannah 1987: 62).

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[62] David Gessner is an English professor from Cape Cod in Southern "exile".

Conclusion: "The Grave in the House"

My hypothesis is that the South has since the early days of the United States depended on the past to both constitute an identity and to deal with the shame and feelings connected to the Civil War. Literally, this perpetuation until the present days uses common motifs, images, and symbols I have identified. For a deeper understanding of Southern literature and culture, it is necessary to understand their drawing on the past and the reasons thereof, and fully to understand the peculiar Southern situation.

But how did and does a backward region as the South bring forth such an extraordinary body of literature? As James C. Cobb describes in *The Most Southern Place on Earth* the Mississippi Delta is the poorest region in the American South with a high illiteracy rate[64] but has the highest density of authors (see Cobb 306f.). The reason for this phenomenon is the same mixture that brings forth the uniqueness, stubbornness, and isolationism described in the chapters above: it is the amalgam of poverty, depravity, illiteracy, and a small highly educated leading class (see Tate X), or as South Carolina editor Shannon Ravenel puts it, “hunger stirs creative determination” (Ravenel IX). It is not only a hunger that derives from poverty; it is also a hunger for recognition, for recognition and acceptance of their uniqueness and maybe even moral and cultural superiority. Even if the situation is deprived and poor, the people and social order are strong. Jack in *Hey Jack!* has gone to a big city when he was a sheriff and got stabbed and robbed. From that on “he had had it with cities” (Hannah 1987: 62) and retreats to Mississippi “the worst rectangle of geography where there was no hope at all, so that he could build himself into a strong man again” (ibid.). It might be “the worst rectangle of geography”, but it is a place where men are strong and protected from the modernized and dangerous metropolis.

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[63] Abraham Verghese (1955-) is a physician and author from Texas, whose bestselling novel *My Own Country* was later made into a movie.

[64] According to a 1998 US government report, released by the National Institute for Literacy, the South still had the "most deplorable social conditions in the country including the highest rates of adult illiteracy. Mississippi ranked worst among the 50 states, thirty percent of his adult population" being completely or functionally illiterate (www.wsws.org).

The Southern identity presented literarily and culturally, is one of great pride, grief, melancholy, and guilt. It is an identity that has its foundation in a longing melancholic, and also stubborn look to the past. It becomes the major reference for Southern self-definition and demarcation. This Southern picture and culture of untiring remaining in and insisting on one’s position, may it be good or bad, is deeply rooted in the past. It is perpetuated and handed down from generation to generation. This cycle of course makes history and identity subjects to construction. White Southerners still turn to their past and heritage to define their present identity, whereas Afro- Americans will hardly look back to the days before the Civil War with other feelings than resentment and endless sadness. It is the institution of slavery that unites and separates whites and blacks in the South. This clash results in non-integrated historical perspectives and a struggle marked by guilt, pride, demands, and racism. Racism and the guilty legacy of slavery is one of the major themes of Southern literature. It is joined by rage and violence, the sense of place, a special connection to the homeland and history, and the second traumatic historic event, the Civil War. The Southern author needs the South like it needs him or her, and the flagship and master of Southern literature William Faulkner admits the high potential of autobiographical influences of the South’s authors.

> Because it is himself the Southern writer is writing about, the writer unconsciously writes into every line and phrases his violent despairs and rages and frustrations or his violent prophesies of still more violent hopes (quoted in Weston 28).

The isolation the South somewhat was and to some extent still is in, is simultaneously both by choice and involuntary. The choice was made after the experience of the Civil War and the exploitation afterwards. Allen Tate describes this unwillingness and incapability to put the past behind and try to start anew in his poem *Ode to the Confederate Dead.*

> What shall we say who have knowledge
> Carried to the heart? Shall we take the act
> To the grave? Shall we, more hopeful, set up the grave
> In the house? The ravenous grave? (quoted in Weston 46)

This is essentially the Southern sentiment about the War, its aftermath and the state it left the South in. This conscious incorporation, this proud and at the same time resigned intake of the history of their region makes the Southerner a Southerner, and these ideas of guilt, pride, shame, and honor are inherited from generation to generation. The South has “set up the grave in the house”. This unique situation brought forth unique literature and a special urge to preserve what was taken by the war and outside Northern intrusion. “The South’s defeat and surrender in battle, with its legacy of shame [is] mixed, ironically, with nostalgia for an idealized notion of the ‘lost cause’” (Weston 42). It is surprising to still find literary tribute to the Civil War over one hundred years after its end; it must be more than literary memory. New cultural expectations and obligations along the old lines have emerged and hardened, “because of the continuing power of a cultural mythology” (ibid.).

Why did and does the South persistently reject modernity and modernism? Why does it only embrace modernist methods to eventually use it against and undermine it? Why does it only accept traditionalist elements in modernism? Why is progress parallelized with loss and outside intrusion?

Modernism is “a set of responses to problems posed by the conditions of modernity” (Whitworth 3), and it is therefore not surprising for the cultural and literary South to refuse the former when they hate the latter. Since the South has tried to avert modern developments, customs, and manners from the region and simultaneously was and is still, with little exceptions, an underdeveloped region of the United States the Southerner was not exposed to the conditions of modernity to the extend the Northerner was. The problems the individual faces and the expression thereof are quite different. The South’s literary and actual individual is faced with a society that both offers protection and stability but also isolation and depravation for outsiders and non-conformists. On the one hand, Southern authors love where they are from with all the South's oddities (see Gatreaux VIII), but on the other hand they have a hard time disconnecting themselves from their home turf, even when wanting to do so. At the end of *Absalom, Absalom!* Quentin Compson, asked "why do you hate the South?", answers "I dont hate. *I don't hate it.* I dont. I dont! I dont hate it! I dont hate it!" (Faulkner 1964: 378). Although Faulkner's portrayal of the South is quite harsh, it is a criticism directed at his beloved homeland, and this fact is never contested. It is a form of love-hate that connects the Southern author to his or her home turf, criticism is meant desperately, where there is no solution at hand, with no option of leaving, or critical where hope of improvement is still realistic.

The South's reproach of modernity and modernism is founded on the antebellum society, which was, also due to the system of slavery, highly agricultural. The Reconstruction Era washed carpetbaggers into the South, whose only intentions it were to rid the Southerner of everything that the war hadn't already destroyed. The disdain and the conviction of the moral and cultural inferiority of the Northerner, who had dismissed history as excess luggage in favor of fast-paced modern society, grew. This environment and the great shame of defeat resulted in a cultivation of Southern ways and history lasting to this day, culturally and literally perpetuated. When Southern authors took up modernist forms and developments, they always did this to handle the "South's relationship with modern America" (Jancovich 202). Ransom and Tate, the famous Tennesseean *New Critics*, are modernist poets who criticized modern, capitalist America. They defended the South's difference, uniqueness, and special situation. As the South was far from being fully modernized a lifestyle could be found there which was preferable to a capitalist one. They re-examined the South's social and cultural history to defend their opinion and to create a foundation for their argument (see ibid.). They tried to identify traditionalist elements in modernism to incorporate those into their own work and agenda.

A strong frame of reference to the past is identifiable in the South even before the Civil War, it is deeply rooted in its culture and collective memory and consciousness. It goes back to the days of drawing the conquering of the wilderness and of the drawing of the demarcation line between the Southern states. Already William Byrd in his 1729 account of his journey to define the dividing line Virginia and North Carolina spoke in mythical terms of the Southern nature and his own role within. Literarily, the South always looked to the past for references, interpretations, and justifications. First, during the antebellum period, to the mother country Great Britain, then after the Civil War to the antebellum period. A set of ideas, themes, symbols, and mythological approaches are identifiable in Southern literature until this present day. They underline the stringency, which I elaborated and show the actualities of old wounds, pride, social systems, and ideologies. They show that it is necessary for the South to perpetuate those motifs and themes to consistently work on them and to construct and consolidate Southern identity.

I have identified various historical, cultural, and literary roots of this attitude and frame of reference. The two disastrous historical events in Southern history, the system of chattel slavery and the defeat in the Civil War have formed Southern identity and historical self-image decisively. Mythologized they have entered collective memory and the literary body. The partly constructed cultural and historical memory and identity are preserved and cultivated and monumentalized as a major branch of the tourist economy.

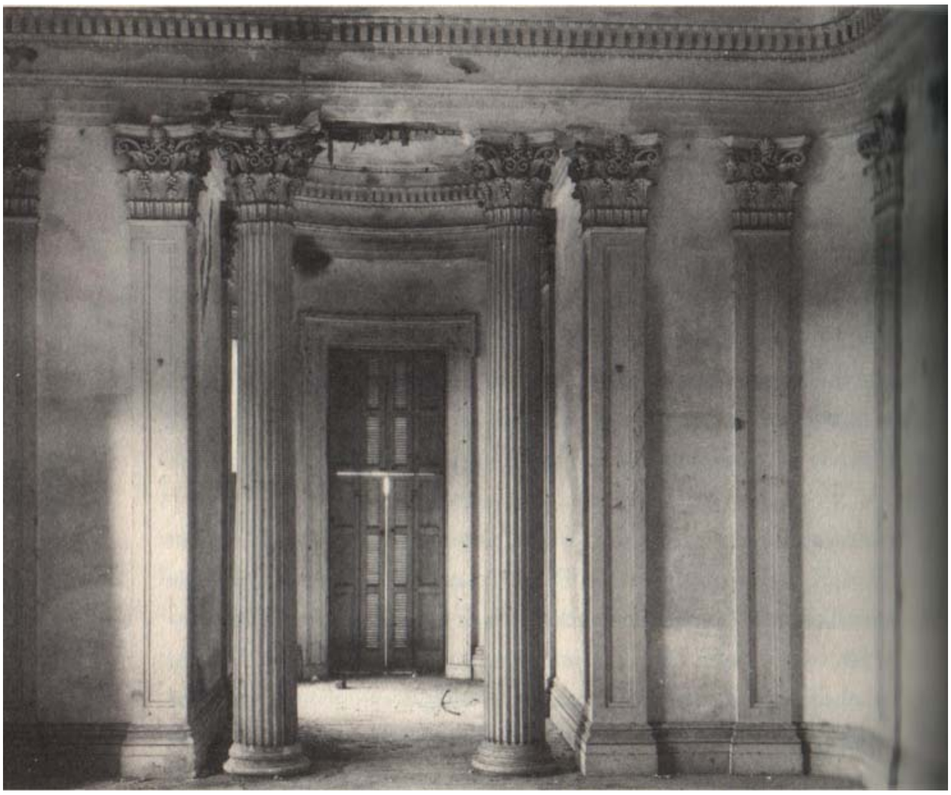
The rebuke of modernity, progress, and parts of modernism are literarily manifested in different motifs, themes, and symbol. Formally, Southern literature is rather conservative and traditionalist. It chooses the form of the short story and the novel, rather reservedly using some modern means. Humor as a means of making harsh facts bearable and also one of persiflage and satire is widely used in Southern literature, which addresses Southern themes such as despair, brutalization, the notion of place, its connectedness to nature, and the relationship between man and beast. These are central aspects in the refusal to accept and adopt progress and modernity. Nature and the close relationship between the Southerner and his dogs, horses, and even livestock work symbolically on many levels. First, it emphasizes the interconnectedness of life, god, and nature, and the importance of this interdependence for Southern culture and society. It would give away a vital part of them if it gave in to modern developments that drove back nature even farther. Also, a country where a man can take his horse and dogs and ride into wilderness or the prairie is a man’s country that still upholds a frontier type of male ideal. It is an ideal that strongly draws on notions of honor, bravery, and valor to define a good Southern man. Dogs and horses are a man’s companions to hunt with and to depend on tough journeys. The widely displayed brutal attacks on animals, mutilations and killings, emphasize the type of person the Southern situation can bring forth. Animals are killed, hurt, loved, and personalized in Southern literature. They often are the only access the isolated individual has to contact and any kind of relationship.

The Southern society is a society lacking upward mobility and the drive to achieve such. Often it brings forth misery and despair, but none of the sort the Southerner would flee. He or she remains rigidly, honoring ossified traditions. To leave one’s home country is not an option, even more so because outsiders are perceived to be foreigners, even enemies.

The Southerner is a person with a very strong sense of place, of identity, and a strong set of morals. He or she draws to the past to manage the present, and access the future. The baggage he or she brings is heavy but the determination not to shed it is even bigger. It is often a distorted way it is used in literature, sometimes places, names and facts are mixed or altered, it is subject to persiflage, and sometimes even ridicule. But what prevails is that the modern agenda to shed history to access an accelerated, modernized present is loathed, defied, and worked against. Romanticist elements and a traditionalist approach are always predominant and favored.

A history and past worked and perpetuated to such an extent necessarily is subject to alternation, deformation, change, and instrumentalization. Its tradition must not stand unquestioned due to its racial implementations and connotations. The South’s incorporation of its past in its identity, its culture weighs it down but at the same time has an uplifting quality for art and distinction. Its recognition is essential to a full understanding of Southern literature and culture, and it is to be seen if the South may or even wants to find its way from regional to national.

Appendix



Picture 1 *The Breakfast Room, Belle Grove Plantation, 1935* (See Mellow 234)

Picture 2 *Belle Hèléne Plantation Manor House, Louisiana, 1935* (See Mellow 284)

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Zusammenfassung

Die Literatur und Kultur der Südstaaten ist entscheidend geprägt von ihrer Orientierung an der eigenen Geschichte und Vergangenheit. Die düstere Vergangenheit, die die Gegenwart überschatten und die Zukunft determiniert ist ein Südstaatenthema *par exellence* und allgegenwärtig in ihrer Kultur und Literatur.

Nach dem Bürgerkrieg und der *Reconstruction Era* ist der Süden kulturell und ökonomisch ausgeblutet, am Boden und isoliert. Nach dem Krieg weitet sich die Kluft zwischen Nord- und Südstaaten immer weiter aus, ein Prozess, der jedoch schon so alt ist wie die Vereinigten Staaten selbst und bereits im beginnenden 18. Jahrhundert seinen Anfang nimmt. Die Isolation ist gleichzeitig gewollt und ungewollt, bewusst und unbewusst. Die Scham des verlorenen Krieges und die Marginalisierung sind die Katalysatoren für die Kultivierung und das Bestreben nach Erhalt der Besonderheiten der Südstaaten, mit ihrer vermeintlich überlegenen Kultur und Moral. Es beginnt die

kommerzialisierte, hoch ideologisierte Konstruktion der Geschichte und Identität der Südstaaten, die in alle Lebensbereiche strahlt. Der melancholische Blick in die Vergangenheit als wichtigste Referenz und kulturellen Fluchtpunkt ersetzt den Eintritt in die Moderne und Modernität mit ihrer Schnelllebigkeit, Austauschbarkeit und die Aufgabe der Tradition für eine rasante Gegenwart. Das Individuum der Südstaaten sieht sich statt mit einer Flut an Wahlmöglichkeiten und Optionen, mit einer einengenden Gesellschaft konfrontiert, die wenig Spielraum für Abweichungen übriglässt und ein harsches Kontrollsystem hat. Es ist eine einzigartige Mischung aus Stolz, Scham und einem Gefühl der gleichzeitigen Unter- und Überlegenheit, die einen besonders guten literarischen Nährboden hervorbringt.

In dieser Arbeit wird den historischen, kulturellen, und literarischen Wurzeln der Südstaatenliteratur seit der *Southern Renaissance* nachgegegangen, um dann die ständig perpetuierten formalen und inhaltlichen Strukturen darzustellen, die wenig Veränderungen erfahren haben. Diese Perpetuierung resultiert aus der einzigartigen Situation der Südstaaten, aus der historischen Last, die unvermindert aktuell bleibt und längst nicht verarbeitet ist. Südstaatenautoren konnten und können nicht die traditionellen Formen und Themen ablegen, solange diese konstituierende Bestandteile der Kultur und Identität der Südstaaten bleiben. Die Südstaaten verweigern sich der Modernität und empfinden Fortschritt und die moderne Massengesellschaft nicht nur als Bedrohung, sondern als Einfluss aus den Nordstaaten, der die eigene Kultur bedroht und eine Einmischung von außen ist, die es abzuwenden gilt. Traditionsbewusste, reaktionäre Tendenzen und Elemente ziehen sich selbst durch vermeintlich progressive, moderne Entwicklungen und Phänomene. Ich kombiniere identitätskonstituierende, isolierende und melancholische Elemente und beleuchte sie historisch, kulturell und literarisch, um eine mehrschichtige Perspektive zu erlangen.

Das Verständnis dieser historischen Last und deren unverminderte Bedeutung und Auswirkung auf die Literatur und Kultur der Südstaaten ist essentiell für eine tiefere Einsicht in deren Strukturen und Bedeutung.

Erklärung

Ich erkläre, dass vorliegende Arbeit selbständig verfasst und keine anderen als die angegebenen Hilfsmittel benutzt, sowie Stellen der Arbeit, die anderen Werken dem Wortlaut oder Sinn nach entnommen sind, durch Angabe der Quellen kenntlich gemacht wurden.

Julia Merkel