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Violence in Southern Literature

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VIOLENCE IN SOUTHERN LITERATURE

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America has always been a violent country from the days of the earliest settlers who engaged in bloody battles with the Indians, through the Revolutionary and Civil Wars, through labor unrest, racial conflict, and violent crimes of the twentieth century. We are a violent people. We freely use violence to get what we want: freedom, land, money, or drugs. Our newspapers and television reports daily occurrences of violent crimes. The gory details would fit into any horror film script. As if the glaring reality of violence in our daily lives is not enough, our literature, especially that from the South, contains numerous accounts of violence, ranging from verbal and psychological abuse to castration and murder. The Southern authors' imaginations are due respect, but their accounts of the varying aspects of violence are dictated by the violent reality of their region's history. Their violence overshadowed all race relations until the Civil Rights bill of the sixties began to alter the situation. The wide degree of violence found in Southern literature demonstrates what Freud had observed on man's inhumanity to man years earlier:

> men are not gentle, friendly creatures wishing for love, who simply defend themselves if they are attacked, but a powerful measure of desire for aggression has to be reckoned as part of their instinctual endowment. The result is

> that their neighbor is to them not only a possible helper or sexual object, but also temptation to them to gratify their aggressiveness on him, to exploit his capacity for work without recompence, to use him sexually without his consent, to seize his possessions, to humiliate him, to cause him pain, to torture and kill him.[1]

Freud's is a very pessimistic, perhaps excessively pessimistic outlook on man's ulterior motives; however, a look at Southern literature seems to confirm its validity. The predominance of violence in Southern literature, and its depiction of a seemingly endless assortment of man's mistreatment of his fellow man, cannot be denied.

Human violence permeates our nation and splits it into warring factions, its anxious citizens beset by a high crime rate. This fear of crime and the backlash to it raises the question as to the reason for the extensive existence of violence. Being the so-called melting pot of the world can be perceived as part of the problem:

> Our country is seen as split into hostile ethnic factions, especially black and white, and into polarized factions. Robert Kennedy, who took upon himself the task of creating unity out of the split American society, became its victim. The United States is a combustible mixture of many heterogeneous groups, as a result of the influx of immigrants from all parts of the world. Thus one view of our nation has us split into hostile, opposing racial and political factions disposed to violence.[2]

Immigrants from all parts of Europe and Asia began to arrive early in the United States along with the

coming of African slaves to Jamestown. Assimilation of various immigrant groups and the abolition of slavery by the Civil War did not prevent polarization and violent outbursts by the various groups seeking equality, better wages, and improved living conditions. With ethnic clashes, political conflicts, and vast economic and social inequities existing in our society there is fuel for constant violence. With violent crimes so prevalent in our daily lives there is little wonder why it reflects in our television, movies, and literature. Indeed, there is "violent crime occurring in the United States every 48 seconds."[3] With our world of reality abounding in violence, how can our world of imagination not reflect it since authors seek to communicate intimately with their audience and the American audience has to deal daily with the reality of violence in their individual lives.

The reality of violence in individual lives and family and regional histories gives Southern writers ample material for violent literature. More than any region, violence has been part of the South. Ever since its early days as a penal colony for English misfits and its eventual institutionalization of slavery Southern authors have been inspired by the effects of slavery, the Civil War, and the bi-racial

society. There are many unique elements in Southern life that writers from this region are confronted with, for instance, as Charles H. Bonner writes,

> The circumstances of Southern history, its cavalier myth and its violent and tragic destiny, provide an inexhaustible subject for the writer. The South alone among American regions has known military defeat and occupation. In a society which places great value on success and progress, only the South has known cataclysmic failure. Given such a situation, Southerners would naturally brood upon the tragic dimensions of life.[4]

Surrounded by a culture toward which it feels alien and hostile, the South has drawn in upon itself, cultivating its uniqueness and keeping its sense of community and regional integrity. Even though the secession of eleven Southern states from the Federal Union in 1860-61 was of short duration, the South has retained its unique qualities that makes it seem like a different country at times. Unlike most Americans, for Southerners the past holds great importance on ancestors and family unity often at odds with reality. In today's Southern world there is a glossy magazine, Southern Living, published monthly in Atlanta. It features coverage of the growing cities of the South and the grand homes, both ante bellum and current, but never does it show a sharecropper's shanty or the slums of Memphis. Southern Living only publicizes the pleasant and the superficial. It doesn't review unpleasant events, such as the South's bloody history

or more recently, the violence that took place with the Civil Rights movement of the sixties.

Such chauvinistic glossing over has not been the case with the South's major novelists of the twentieth century. Though they write most often out of a genuine and deep love of the region, Southern authors like Faulkner, Penn Warren, Caldwell, Welty, and McCullers have pulled no punches in depicting the prevalence of violence in Southern life. As H. Rap Brown, a leader of the Black power movement in the sixties, stated "Violence is as American as cherry pie."[5] This is a none too flattering appraisal of a nation that presents itself to the world as a bastion of peace and human rights. Brown is representative of a racial minority that has borne the brunt of physical and psychological violence since the arrival of slaves to the new American colonies in 1619. Generations later, emancipation didn't stop the violence directed at Negroes. In addition to Americans' often violent response to racial issues involving blacks, violence developed almost immediately between white colonists and the Indians over accessibility to hunting and fishing and land ownership (an alien concept for most Indian peoples). Brutal warfare which was genocidal for many tribal groups, resulted in the forcing of surviving Indians on reservations. The resolutions

of slavery and the Indian Wars didn't stop the violence either. These minorities just internalized much of it. Indians and blacks may experience more violence than whites as they are fueled by frustration seething within due to years of oppression by the white community.

Brown's statement makes clear that he finds violence as much an integral part of American society as any other factor. There is no denying that Americans are violence-prone. Americans are violent in their private lives as their crime rate continues higher in the United States than anywhere else in the world. As David Abrahamsen writes, "Statistics seem to confirm the suspicion that there is more violence in America than in other nations. The highest rate of murder--the most definitive act of violence--is found in the United States."[6] Such a position is an ignominious one for the United States to find itself in. It is embarrassing that a country which leads the world in technological development is unable to control its national murder rate.

The facts on violence are no more encouraging within the separate areas of the United States. For example, statistics about crime in the South have produced some startling facts. In 1966 a survey determined that one half of the murders reported, 49 per

cent to be exact, occurred in Southern states."[7] The author citing these statistics offers no supporting reasons other than that citizens in Southern parts of the country have greater access to guns. But in addition to available firearms, the Civil War and racial, psychological, economical, and political problems are influential in causing this disproportionate expression of violence.

Along with having the highest murder rate in the nation the South has produced literature that is very violent. In the twenty-eight books I studied, written by six Southern authors--Faulkner, Penn Warren, Caldwell, Welty, McCullers, and O'Connor--there are one hundred and forty-one acts of physical violence, ranging from murder to castration. Besides these acts of physical violence there are also striking examples of violent language. Both the actual physical violence and implied violence of speech employing violent metaphors are prevalent in Southern literature. Each reflects very real cultural problems of a racial, psychological, political, and economical nature. Very often these problems are depicted by Southern authors as tied to difficulties their characters have in establishing a sense of identity.

This identity issue can be seen as reflecting real problems for individuals in the South (and

America in general). Often problems are historically rooted. The struggle for identity is especially acute in the South because the region itself has experienced a series of transitional identities. First the South was a haven of slavery which bolstered a flourishing economy and an aristocratic, genteel ruling class whose existence was romanticized by a chivalric mythology. The South had the distinction of having the capital of the United States, situated on its northern border of Virginia, a state unique for its aristocracy that produced many statesmen and founding fathers of America who have had national and international influence. These accomplishments have given the region and its identity added status. After the Civil War the South was a poor rural area where subsistence farming and light industry was the main source of employment. On the social level the South clung to the old values and conservatism in the face of major changes in America throughout the twentieth century. The South's "backward" identity lasted into the mid twentieth century. In recent years the "New South" has prospered with industry and the thriving sun belt economy. Along with the improved economy the South is socially and politically more progressive now. The periodic changing of the South's regional identity has contributed to pressures individuals feel regarding their

own identities. A region unsure of its own identity is a turbulent place to grow up in as stability is undermined. This instability is a contributing factor to violence.

The Civil War left a heritage of violence which still has severe effects on the area. Initially its devastation left an ash heap of past accomplishments, glories, and underlying emotions:

> A fraticidal war of such dimensions, in which close to a million people were killed or wounded and cities and countrysides were burned and laid desolate, reflect ferocious and underlying emotions of fear and hate.[8]

These emotions are so intense they have endured over a hundred years and several generations. The reason for this tenacity is because the South is the only section of the United States that has been a battleground in which white countryman fought white countryman. The most vivid memories of particular battlegrounds or particular families' histories are handed down as an oral tradition of the region. Southern writers tend to be steeped in these collective memories and thus are highly sensitive to existing social conditions in the South and their pervasive violence.

This sensitivity to social conditions in the South did not originate with six writers of the twentieth century focused on here. Faulkner, Penn Warren, Caldwell, Welty, McCullers, and O'Connor in producing

violent literature are following the lead of two nineteenth century writers of horror--Charles Brocken Brown and Edgar Allen Poe. These two Southern authors take up where the European Gothic story left off and make their own unique contributions. Brown, who was Poe's predecessor, according to Leslie S. Fiedler:

> established in the American novel a tradition of dealing with the exaggerated and the grotesque, which impose themselves on us, not as they are verifiable in any external landscape or sociological observation of manners and men, but as they correspond in quality to our deepest fears and guilts as projected in our dreams or lived through in 'extreme situations.'[9]

Using these deep fears and guilts Brown writes stories that are not comforting to the soul but shake it with horror. He deals with violence as profusely as his modern counterparts. In choosing themes Brown selects terror over the ever popular pleasing themes of love. For this reason Brown's works did not meet with the warm public acceptance that he expected early in his career. Significantly, the Indian and the black are often projected in his works as the evil demons populating Brown's dream-like Southern landscape.

Poe, who follows in Brown's literary footsteps, also fails to find great clamoring audiences of avid readers. After his premature death at the age of forty, critics gave his works their just accolades so

there are few people today who do not associate his name with the macabre. The most violent story writers of today owe Poe much for his pioneering efforts in opening up the genre of horror and mystery surrounded by an aura of incipient violence. Poe and Brown seemed to project the violence they sensed in the spirit of America as a place and deeply embedded in their own psyches. In contrast, those who followed Brown and Poe in developing a Southern literary tradition have been primarily realists. Though the grotesque still figures prominently in works by Southerners like Faulkner and McCullers, Southern writers have focused primarily on documenting the strident social realities of the past 150 years.

Reality is a factor which rarely enters into Poe's writing. Instead he relies on his bizarre imagination to create a grotesque world which readers find to be fascinatingly foreign and yet vaguely familiar mappings of psychic territory. For these reasons Poe's works make compelling reading:

> To go further and to catalogue the incidents, characters, and thoughts is to perceive that they constitute almost the complete repertory of neurotic delights from the simple sadism of mature stories as 'Hop Frog', 'The Cask of Amontillado', and 'The Pit and the Pendulum' to the most elaborate of perversities like that described in 'Berenice', where the hero mutilates the object of his ambivalent passion, composed half of love and half of hate, in order to extract from her mouth the teeth upon

> which his desires have become fixed or like that which the hero is seized by an unreasonable and irresistible desire to torture the cat which has been his pet.[10]

The bizarre urge to multilate his beloved or to inflict pain on an unfortunate animal is an example of madness that appears in much of Poe's works and that of more recent Southerners. Aberrations of this sort reemerge a century later, for instance, in Faulkner's novel Sanctuary in which a creepy character glories in cutting up live cats and birds. Regardless of the time period that such violent literature is created it still retains the same strong sense of repulsion in the reader. With many acts of violence in their works, both Poe and Brown are the forerunners of modern Southern writers whose work is full of violence.

Both authors wrote in the South prior to the Civil War when the social conditions were tainted by the evils of slavery and the violence of white-Indian relations. The post Civil War period in the South provided equal fertile material for violent literature as post-war social conditions were also in disarray. Many of the institutions of the past, like slavery were discarded and as a result new or variant behavior patterns emerge. For example the eradication of slavery required a new mode of social interaction between black and white citizens. However, it did not produce fresh harmony, but continued white

prejudice against the blacks creating a lingering tension. To this day terrorist organizations such as the Ku Klux Klan attempt to subjugate the blacks and retard their social advancement.

Also Southern individuals continue to struggle with widespread psychological problems rooted in hate and misconceptions. Not only are there situations of rabid segregation but there are great psychological problems with which Southern individuals struggle that are founded in the disorienting Civil War experience. Historically, these took various forms. One was the dissension occurring when members of a family took opposing sides in the Civil War. Another cause of broken relationships was the high death rate of both civilians and soldiers. Offsetting the severed relationships was the new relationships of equality between the freed slaves and the former ruling class of whites as decreed by the law of the land. Blacks were no longer slaves (i.e. private property) but they were still economically dependent on whites. This new dimension in the black and white relationship clashes with the South's romantic notion of itself, with its own brand of nobility, and caste system. The Civil War changed all of that. The pre Civil War past became seen as the good and stable model for reality, clashing with the real process of social change. The

fact that reality conflicted with the lofty ideal resulted in psychological unease that often led to violence.

In addition to innate psychological disturbance caused by the discrepancies between the glorious past and difficult present, after the War the South also experienced economic disaster. Before the War the South based its wealth on a slave-supported agrarian society. After the Emancipation Proclamation the South had a problem of the freed unskilled slaves who flooded the region with thousands of uneducated and untrained individuals. These blacks were challenged by securing jobs and learning to lead lives independent of a master who provided everything, no matter how meager. Because the largest number of slaves were field hands, many joined the poor whites who were share croppers in making up the great number of Southerners living a marginal existence. These two subsistence level groups were vying for menial jobs and often tended to obscure the real enemy which was the economic and political power structure responsible for their problems.

The loss of personal power or the sense of individual impotence naturally detracted from both poor whites and blacks in real life, a fact reflected in the novels of Southerners. Greater even than

individual power is the Southern states' loss of power and prestige in their ability to govern the people of the region immediately following the Civil War. This loss occurs at state and local levels as well as in the region as a whole. The Southerners, especially the blacks, looked to the Federal government for guidance, financial aid, the protection of their civil rights in the post Civil War era. At that time the local governments were unable or even unwilling to assist in these areas. In addition to the power or lack of power at all levels there has been throughout the South's history the exploitative political and personal power, often exercised violently by Southern officials. A famous example of Southern demogogery is Robert Penn Warren's immortalization of Hughey Long in All The Kings Men. A side effect of the loss of a sense of personal and political power is that it drained the South of its former strengths following the Civil War. Before the War the South identified with gracious plantation living and a healthy economy based on slave labor. This was all lost after the War. Earlier the region had political clout. The Founding Fathers of America were Southerners, Washington and Jefferson were part of a group known as the "Virginia Junta". Aside from their political activities both men were planters successfully involved in

agriculture. The pre-Civil War South was the center of an economy that was projected as predominately agricultural. After the War the great plantation lands were in ruin with the armies of free laborers gone. It took many years and mechanization before the South became once more important in farming of great citrus groves and truck patch growing of vegetables. Despite the pre-Civil War grandeur the South has economic shortcomings and it also has complications between black and white citizens in the area of communications.

Another problem especially pronounced in Southern race relations is that of language, a communications breakdown. Communications are a very delicate part of human interaction and requires much sensitivity and careful forethought to be successful in either the South or the North. If an individual fails to communicate his true feelings, drastic violent reactions may occur. The reason the individual fails to convey his actual feelings may be that he feels them to be offensive and the other person may reject him. This has occurred many times in the past between blacks and whites when the vernacular of one was not interpreted correctly by the other. Because blacks are sometimes intimidated by white people they fail to give full expression to their feelings in discussions. In communications there is ambivalence

between the speakers because they often wish to be understood, but not to the extent that their true inner feelings are revealed. Blacks have deliberately conjured their own jargon to keep whites from understanding what is being discussed. Even in the days of slavery the Negroes had subtle secretive ways of communicating in the fields despite the gimlet eyes of the grim overseer. These covert methods of communicating have developed into the black jargon which eludes the white listener in whichever part of the country the conversation is taking place. It is a survival technique in communicating creating a lack of understanding which can lead to violence when whites are made to feel excluded, or when they misunderstand or project negative feelings.

There is no way for whites and blacks of all ages and both sexes to avoid association with the Civil War. Comedians want their audiences to think that Southerners are still fighting the Civil War a century later. Their jokes seem to have some reality in depicting the ghost of the Civil War surviving in the South. In my own experience, I have had this ghost brought to my attention when visiting the middle class home of one of my Southern aunts. She reveals to the visitor, almost directly upon arrival, a photo of a solemn young man in a Confederate uniform, and proudly

identifies the soldier as her great grandfather. In the ensuing conversation, it becomes clear that her allegiance to the past is as strong as her segregationist's beliefs. She recounts joining a splinter Presbyterian church because her original church allowed blacks to become church members in the turbulent sixties, a decade of racial violence throughout the country. Despite the many violent deaths of the Civil War and the racial conflict of the sixties, the woman clings to her allegiance to the Confederate past, still very much a part of her life.

The Civil War continues to be a reality for many Southern citizens. Some of these citizens are leading twentieth century writers who reveal the wide-ranging depictions of Southern violence as an aftermath of the Civil War. This is born out by writers such as Faulkner, Penn Warren, Caldwell, McCullers, Welty, and O'Connor who portray the heritage of Southern violence and its foundations in the Civil War, and problems of race, psychological disharmony, economics, sex, and power.

Taylor Caldwell writes of impoverished white share croppers and economics, which has been as much of a problem for the South as race and often overlaps with it. He reveals how economic deprivation can cause inhumane behavior. Faulkner examines the

economic pressures caused by one war itself and how these pressures resulted in violent behavior on the home front. Penn Warren writes of civilians suffering violence during the Civil War as seen through the eyes of a newly-arrived immigrant. Faulkner and Welty focus on race relations in many of their works. O'Connor looks closely at the issue of communication, an area that tends to break down frequently in race relations. Penn Warren also, in his best known work, All The Kings Men, explores still another source of Southern violence, the ubiquitous drive for political and personal power. In their works virtually all of these writers depict murder, which statistics indicate occurs at an alarming high rate in Southern states. The twentieth century writers reveal their heritage of Southern violence in the following stories and novels.

In Faulkner's novel, The Unvanquished, he tells the story of adolescent Bayard and his Grandmother who face the terror of renegades. It is an account of the violence to the unprotected women, children, and slaves that takes place in the South. They are vulnerable because all of the ablebodied men are away fighting the Civil War. They are subjected to the horror of facing the Union soldiers as well as the ragtag renegades:

> There was one Negro in the Country that everybody knew that they had murdered and burned in his cabin. They called themselves Grumby's Independent's--about fifty or sixty of them that wore no uniform and came from nobody knew where as soon as the last Yankee regiment was out of the country, raiding smoke houses and stables and houses where they were sure there were no men, tearing up beds and floors and walls, frightening white women, and torturing Negroes to find where money or silver was hidden.[11]

Here Faulkner is showing the inglorious side of war that causes the citizens to face similar terrors as soldiers without the protection of the uniform and artillery. Bayard and his Grandmother did not have these protections and consequently Grumby kills Bayard's Grandmother. Like Bayard's Grandmother, the unarmed dependents behind the fighting lines are fair game to the unprincipled and the bloodthirsty. Faulkner is suggesting that war anywhere unleashes the most primitive and vicious behavior in men. In any war there are always those men, outside the armed ranks who will take advantage of the women, the weak, and the unprotected as did Grumby's Independents.

But in the South, or at least in its literature, violent attacks on women seem more prevalent than those limited to war-time situations. This violence to women may be attributable to traditional Southern attitudes of idealization of women. Southern romantic notions of white womanhood personifies the woman as weak and unprotected. It also places the woman on a

pedestal and though the image idealizes, as Bayard did his beloved Grandmother, it also objectifies her. The Southern male is conditioned to view woman as an object. By becoming an object of idealized passion, or of the lower passions of lust, anger, or hate, a woman is thus easier to brutalize or rape than in a situation where her actual humanity is recognized. In The Unvanquished Grumby dehumanizes Bayard's Grandmother and in the height of brutality, murders her. Thus if woman is perceived mainly as an object of fantasy, she can be subjected to the dark side of the male psyche as well as the light. Grumby was a ruthless murderer who relegated all human life to the dark side of his psyche which was very violent.

Grumby's violence helped expose the home front as a place of violence analogous to the battle lines of the Civil War. Moreover, the women, children, and the slaves are especially vulnerable in contrast to the soldier on the front lines who has either experience or training (not to mention weapons) to help him cope with fearsome situations. The Civil War had a dual effect on those at home and those on the battlefield. Those remaining at home have to face the regular Union Army as well as the renegades such as Grumby and his Independents. Their activities of torturing, murdering, looting, and burning bespeaks the underlying

tensions surging in the South. There is the pressing need for freedom by the enslaved blacks and the desires of the poor whites to share in the finances and luxuries of the white plantation owners. Grumby represents the have nots of the South experiencing frustration and anger over denial of comforts others more wealthy enjoy.

In The Unvanquished Faulkner uses several acts of violence to show that the front lines are not the only place where war causes violent behavior. Bayard and his faithful slave, Ringo (who is treated as an extension of the family as are many slaves), open the story with a bit of violence that goes awry. They are plotting to ambush a union soldier and shoot him. As the soldier turns into their lane, Bayard fires the rifle, missing the man, hitting his horse. Bayard and Ringo's next adventure is to murder Grumby, the leader of the Irregulars. Thus the adolescent, Bayard, has to seek his own revenge by shooting Grumby. As if the suffering of the Civil War afflictions is not enough for the South, it has to suffer the humiliation of the swarm of carpetbaggers who flock to the South after the War. When Bayard's Father, General Sartoris kills two carpetbaggers there are no details of the killings nor are the reasons for them given by Faulkner. In this manner Faulkner is saying that

violence is so widespread and tolerated by the populace that two more dead men did not matter enough to give them names. Furthermore, to allow the carpetbaggers to remain anonymous suggests how deeply the South resents the invasion not only of the land and social order but also of their politics as well as by the North. The dual murders are meant to speak for the war-ravaged South saying that nothing it possesses is free from Northern interference. The North may deem slavery wrong and devastate the South to free the slaves but the South will fight violently to preserve its last shreds of regional integrity--its politics--even if it means that General Satoris must kill two unknown interlopers.

Extending the legacy of Civil War violence in the South, General Satoris and his girl friend, Drusilla, kill two Burden brothers. These two men are strongly supporting an objectionable candidate for United States Marshall in the elections following the Civil War when the South tries to reorganize its crushed government at all levels. The Burdens have all of their slaves camped out under guard at the polls, waiting for their slaves to stuff the ballot box. However, the ploy is a failure because General Satoris outsmarts them. Politics is an issue that generates as much negative emotion as integration among

Southerners even to the eruption of violence. This is the situation General Satoris found himself in when he discovered the Burden's plot at the poll. Southerners regard their choice of politics almost as sacred as their religious preferences and they protect that precious political choice in heated arguments that can often explode into violence.

In Wilderness, Penn Warren gives the view of violence behind the front lines a different slant. The story is told in the words of a newly-arrived Bavarian who becomes an Union Army camp sutler, a peddler selling supplies to the soldiers. Adam Rosenzweig, the Bavarian, witnesses mob violence in the streets of New York, a murder in his sutler's tent, and a fight involving him on the road with a convoy of sutlers. Also he is told by the shabby wife of a draft evader about the murder of a conscription agent by her husband:

> We was hidden out. It ain't no way to raise a young'un, hidden out, but we done the best we could. But they found us, them 'scripters. He taken the head off one of them 'scripters . . . . That 'scriptor, he was gonna lay a hand on him, and that-air scatter gun. Him my husband--he picked it up.[12]

This violent act takes place in the draft evader's hideout, far from the fighting of the Civil War but nonetheless, the effects of the War brings it about. The hideout isn't successful in keeping the draft

evader away from violence. To prevent other such similar incidents, the evader will have to hide the body and find a more secure hiding place or he will be sought out again.

Not wanting to kill for the Army, ironically enough he kills a conscription officer to avoid being drafted and later faces the possibility of further murder to remain free. With this incident Penn Warren is saying that war can perpetuate violence among citizens in ways that can be contrary to their beliefs. These novels show the pervasiveness of the violence spawned by the Civil War. They show its awful effects on the battlefield where "Confederate dead are estimated at about 258,000; wounded, at about 100,000,"[13] but also how the violence of war invaded the homes, work places, and minds of those not directly involved in the soldiering. The "battleground" heritage of Southern writers is vividly depicted in works like these. But the slavery issue and the violence bred by its racial hatred extends in time beyond the Civil War. Many Southern novelists have mapped its effects on Southerners from the Reconstruction period to contemporary times.

Violence between the black and white races can be traced back to the earliest days of slavery in this country. Blacks have been intimidated by white people

since their arrival on American shores in the sixteen hundreds as slaves. The white slave owners who constantly feared a slave revolt in the South kept the blacks under control with physical violence. Whipping, lynching, and branding were a few of the methods used to intimidate blacks both before and after the Civil War. Emancipation did little to alter the situation. Blacks were still in a position of extreme economic dependence. Thus racial problems exist before the Civil War and continue afterwards in the South as well as the North. The South struggled with its racial problem whereas the North suppressed its racism. To show how deeply the anti-Negro sentiments ran throughout America, Penn Warren in his novel Wilderness writes of a draft resister's riot in New York City. The violence of the riot is reported by Adam Rosenzweig, an immigrant newly arrived from Bavaria:

> The simple fact is, there's a new conscription law, and the mob had risen because they don't want to be conscripted. So they have gutted conscription offices, killed all the black people they could lay a hand on, burned the Colored Orphan Asylum, and would have killed the orphans but for luck-killed police, fought the troops, and looted and burned a big part of town.[14]

The mob's anti-Negro feelings are so intense that they cut the fingers and toes off a Negro corpse and slash the torso. Here Penn Warren is showing that racial hate and violence is not limited solely to the South.

The Northern mob was as rabid as any Southern lynch mob. The Northern Negro is no more safe than his Southern counterpart at this time in history. The mob's drastic action dispels the commonly held misconception that the North is a haven for Negroes and that it is peopled by Abolitionists.

All of the violence in the conscription riot is physical but the after effects are psychological for the Negroes. They fear and distrust the Northern white citizen as much as the white Southerner. After the riot the Negro can no longer regard the North as a safe haven from the physical violence and psychological intimidation. This reinforces the fact that the Negro will have to take care selecting trustworthy whites.

The Conscription riot makes victims of the Negroes, the police, and anyone, like Adam Rosenzweig from Baveria who is unfortunate enough to be swept into the riot. He escapes the mob through the aid of a Negro. The random burning and looting makes the public of New York City a victim too. The rioters become victims when the Union troops are called in to quell the riot. Penn Warren shows us how the Conscription Riot is a negative situation in which everyone loses.

The Conscription Riot is just one of many instances in which both sides in the Civil War suffered loss. Although the South lost the Civil War, the allegiance to the past, to the glorious and prosperous period prior to the War, still exists in individuals who cling to the past. This refusal to accept the modern South with new codes of behavior made necessary by the Emancipation often results in violence when the old code of conduct clashes with the new. Psychological problems develop if there is inability to cope with the demands of a society giving blacks the right to dwell side by side with the white Southerners.

A literary example of the white Southerner who still harbors hate for Negroes or anyone having black heritage is the deputy Grimm in Faulkner's Light in August. Grimm castrates Joe Christmas for having sex with a white woman. The brutal Grimm is still filled with the ageold hate for anyone with black heritage, like the novel's mixed-blood hero, Joe Christmas. The hate is accompanied by the equally ancient fear of black men having sex with white women. By castrating Joe, Grimm is punishing him for having an affair with Joanna Burden, a white woman. Grimm is assuming the ante bellum role of punitive white master to the erring, inferior black. The taint of black blood in

Joe's veins is strong enough to make Grimm feel threatened. Grimm chooses to identify with the ineffective past by taking the law into his own hands rather than trusting the justice system to punish Joe.

Another individual who chooses to identify with the past is the elderly woman in Flannery O'Connor's short story "Everything That Rises Must Converge". The old woman, who is never named in the story, lives in a fantasy world that denies her son Julian's career failure, the dismal neighborhood where they live, and the poverty of their life style. She loves to ruminate to Julian about the grandness of their ancestors. The persistent old lady reminds the resistant Julian that his great grandfather is a former governor of the state as well as the owner of a plantation and two hundred slaves. She retains the attitude of her grandfather that Negroes are inferior to white people and are to be treated with avoidance and condescension. The stubborn old woman is so firm in her segregationist beliefs that she refuses to ride the city bus without Julian because there are so many Negro riders, even though the bus trips are necessary to take her to exercise class. To atone for his mother's attitude of superiority, Julian will deliberately sit with a Negro passenger on the bus whenever possible. With great effort he engages the Negro in a halting

conversation just to annoy his Mother. He is dependent on his mother but he resents this need and consequently tries to punish her for her prejudices by constantly pointing them out to her.

The mother's prejudices do not include Negro children. She is attracted to them because she considers them cuter than white children. This is just one more of her condescending attitudes. One particular night a very large and hostile Negro woman and her small son are on the same bus with Julian and his mother. The mother, after several attempts, succeeds in getting the little boy's attention with a game of peek-a-boo despite the black mother's fierce protests to the child. Finally all four disembark at the same bus stop. Immediately the old woman begins to search her purse for a nickel for the little Negro boy, as is her custom, while the embarassed Julian is telling her to forget it. Nevertheless, the old woman finds a shiny copper penny which she presents to the little Negro boy much to the Negro mother's chagrin:

> The huge woman turned and for a moment stood, her shoulders lifted and her face frozen with frustrated rage, and stared at Julian's mother. Then all at once she seemed to explode like a piece of machinery that had been given one ounce of pressure too much. Julian saw the black fist shoot out with the red pocketbook. He shut his eyes and cringed as he heard the woman shout, "He don't take nobody's pennies!" When he opened his eyes, the woman was disappearing down the street with the little boy

> staring wide eyed over her shoulder. Julian's mother was sitting on the sidewalk.[15]

Julian offers to help his mother up but he also begins to castigate her as he puts the controversial penny back in her purse. Although she seems not to listen, Julian explains that the Negro woman is not an uppity black but that she is the whole colored race which will no longer take her condescending pennies. He reminds her that the old world is gone, her manners are out of date and her graciousness is worthless. All of these devastating revelations combined with the Negro woman's outburst is too much of a shock for the old woman who has a stroke and dies on the sidewalk as Julian whimpers helplessly at her side. She is too old and inflexible to meet the new changes of society, a society that she did not care to join. She prefers her fantasy world of the past to anything that the future might have to offer. When her old behavior of patronizing Negroes becomes passe, the old woman has no alternative approach.

But Julian too has a problem dealing with the integration that his mother has struggled with unsuccessfully. He deliberately sits with Negroes on the bus just to prove to his Mother that her attitude toward blacks is antiquated. Although Julian is very critical of his mother's opinions he has no black friends or associates. He talks about integration,

but does little to help bring it about. He is too caught up in his own failure in a dead-end job to be a social activist. Julian is acutely aware of the inequities between the races, but he is too reliant on his mother to break away and take positive action. Like his mother Julian indulges in daydreams. The old lady has fantasies of the past whereas Julian has fantasies of the future when he will bring home a beautiful and intelligent Negro woman to the house to astonish his mother. These dreams are just as unrealistic as his mother's out-of-date attitudes. Julian is critical of his mother's outlook on life but despite his more realistic insight he is as incapable as she of bringing about changes which would make his dreams real. Both mother and son are trapped by the past into unrealistic preoccupations.

Another O'Connor character, Tanner, in the short story "Judgement Day", has an attitude toward Negroes which is lodged in the past also. Tanner feels a superiority which clearly shows in all of his dealings with Negroes. He builds a shack on a Negro doctor's land and the doctor comes to evict him as a squatter. While Tanner mulls over this dilemma the doctor wanders about his property searching for a stump liquor still which he is convinced exists. Tanner becomes furious as the doctor investigates his old shack:

> Then would have been the time to kill him. There was a gun inside the shack and he could have done it as easy as not, but, from childhood, he had been weakened for that kind of violence by the fear of hell. He had never killed one, he had always handled them with his wits and luck. He was known to have a way with niggers. There was an art to handling them. The secret of handling a nigger was to show him his brains didn't have a chance against yours;[16]

Tanner's concept of dealing with Negroes is limited to two narrow solutions, either kill them or outsmart them with what he assumes is superior white brain power. Such assumptions do not allow for man to man communications as equals, for Tanner's view of the Negro is an inferior being who is to be treated like a child. This pre-Civil War attitude is ineffective, however, in Tanner's dealings with the Negro doctor. The doctor proposes that Tanner remain living on his land and work for him brewing the illegal stump liquor or, if he refuses that offer, he can be prosecuted as a squatter on the doctor's land. Tanner, accustomed to having Negroes work for him at a saw mill years earlier, refuses the doctor's offer and decides to leave the place before he will work for a colored man. Tanner moves to the sterile isolation of his daughter's apartment in New York where the Northern Negroes are different from the submissive Southern Negroes with whom he is familiar. After a provincial attempt to make friends with a very non-responsive Negro actor in an adjacent apartment, Tanner suffers a stroke.

During his recovery he is very homesick for the South. He particularily misses Coleman, a Negro, who has been his faithful companion for over thirty years. In a confused state Tanner goes out into the apartment hallway where he once more encounters the indifferent Negro. In his befuddlement, he mistakes the neighbor for reliable Coleman and thinks he is at home in the South once more. His clumsy attempts at befriending the Negro are misinterpreted as the approach of a racist or a lunatic and provoke an attack. Tanner dies lodged by the neighbor between the railings of the stairway.

Tanner encounters in the black actor another mind, like the black doctor's which he can not manipulate. Similar to Julian's mother, Tanner attempts to deal with Negroes in a condescending manner that is only effective in the past. Neither one, the old lady nor Tanner, is prepared to relate to educated and intelligent Negroes such as the doctor and the actor. They, along with the irate black mother, do not feel the need to accept any scraps of patronizing attention from white people. Unlike their ancestors, slaves and later free men, who are afraid to be anything but humble and accepting of white citizens comments, the modern Negro knows and asserts his rights.

But when Negroes assert their rights the white community members often react violently, feeling that the individual is being difficult. This is exactly what happens to Doctor Copeland, a Negro doctor in Carson McCullers' novel, The Heart is a Lonely Hunter. Doctor Copeland tries to utilize his right to see a judge and is manhandled by a law officer for pushing the matter. The reason for the incident is Willie, Doctor Copeland's young son, who is sent to the state penitentiary for a minor crime. While there he is disciplined for a minor infraction of the prison rules by being isolated in a cold room with his feet suspended from the ceiling by a rope for three days. Willie's badly swollen feet pain him so severely that he calls for help constantly. Help finally comes on the third day when the prison officials untie Willie's gangrenous feet, immediately taking him to the sick ward where both feet are amputated. When Doctor Copeland is notified that his son is a footless cripple, he is thrown into deepest despair. With great sadness he goes to the local courthouse to see the judge about the miscarriage of justice. However, the judge is too busy to see Doctor Copeland. The white deputy commands the Doctor to leave but he sits down to wait for the judge under the suspicious gaze of the deputy. At last the deputy commands Doctor Copeland to come to

him. Doctor Copeland is so emotionally distraught that he trembles when he stands up which causes the deputy to accuse him of being drunk. His reaction is to call the accusation a lie, causing the deputy to react abruptly:

> The sheriff struck him on the face. He fell against the wall. Two white men grasped him by the arms and dragged him down the steps to the main floor. He did not resist. 'That's the trouble with this country,' the sheriff said. 'These damn biggity niggers like him.'[17]

Suddenly the calm goes away and is replaced by a rage that causes Doctor Copeland to wildly fight and struggle with his captors who beat him and kick him into a cell. All of this violence and mistreatment occurs to him because the deputy sheriff clings to an outmoded stereotype of a lazy, impudent drunken Negro. Acting on this premise, the deputy does not try to relate to Doctor Copeland as a dignified individual who possesses certain rights. Instead, the deputy seeing the unsteady Negro man who refuses his order to leave, assumes him to be a common drunkard without benefit of further inquiry. He is using a model of the expected behavior based on the white community's failure to individualize Negroes' behavior, appearance, and feelings. All of the white people presented here deal with Negroes in outdated manners that were used by their pre Civil War ancestors. They make the mistake

of identifying with behavior that was effective in the past but which in modern times could only lead to violence because the Negroes with whom they deal expect equality in treatment after the Civil War of the 1860's and the Civil Rights Act of the 1960's.

Equality was slow in coming after the Civil War and great strides in black and white relations were not made until a hundred years later with the Civil Rights movement. But even to the present day the collective consciousness of whites tends to progress slower than that of blacks where blacks civil rights are concerned. The old stereotypes and modes of relating die slowly. Racial conflict bursting into violence has been a common Southern situation since pre Civil War times. Racial violence is clearly depicted in Carson McCullers' novel Clock Without Hands set in the nineteen fifties. Sherman is a young black man living in his newly rented house. The victim, Sherman, feels compelled to respond by defiantly violating the rules of segregation accelerating the transgressions which leads to the bombing of his house. The trouble begins when a Negro family moves in a white neighborhood and is bombed, injuring three black children. Defiant and outraged, Sherman resolves to do something constructive about segregation by disobeying the old laws which have ruled Negro's

lives for so many years. First he drinks at the water fountain reserved for whites, but no one notices. Next he uses the white men's room at the bus station, but he does so hurriedly and secretly so again no one notices. Sherman's use of resistence is shrouded in passive secrecy because he has been programmed from childhood to be invisible--to attract as little attention as possible from white people to avoid disfavor and even violent reactions. He attends the white Baptist church service, sitting on a back pew. When the service ends a white usher directs Sherman to a black church in town. He finally elicits a hostile response when he sits down at the soda fountain in Whelan's drug store. A clerk says to him, "Get away, nigger, and never come back." Dismayed at his failure to gain public attention Sherman vows to do something big to get the attention of the white community.

Sherman indeed does do something big. Because he hates his white diabetic boss, Judge Clane, he injects water instead of insulin into the unsuspecting man's arm. For three days Sherman used the water injections but Judge Clane remains as robust as ever. In bizarre desperation he hangs the Judge's pet dog from a tree limb in the Judge's yard. Jester, the Judge's grandson, protects his friend Sherman by burying the dog and telling his grandfather the dog

died in its sleep. Sherman fears the results, but he wants some of his inflammatory behavior to be noticed. He rents a small shabby house in the poor white section of Milan. As soon as Sherman moves into the white neighborhood, the white community leaders, led by Judge Clane, decide to bomb Sherman's house. Judge Clane is already disgruntled at Sherman for resigning as his personal secretary. Besides that, drastic measures will have to be taken against the bold Sherman. The enraged Sammy Lank, Sherman's next door neighbor, is chosen to bomb Sherman's house. On a quiet May evening he stands outside Sherman's window:

> He stood numb of any feelings except a feeling of shallow pride that he was doing what had to be done. Sherman was playing the piano and Sammy watched him curiously, wondering how a nigger could learn to play a piano. Then Sherman began to sing. His strong black throat was thrown back and it was at that throat Sammy aimed a bomb. Since he was only a few yards away, the bomb was a direct hit. After the first bomb was thrown a feeling savage and sweet came back to Sammy Lank. . . . He threw the second bomb and the house began to burn.[18]

Both sides of the situation get what they want; Sammy Lank thwarts Sherman's plan totally and with fiery finality. Sherman makes a statement that will make his little world take notice. Sherman probably does not plan to go so far as to become a martyr for Negroes rights although Jester has warned him that he is courting danger when he rents the house in the

white neighborhood. Basically, Sherman just wants to have a share in the white man's world and to make the white citizens of Milan aware of that desire.

Clock Without Hands is one of many instances of a Southern artist holding up a mirror to Southern life. Numerous blacks have tried to share in the benefits of the white community since the Civil War and violence is often the result. For instance, when blacks tried to integrate the Little Rock, Ark. public schools in the fifties the white community became very violent. There was such a threat of bodily harm to the black students that the National Guard had to be called in to protect them. These innocent black children were not seeking to take away any jobs or income from the whites. All the black students wanted was the opportunity for a good education which was only available at white schools. Likewise, in the sixties, black garbage men in Memphis wanted something even more basic than a thorough education: they wanted to share the same building with the white garbage men to escape a downpour. The white men, however, felt the traditional segregation was in order, and drove them out of the building into the cold rain. Three black men crawled into the chopper of a garbage truck, seeking shelter; only to be tragically, accidently killed by the truck's crushing mechanization. In both

cases the white community would not have lost financially but the white community feared the symbolic impact of the loss of their ascendancy over blacks. The black school children and the black garbage men of these real-life incidents share a common trait with Sherman of McCuller's novel. All were Negroes pushing for equal rights only to find white community resistance in all instances, oftentime violent reaction because the whites did not want to share equality with the blacks.

This tug of war over equal rights between blacks and whites is shown in the contagion of violence in McCullers' Clock Without Hands. Such violence is characteristic of the white oppressors but when the black oppressed become brave enough to respond, violence often appears as the only way to get attention. Sherman's secret killing of the Judge's dog is analogous to ghetto riots. Each can be seen as a desperate acting out of feelings by black citizens who have failed previously in numerous attempts to gain the white community's attention to their plight. Both are desperate potentially self-destructive acts of hopeless violence enacted to call attention to unjust conditions habitually ignored.

The violence in Clock Without Hands is limited to only five acts and each one is racial in origin and

directly involves blacks, even the suicide of Johnny, the only son of the hard-shelled racist, Judge Clane. Johnny's violent death is unique because he is the only white to become despondent over his inability to provide justice for his black client convicted of murder. One Sunday Johnny attempts to explain his feelings on justice for Negroes to his father, a former Ku Klux Klan member, who fails to understand his sensitive altruistic son. This difference between the two sets off a quarrel which ends with Johnny rushing up to his room and shooting himself. Johnny's death brings sorrow to the old Judge, but it does not enlighten his attitude regarding Negroes.

The violence in Clock Without Hands has a cyclic effect like the clock of the title, one situation interlocking with the next. The clock lacks hands because the cycling is a vicious one lacking progress. Johnny's black client is executed by the state for murder and in desperation over this death his legal defense could not prevent, Johnny kills himself. His son Jester grows up to be a very sensitive fair minded young man. When he struggles with a retarded black youth, Grown Boy, over stolen money, a cop intervenes, accidently killing Grown Boy much to Jester's distress. After his friend Sherman is killed by the bomb-throwing Sammy Lank, Jester vows to revenge Sherman's

death. Jester gets his late father's gun and takes Sammy Lank for an airplane ride with the intention of killing him. Sammy is thrilled to be treated like a celebrity for his act of violence little suspecting Jester's ulterior motive. When Jester has Sammy at high altitude he dissuades himself from shooting him in revenge and thus breaks the circle of violence.

The violence of Grown Boy's death causes Jester to be overcome with faintness and he has to sit down in the pharmacy to contemplate the sudden impact of his fatal clubbing. When the faintness passes, Jester begins to blame himself and the crush of the crowd for Grown Boy's death. Jester inherits his late father Johnny's social consciousness and none of Judge Clane's disregard for Negroes. After castigating himself Jester asks the cop why he hit Grown Boy so hard. The cop's reply to Jester shows insight and remorse:

> When you are breaking up a crowd with a billy stick you don't know how hard you are hitting. I don't like violence any more than you do. Maybe I shouldn't even have joined the force.[19]

The cop voices remorse, but McCullers does not take his feelings further so the reader is uncertain as to whether he relates liberally to racial problems or if he is just upset by the recent violence. McCullers suggests through the cop that all of the citizens of the South are not evil like Judge Clane and Sammy Lank,

and that the South's ingrained attitudes on racial matters are often more complex than a clear cut, black-white, affair. The overall effect of integrations like Johnny and Jester has slowly led to some changes in the fair treatment of blacks in the South. However, many more changes are required in the area of race relations before full equality is gained. Human attitudes and behavior tend to change more gradually than legal codes.

Johnny and Jester's close relationship with Negroes is not unusual in the South because since pre-Civil War days blacks and whites have had intimate relationships. During slavery, it was not irregular for a black woman to nurse and rear her master's white children along with her own children. The children grew up playing together like siblings. The blacks often served as extended families of the whites. The sudden shifts in deeply embedded attitudes and relationships that the Civil Rights movement demanded triggered the kinds of violent responses from the white community like the bombing of Sherman's house by Sammy Lank. The Civil Rights movement made Negroes realize that they no longer had to be satisfied with submissive roles, menial jobs, and arrogant attitudes of whites. This also meant that they didn't have to sit in the rear of the bus or enter restaurants

by a special door. The Civil Rights movement has made monumental advances for Negroes, but there are still attitudes and interrelationships between people that have to undergo positive changes.

Discrimination runs rampant in the Southern town where Eudora Welty situates the story, "Where is the Voice Coming From". In this novel the racial problems are very exact. A white man shoots a black civil rights worker and recounts the event with relish:

> I'd already brought up my rifle, I'd already taken my sights. And I'd already got him, because it was too late for him or me to turn by one hair. Something darker than him, like the wings of a bird, spread on his back and pulled him down. He climbed up once, like a man under bad claws, like just blood could weigh a ton he walked with it on his back to better light. Didn't get no further than his door, and fell to stay. He was down, and a ton load of bricks on his back wouldn't have laid any heavier. There he was in his paved drive-way, yes sir.[20]

This violent scene, made more terrifying by the use of the murderer's own words was written by Welty on the very night that she learned that Medgar Evers, the civil rights activist, had been slain. Her immediate response was to write about the killing of a civil rights worker, Roland Evers, by a rabid racist. Through the story Welty expresses her concern about the violent tensions between blacks and whites. To reveal how deeply ingrained hatred is in the Southern consciousness Welty writes the scene in the first

person vernacular of the killer. The immediacy the the first person perspective affords underscored the intensity of the hatefilled attitudes he expresses. The centuries old animosity of whites toward blacks embodied in the killer and his real life counterpart is further reflected by the real life resurgence of the formidable Ku Klux Klan in states outside of the South. A touch of the times is that women are now allowed among male members.

Welty's killer shows no concern for killing a man in cold blood; instead, he frets because the next day there is a picture of the late Roland Summers in the paper instead of him. Furthermore, he laments that the least the newspaper could do would be to offer a five hundred dollar reward to find out who he is. The killer is very proud that the investigating official says that the shooting was done by an expert. His reaction to the aftermath of the killing is the indignation of a person who has done a public service and is not receiving the proper recognition for it, rather than to experience remorse for his racist thoughts and deeds.

After the initial violence in the opening of "Where is the Voice Coming From" there are no further incidents of violence. Instead, Welty exposes the speech and thoughts of the killer about his crime.

He is triumphant that he kills Summers before some tennager from North Thermopylae can do it. Like the bomber, Sammy Lank, who kills Sherman in Clock Without Hands, Summer's killer feels he has done the white community a good service. The two killers feel pride in the brutal crimes they have committed. The study of the racist killer of Summers in "Where is the Voice Coming From" is a rare opportunity to see how fellow Southerners size up his psyche. In doing so Welty exhibits the selfish white community's need for a scapegoat in the poor white trash murderer, rather than realizing their own shared responsibility for Roland Summers' death. Welty pictures the killer as a single minded individual afraid that he won't receive proper recognition for his deed. He views killing lightly. She tells her husband that since the NAACP is sending an official to their town to investigate, he should have waited because he might have somebody better to kill. Welty's acute insight into the minds of the killer and his peers reveals the racist crime as even more heinous, because she shows how the crime acts out the implications of widely held attitudes.

Welty reveals how many white people of both the North and South are silent racists who would never take the violent action of Sammy Lank, the New York

racial rioters, or the killer of Roland Summers, but would, nevertheless, applaud their actions. There are many Archie Bunkers in the world who foster an environment in which killers of people like Sherman and Roland spawn. This problem is pinpointed by Robert Penn Warren:

> What the white workman must learn, and his education may be as long and laborious as the Negro's, is that he may respect himself as a white man, but, if he fails to concede the negro equal protection, he does not properly respect himself as a man.[21]

Negroes will have to be protected from white racists like the two killers before the white community can be whole and self-respecting. Even today the white community does not protect blacks from the incidence of high crime rate. The problem extends beyond racist crimes by whites against blacks in a racist climate that results in the increasing of black on black crime.

The previously mentioned killers of black victims are representative of a wide community of racists who tacitly support disfranchisement, even murder, or terrorizing of blacks. The New York mob and Sammy Lank's actions are approved by racist groups determined to get rid of blacks. Roland Summers' killer acted alone but he knows there are people in the community who feel as strongly against Negroes as he in the area of race and violence. He feels confident

enough to assume their tacit support, and is somewhat miffed when he is not overtly congratulated. The killer, along with his other complex attitudes may feel his white manhood is threatened by the black manhood of his victim. Or he may feel and fear the black man's mythical virility, the stereotype of the black buck, a threat to the white Southern woman, a topic which will be considered in the following section.

Racism and interracial sex has been a volatile issue since the earliest days of slavery. Much fear, guilt, and fantasy surrounds the situation. White males have projected their own sexual insecurity for generations onto the black man in the stereotype of the buck. The buck, who fits many myths, is a figure whose main preoccupation in life is ravishing and defiling the suitably pure white woman. The spector of interracial sex and mulatto children, and the defiling of the pure white idealized woman are often used as a simplistic avoidance of the real problem of integration as when an unyielding white racist will demand, "Do you want your daughter or sister to marry a black?" This is begging the question, and it neatly avoids seriously confronting the problem of blacks and whites living together on equal footing in harmony in a shared community.

The disharmony in a small community caused by interracial sex is depicted vividly in Faulkner's novel Light in August. This factor of racial hate is an overwhelming force well before the protagonist, Joe Christmas' birth. He is the product of interracial sex: his mother a white woman and his father a black carnival worker posing as a Mexican. Joe's maternal Grandfather, Doc Hines, goes from one act of violence to another, all revolving around his intense racial hate. He beats up a doctor in a nearby town searching for an abortionist for his daughter. He fails to get an abortion for his daughter, Milly, so she carries Joe through a full term pregnancy. When Milly begins to have labor pains, Doc Hines refuses to get a doctor and she dies of complications. Doc Hines takes the newborn baby to a nearby city orphanage and takes a job as a maintenance man. He maintains a silent vigil over Joe until the boy is adopted by the intolerant Fundamentalist, McEachern. With the adoption of little Joe, Doc feels his duty to society is done until years later when Joe is wanted for the decapitation of Miss Burden. Then, an old man but with his racial hate and contempt of miscegenation still intact, Doc Hines wants to lynch his own grandson. Only his weakened physical state and his wife's protests prevents old Doc Hines from carrying out his

final act of racial violence.

Violence has always been a counterpart to racial conflict concerning sex. Race and sex are an explosive twosome in Southern relations. Together the two assure violent reactions from the white community. The fear of the black male having sex with the white woman has always pervaded white Southern Society:

> In Faulkner's work, the threat of miscegenation is posed not only in terms of future racial contamination, but also in those of a present sexual threat. Out of the semi obscene subliterature of Southern racists, he captures and redeems the hysterical vision of the black racist, the Negro who, by stealth, or force (in Faulkner it is typically by stealth, which is to say, under the cover of a psuedo white skin). The archtype answers precisely the abolitionist myth of the helpless Negro servant girl assaulted by her Master.[22]

In Light in August Faulkner's Joe Christmas whose own race is ambiguous has sexual relations with Miss Burden. Joe's heritage does not faze Miss Burden, who does not agree with local attitude toward blacks and whose life work is to provide financial aid to disadvantaged blacks. In a sense she has taken on her own shoulders the "burden" of white guilt. However, for others the spector of miscegenation is one of the most inflammatory factors of race relations.

The affair between Miss Burden and Joe Christmas inflame some citizens more than his brutal murder of her. One such person is a deputized political reactionary, the crypto-Facist ex-soldier, aptly named

Grimm. Grimm joins the county-wide manhunt for Joe and follows him to the home of Reverend Hightower where Joe takes refuge behind a table in the kitchen. Grimm fires five shots at Joe mortally wounding him, but he still feels as if more violence is necessary for justice to be complete:

> When the others reached the kitchen they saw the table flung aside now and Grimm stooping over the body. When they approached to see what he was about, they saw that the man was not dead yet, and when they saw what Grimm was doing one of the men gave a shocked cry and stumbled back into the wall and began to vomit, then Grimm too sprang back, flinging behind him the bloody butcher knife. 'Now you'll let white women alone, even in hell,' he said. But the man on the floor had not moved. He just lay there, with his eyes open and empty of everything save consciousness, and with something, a shadow, about his mouth. For a long moment he looked up at them with peaceful and unfathomable and unbearable eyes. Then his face, body, all, seemed to collapse, to fall in upon itself, and from out of the slashed garments about his hips and loins the pent black blood seemed to rush out of his pale body like the rush of sparks from a rising rocket, upon that black blast the man seemed to rise soaring into their memory forever and forever.[23]

This repulsive scene occurs because Grimm, despite all of his military bearing, is asserting his own insecure manhood through the violence of cutting off the manhood of the (presumably) black man who embodies all of his fears about his own potency. As with Faulkner's Popeye we see in Sanctuary the intimate relationship between sex to violence created in Grimm's confrontation with the hated and feared "buck" of his own

imagination and fears.

The South and the nation's inability to deal harmoniously with its mixed racial identity is further embodied in the character of Joe Christmas, who is ultimately martyred to this problem in Faulkner's Light in August. Christmas' personal identity crisis embodies the South's black-white conflicts. Faulkner's grisly description of Joe Christmas' mutilation symbolically suggests that the South was castrated years (i.e., deprived of its potency) earlier by the Civil War. As surely as Joe Christmas is cut off from his manhood the South is cut off from the identity; regional grand masters of thousands of subservient slaves. It took years for the South to gain a new identity of near equality for both races. The South was further devitalized by the Northern defeat which damaged its pride and self-esteem as an important part of the United States.

This caused a loss of regional identity for the South robbing it not only of its free labor force, but its sense of independence, and making it dependent on the North until it recuperated from the burning, looting, and killing of the War and the Social changes of the Emancipation. Faulkner symbolizes the loss of psychic and physical Southern lives in the blood spurting from Joe's loins. Masculine loins usually yield

the seeds of life, but Grimm thwarts that natural process for Joe just as the Civil War took the life force of slavery from the South. The War and the Emancipation do not alter the conflict of race and sex for the South; instead, the changes fail to run deep and violence continues in that region. These incidents often grow out of the South's ingrained pent-up racial and sexual stereotypes. White Southern males hate and fear the black man, who they see as "uppity" and spurning condescending whites. This "buck" Negro he sees as a threat to the highly idealized white womanhood: All of these factors blend in the white Southern male psyche to produce sexual confusion and violence.

White illicit sex between the two races creates problems, conflict is also generated by the sexual dissension occurring within the bonds of marriage. This sexual dissension often takes the form of rape although until recently there has been little publicity (concern) about the problem. Its existence is documented in Southern literature.

In Robert Penn Warren's Night Rider Percy Munn, a young lawyer and vigilante comes home late one night after a particularly violent foray in which he kills a farmer. His emotions are in turmoil and rather than seek solace from May, his wife, he rapes her.

Previously, he is tender and loving, but on this particular night he is aggressive and ignores May's attempts to reject his advances:

> She tried to thrust him back, and with the tone of desperation there was a hint of wheedling, guileful but hopeless. After he had forced her past the table to the divan, she struggled with him with a strength he never suspected. Then, suddenly, she was as passive as a dead body. Although her hands remained crushed against his chest as in resistance and revulsion.[24]

Percy wins that struggle but in doing so he loses May. The next day she flees to her maiden Aunt who raised her. The Aunt in cold terms later writes to Percy that he is never to see May nor their newborn baby again. He is momentarily stunned by the news that he is a father and also by the rejection but he does not alter any of his terrorist activities. Instead he continues to engage in the attacks of night riders until he is killed by the state militia.

Similar to the attitudes of so many males to females, Percy, like many of his fellow Southern males, had placed his pretty young wife on a pedestal of unrealistic notions. Just how unrealistic these concerns were is revealed in his surprise at May's unsuspected strength in resisting him. His view of May is that of a delicate flowerlike creature too frail to possess muscular strength which is the private attribute of men. This disregard of May's strength

and determination denies her existence as a flesh and blood woman with very distinct needs and rights. Ignoring May's wants and rights make it easy for Percy to rape her as she is a part of his fantasy world.

Similarly Popeye, the brutal murderer in Faulkner's Sanctuary is a bachelor who does not harbor any grandiose fantasies about Southern womanhood. Instead, he is an impotent voyeur of the sex act he is incapable of performing. He can brutalize Temple who he has kidnapped because he has total disregard for any living thing, even the lives of the men he shoots or the helpless animals he dismembers live. According to Leslie A. Fiedler when

> Popeye rapes Temple with the corncob, Faulkner is parodying his own blasphemy of the Pale Protestant Virgin-portraying the hysterical masculine protest of his time in the image of the maimed male, revenging himself on woman who maimed him with the first instrument that comes to hand, a weapon in place of the phallus.[25]

Popeye is acting out his sexual frustration by attacking the symbol of pale and pure feminity, Temple, with the most common and coarse object available. Furthermore, the use of the lowly corncob gives the sex act crude overtones, particularly within the traditionally romantic or bucolic provincialness of the story's atmosphere. Popeye is a killer and a sadist, raping a woman is one of his milder activities. To him a woman

is just one more object meant for man's use as he sees fit.

Like Grumby, the ruthless soldier of fortune in Faulkner's The Unvanquished, Popeye is a social misfit, an outcast who acts according to his own barbaric code with little regard for the refinement of Southern mores. But misfits are common in the turbulent inner and outer life of the South according to its authors. The rape of May in Night Rider and Temple in Sanctuary are widely different but each act represents a violation of Southern womanhood that makes these characters sisters to women all over the world who have been sexually abused. Today, this sisterhood is often a source of strength comprising a form of identity for such victims. Prior to the last decade, however, such violation usually resulted in the female victim's isolation and shame--a crushing experience for a woman's self-respect and identity. The prevalence of romantic stereotypes of males and females in the South (as in Latin America), compounded by racial stereotypes and fears, creates an atmosphere in which sexual relationships are often dehumanized, objectified, and charged with violence.

This violence causes changes in identity. According to Erik H. Erikson, "There have been national wars, political revolution, and moral rebellions which

have shaken the traditional foundations of all human identity."[26] The Civil War and the transitions the South has undergone as a region over its recent history, has, as we outlined earlier, played havoc with the identity of the region and its citizens. In the South there is not only the Civil War and its repercussions but the continuing racial strife which undermines the foundations of individual identity. Negroes are no longer slaves subservient to a particular master and to all white people in general. Having been dependent on a master for their very existence for generations causes confusion and insecurity for blacks. Being suddenly "freed" in a society whose racism is too deeply ingrained to be wiped out by legal proclamation does not eliminate the identity problem. Blacks trying to assert their freedom by overstepping the bounds of pre-existing racial segregationist conventions tend to find themselves squelched by whites or labelled "uppity" while those still bowing and scraping to whites are regarded as "Uncle Tom's" by other blacks. Each of these identities is shaped by racism and insecurity at their root. As for the white slaveowners they are no longer the grand masters in control, but they continue to act and feel superior to Negroes. These two different attitudes often lead to misunderstanding and violence.

The problem of individual identity in the South is a central theme explored by many of the authors being surveyed here. We find it prominent in such important Southern novels as McCullers' Reflections in a Golden Eye, and The Heart is a Lonely Hunter, as well as Erskine Caldwell's Claudelle Inglish. Often Southern authors depict problems of individual identity crisis as resulting in self-inflicted violence. A prime example of this is the temperamental and neurotic Mrs. Langdon in Carson McCullers' novel Reflections in a Golden Eye. Mrs. Langdon is a sickly childless woman who relates better to her homosexual houseboy than her career Army officer husband. Their relationship is one each tolerates but there is no warmth between them. Mrs. Langdon is dimly aware that her husband is having an affair with a fellow officer's wife. This fact prompts her to take drastic action:

> Later Amacleto, the Langdon's Filipino servant, rushed wailing into the room with such a wild-eyed face that they followed him without a word. They found Mrs. Langdon unconscious and she had cut off the tender nipples of her breast with garden shears.[27]

Mrs. Langdon's brutal self-mutilation is a denial of her womanhood just as Grimm's castration of Joe Christmas denies Joe the symbol and the organ of his manhood. When Mrs. Langdon severs her nipples she also

severs her maternalistic potential and her identity as a woman. She is disfiguring the symbol of femininity because she is unable to attract or hold her husband's attention. Her identity as a woman, as a wife, has been obliterated by this self-destructive behavior, and the self-multilation dramatizes or "acts out" her problem. The fact that she selects the coarse masculine garden shears rather than dainty and sharp sewing scissors makes the act even more bizarre. The injurious act, however, does not deter the husband's affair nor alter his wife's cold and indifferent attitude; each continues living their independent lives. Mrs. Langdon is a cold self-centered woman who could not share her life with others; her act of self destruction represents the self destruction inherent in coldness to others.

Singer, the deaf mute in Carson McCullers' novel The Heart is a Lonely Hunter is just the opposite of Mrs. Langdon. He is sensitive and sympathetic to those who want to tell him their problems and has a varied group of friends who use him as their confidant. There is Mick, an adolescent tom-boy who wants to compose beautiful music and Biff, the restaurant owner, recently widowed. Then there is Dr. Copeland, a Negro physician who has great dreams for his people, and Jake, the itinerate social reformer for the

working class. All of these different individuals pour out their anxieties, hopes, and fears to Singer who nods knowingly and who in turn vents his emotions to his best friend, a retarded obese man, Antonapoulos, also a deaf mute. He watches intently as his good friend's nimble fingers adeptly describes all of his innermost feelings and secrets. Singer is lonely after Antonapoulos is admitted to an institution by a relative, but he goes on letting his four friends pour out their feelings to him. On one of Singer's gift-laden visits to the distant hospital where Antonapoulos stays he is told his friend is dead. Singer, crushed, returns home taking his gift with him:

> Singer left his luggage in the middle of the station floor. Then he walked to the shop. He greeted the jeweler for whom he worked with a listless turn of his hand. When he went out again there was something heavy in his pocket. For a while he rambled with bent head along the streets. But the unrefracted brilliance of the sun, the humid heat, oppressed him. He returned to his room with swollen eyes and an aching head. After resting he drank a glass of iced coffee and smoked a cigarette. Then when he had washed the ash tray and the glass he brought out a pistol from his pocket and put a bullet in his chest.[28]

Singer commits suicide because he has identity problems. He presents a warm and accepting facade as the sympathetic friend to all. But Singer is as much in need of sympathy and understanding as his four friends. Because he never attributes any of their problems to

him they never give him credit for having problems too. When he loses Antonpoulos he loses his only confident and he is incapable of coping with the remnants of his life. He needs another person with whom to share his true identity, otherwise it ceases to have real existence for him. His suicide acts out the loss of identity Singer expresses with the trauma of Antonpoulos' death.

Another man who cannot cope with the world is the Reverend Horace Haddbetter who gives in to the temptation of an affair with the notorious Claudelle Inglish in Erskine Caldwell's novel by the same name. Horace is one of the many men the promiscuous Claudelle turns to after the love of her life, Linn Varner, writes her from the Army that he is marrying someone else. Following the affair with Claudelle, Horace is unable to deal with the resulting social repercussions of rejections. When the news of the affair is known by the community the minister's whole life falls apart. The deacons and elders tell him to quit preaching and move out of the parsonage by nightfall. When his wife hears that he has been removed from the church she goes home to her family and refuses to let him see her. He is so distraught by all of this he goes to the Inglish home where he tells Claudelle he knows how to keep her from making any more trouble:

> Reaching into his pocket, he took out a small pistol and pointed it at her . . . without another word being spoken, Horace fired the pistol at her . . . . Then while her lips moved feebly, he got down on his knees and put his arms around her. 'I had to do it--Claudelle--there wasn't anything else for me to do.' He bent over her, kissing her until the body became limp and motionless. After that, still kneeling beside her, he held the pistol against his chest and fired it twice in rapid succession.[29]

The Reverend places his faith in human opinion rather than trusting his own religious faith so that when he faces the great test of multiple accusations he finds that he does not possess inner strength. He is so desperate that he takes the most drastic means to relieve his unbearable guilt which he feels to be beyond forgiveness. He can not face public humiliation and rejection. The Reverend is basically a weak personality who believes in his identity as a strong religious pillar of the community until the crisis with Claudelle reveals his inadequacies. Erik H. Erikson states, "Psychosocial identity is necessary as the anchoring of man's transient existence in the here and now."[30] The Reverend's psychosocial (his emotional relationship to the society about him) identity is weak which allows him to end his existence in the face of his many problems. All three characters, Langdon, Singer, and Haddbetter, though their emotional makeup differed greatly, are so unsure of their public

images that they resort to violent resolutions when a crisis arises.

Mrs. Langdon and Reverend Haddbetter all have identity problems that are noted by relationships in which an unnatural degree of power is exercised. Mr. Langdon and Claudelle all exert power over Mrs. Langdon and the Reverend. Ultimately, each of these victims express their frustration thru self-inflicted violence. Power, whether it is personal as in the cases of Mrs. Langdon and Haddbetter, or political, as with Willy Stark, seems to carry violence as a major side effect. Governor Willy Stark possesses great political power which he misuses in Robert Penn Warren's novel All The Kings Men. His particular type of politics is a curious blend of traditional American populism and the tendency toward totalitarianism prominent in the 1930's. Governor Willy Stark parallels real life populist demogogues of the Thirties like Louisiana Governor Hughey Long and the radio preacher Father Coughlin. Their fanatical and ruthless ambition, as the book suggests, can only lead to violent ends. When the powerless try to right an unbalanced relationship, they often resort to violence as the only effective option available.

Governor Stark's blind ambition and misuse of power does lead to a violent ending for himself and

others as well. He assigns his long time aid, Jack Burden, the task of getting the political backing of Jack's old family friend, Judge Irwin. The Judge had been the state's Attorney General about twenty years earlier. During that time there has been some shady dealings between the Attorney General's office and the American Electric Power Company. As a result of these activities the lawyer for the company, Mortimer L. Littlepaugh, commits suicide. Governor Stark has Jack remind Judge Irwin of these shadowy affairs of his past. It is not a threat to publicize the past events but an attempt by the Governor to scare the old Judge into supporting him politically. Even this is too heavy-handed for the sensitive Judge Irwin who commits suicide after Jack leaves his home:

> Mrs. Daniell heard the shot but had thought nothing about it until the colored boy at the Irwin place ran out into the yard and began yelling. She had gone back into the house with the boy, and had seen the Judge sitting in one of the big leather chairs in the library with the pistol on his knee, his head canted over one shoulder, and the blood spreading out over the left side of the white coat.[31]

Governor Stark, whose story is based on the career of Kingfish Hughey Long of Louisiana, underestimates the potential of the blackmail threat. Furthermore, there are extenuating circumstances of which the Governor is unaware but which increase the pressures on Judge Irwin. Even Jack, who has known the Judge all of his

life, is not aware of the hidden circumstances, until his Mother reveals them to him after the Judge's death. Much to his surprise Jack discovers that the man he inadvertently pushes toward his death is his real father. This situation places Jack in an identity crisis because he has always believed his mother's first husband who left her and Jack to work among the poor is his father. The echoes of the Oedipus story here suggest again the theme of identity and its relationship to violence.

Jack, by doing Governor Stark's political dirty work, eliminates and betrays his old friend and father, the Judge, as well as crushes his Mother. Jack acts out the behavior suggested by O'Brien, hero of George Orwell's book 1984:

> Always there will be the intoxication of power, constantly increasing and constantly growing subtler. Always, at every moment, there will be the thrill of victory, the sensation of trampling an enemy who is helpless. If you want a picture of the future, imagine a boot stamping on a human face forever.[32]

Jack possesses the heady knowledge that Judge Irwin misused political power when he held the office of State Attorney General. Jack, indeed, is trampling on a helpless victim. The Judge surely feels as if he is the enemy since his reputation is threatened by his own son. Jack has unwittingly stamped the politically corrupt boot of Willie Stark on his own

father's face with fatal consequence. Jack is so corrupted by Willie Stark's power that he feels no constraint at telling his old family friend, the Judge, that he knew of his past political misconduct. Jack is willing to sell out an old friend for the political sake of his boss, Governor Willie Stark, illustrating that misused political power can disrupt the most sacred relationships. That the Judge turns out to be Jack's father symbolically underscores the traumatic results that such blind pursuit of power can cause.

As destructive as misused political power can be, the power of terrorists in action is as formidable. The South's history is damaged by the curse of widespread vigilantism, of which the Ku Klux Klan is but one example. Naturally, vigilantism often invades the novels of Southern authors. The origins of vigilantism relates to the tensions surrounding the slavery issue and the lawlessness existing in parts of the South, particularly during the decades before and after the Civil War. Quantrill's Raiders, the Jayhawkers, and lynching parties are early examples of vigilantism in the South out of which a group like Penn Warren's, night riders originates. The night riders serve economic interests. They are a vigilante group that terrorizes farmers not belonging to the Tobacco Association by destroying their tobacco crops. The

terrorists' tactics consist of the masked night riders forcing at gun point the startled farmers outside in the middle of the night. Part of the terror is that the victims never know if just their tobacco crops will be destroyed or whether they themselves will be beaten or murdered. One farmer, a Mr. Sanderson, who suffered neither consequence is so terror-stricken when the night riders burn his tobacco barn that he disappears:

> He was found two weeks later, seventy-five miles away, over toward the central part of the state. Some boys out possum-hunting found him cowering in a thicket. His clothes were in tatters and he was almost barefoot. His beard was matted with mud and small fragments of dry leaf. He was nearly starving. He remembered nothing. When the boys questioned him, he put the knuckle of his right forefinger into his mouth, like a frightened and confused child, and peered from face to face. When they built a bonfire and tried to warm him, he was so terrified that they had to hold him. After a little while he became quiet in their grasp, but he kept shaking his head like a sick man who is too weak to protect otherwise against an injustice, and the tears flowed silently and resignedly out of his red-rimmed eyes.[33]

While Mr. Sanderson recuperates quickly enough to resume his regular chores by spring the terror of the night riders' act is such a violent shock he can never recall the burning of his tobacco barn nor the two weeks of wandering away from home.

The night riders, a vigilante group operating outside the established law force in their community,

have a desirable goal: higher tobacco prices--but their method of gaining that goal is illegal and infringes on the rights of their victims. Neither the night riders nor the dreaded Ku Klux Klan are isolated phenomenons of the South:

> The sporatic violence of the vigilante tradition in the United States was merely a transition phase to a more ordered society. Outbreaks of the vigilante type of violence were a persistent feature of American life at least near the frontier. In their studies on violence in America, recent writers have been able to show how such periods of violence were related to important transformations of the American system and its region. Out of the frontier conditions of self-help and amateur warfare the vigilante movements have sprung. A short list of them fills five and a half pages in small print. The vigilante tradition in America, 'in the classic sense refers to organized, extra-legal movements which take law into their own hand.' Three hundred and twenty-six such movements are known to have occurred: the actual number may be as high as five hundred.[34]

Vigilantism is believed by some to be peculiarly American, a product of the frontier where there is an absence of effective law and order. Before the Civil War as well as following it there is ineffective law and order for the Negroes. The Law is often misused with a vengeance when dealing with blacks suspected of crime. If this lack of justice is tolerated how great then is the injustice of vigilante groups such as the Ku Klux Klan which intimidate blacks with harsh physical attacks often ending in death. Lynching blacks for the simplest excuse, occasionally on

trumped-up charges, is almost a sport in the South's past. Such vigilantism is successful in keeping the black population well subordinated in politics, employment, and in social matters. The blacks lack the power of position so they are defenseless against vigilantism. Vigilanties are a threat to the life of Negro Lucas Beauchamp who is in a small town jail for the accused murder of a white man in Faulkner's Intruder in the Dust. The white townspeople are so rabidly convinced of Lucas' guilt they want to break him out of jail to murder him. For this reason the sheriff stations a sharp shooter in front of Lucas' cell to prevent any vigilante action. Faulkner writes about the vigilante's plan to kill Lucas to show how whites in the South feel they have priority over the law in dealing with blacks who are accused of crimes especially against whites.

Another example of this imposition of power by the strong onto weak takes place in the situation of marriage. The right of a husband to have such power is stated in the marriage vows and actualized by hundreds of years of practice. In Faulkner's novel The Hamlet, the husband, poverty stricken, spends the family's last five dollars for a wild pony despite the submissive wife's protests. The wife pleads with the owner of the untamed pony not to take the money

because they don't have shoes for the children nor feed for the livestock. The wife explains that she earned the five dollars by weaving cloth by firelight. The husband is angry with his wife for resisting his wishes, and he orders her into the pen of swirling animals to help him catch his wild pony. The pony rushes straight past the wife despite the men's efforts to catch it:

> They followed and hemmed it in again into another corner; again the wife failed to stop its rush for freedom and the husband turned and struck her with the coiled rope. 'Why didn't you head him off?' he said. 'Why didn't you?' He struck her again: she did not move, not even to fend the rope with a raised arm.[35]

The wife meekly submits to the public beating because she feels so defeated when her husband gives their last five dollars for the worthless pony. In the South as well as the North, women have been expected to submit to their husband's wishes. In the South the feminine mystique is especially prevalent: women are not to think or act but let their husbands think or act for them. The abused wife did not possess the power of money, prestige or even the backing of tradition so she submitted to her husband's mistreatment without question.

Southern writers depict other abuses of power within family relationships and their incipient violence. The power of the abusive husband over his

submissive wife is formidable but even more awesome is the control exerted by the paralyzed father and two emotionally dependent siblings of Clytie in a short story with the same name by Eudora Welty. Clytie Farr is a shy unassuming woman who dedicates her life to tending to her elderly apoplectic father, her half-mad sister, Octavia, and her alcholic brother, Gerald. Besides being responsible for the living family, Clytie carries with her the burden of her brother, Henry, who shot himself in the head for no given reason. Welty uses this unexpected suicide to make more acute the Farr family's tragic lives, the paralyzed father, the incapacitated sister, the alcoholic brother, and lastly, the strange Clytie who will hide her face behind a tree branch rather than meet an approaching individual on the streets of Farr Gin. Clytie tends to the demands of her family members by cooking their meals and taking the food to them on trays. She has to feed her father as he is incapable of helping himself. Her sister screams commands from her bedroom and Clytie faithfully carries out the duties no matter how odious. A neighbor plants a blooming rose bush near the Farr fence. A short time later she runs out of the house and screams that her sister, Octavia, has ordered the rose bush be moved away from the fence or she will kill the owner.

Clytie relays Octavia's threat to kill a little neighbor boy for playing with the Farr cat by holding it in his arms and singing to it. Obviously, Clytie is distressed at relaying her sister's verbal threats, but she is completely subservient to Octavia. As a reaction Clytie has wide mood changes: one moment she will unexpectedly and ever so gently stroke the face of the little barber who comes to shave her father weekly. After the soft caress both give a despairing cry, and the barber flees the Farr house. Later, Octavia sends Clytie out for rain water to shave their father. As Clytie leans over the water barrel she sees a face reflected in the dark water:

> It was a wavering, inscrutable face. The brows were drawn together as if in pain. The eyes were large, intent, almost avid, the nose ugly and discolored as if from weeping, the mouth old and closed from speech. On either side of the head dark hair hung down in a disreputable and wild fashion. Everything about the face frightened and shocked her with its signs of waiting, of suffering and too late she recognized the face. She stood there completely sick at heart, as though the poor, half-remembered vision had finally betrayed her.[36]

As Clytie stands there staring, Octavia screams for the water. Then Clytie does the only thing she can think of. She thrusts her head under the water and holds it there. A former family cook finds her body later. The vision of her own reflection in the water barrel reveals the extent of her unhappiness to the startled

Clytie. Octavia's final shouted command reminds her of the power the family has over her. The Farrs are a family totally surrounded in violence. Their violence draws directly on violence inherent in the Southern power structure of the family. The family code is to remain cohesive no matter how abrasive the relationship might be or how detrimental they might be to individual members. Pride causes them to present a unified face to the public no matter how much dissension exists within the family. A pride is reflected in the South's need during slavery to keep a "united front", particularly during times of slave unrest, and supported by the strength of religious and other traditional values in the region.

Poverty too helps to support such abuses, for it keeps people under constant pressure, and prevents them from bettering their lot through education. And while conditions of poverty and poor economic development are not peculiar to the South, they have been particularly prevalent since the Civil War left the region bankrupt. The War flooded the market with a glut of unemployed, unskilled workers who were powerless. They had no union or other organization to protect their rights. Before the South solved that problem there was the transition to mechanization of agriculture which took employment from thousands of

sharecroppers and marginal hill farmers. These people faced unemployment, public welfare, or migration to the industrialized North since they couldn't make a living from the land. These problems represent the disruption of individual identities and the accompanying material impoverishment resulting from the Civil War. Since that time Southern writers have been instrumental in recording the intimate relationship between poverty and violence.

Poverty and violence are closely allied in the Lester family in Caldwell's Tobacco Road. Jeeter Lester is a sharecropper who faces unemployment when his landlord, due to increasingly lower farm income, moves to the city. This leaves Jeeter without a job or credit at the country store. Without money or credit Jeeter and his family go hungry when they can't beg or steal food. The precious little food they get is not shared with the elderly Mother Lester who subsists on grass and roots from the fields. The ignoring of Mother Lester's needs by Jeeter and his wife, Ada, shows how prolonged economic deprivation affects human actions toward others. This behavior in Tobacco Road represents in an exaggeration of manners that cruelty is all too pervasive in poverty stricken areas. Hugh Holman states in his essay:

> Caldwell wrote with great simplicity and force of style--a clean, hard, clear and forceful prose--of the lives of people so stripped of economic and social hope that they become grotesques and parodies of human beings, twisted by the simplest hungers and lacking in dignity or integrity.[37]

Jeeter and Ada are prime examples of individuals losing all dignity and integrity by depriving Mother Lester of food. An even more extreme example of Jeeter and Ada's inhumane behavior occurs when Mother Lester is critically injured after her grandson, Dude Lester, runs over her in wife Bessie's new car after a family quarrel:

> The automobile had struck her with such force that she did not know what hit her. Both of the left wheels had rolled over her, one of them across her back and the other on her head. She had not known what had happened. More than anything else she wanted to get up and lie in her bed. She struggled with a final effort to raise her head and shoulders from the hard sand and she managed to turn over. After that she lay motionless.[38]

After the dust has settled from Bessie's car, Jeeter and Ada return to the front yard and see Mother Lester in her badly mutilated condition. Since her face is crushed they suppose that she is already dead and do not concern themselves with her any further. Ada goes into the house, shutting the door, thus symbolically closing herself away from the old woman's death. Jeeter shows no further interest in his Mother so he goes about the fields checking the soil for moisture

content for future plowing. The couple hates Mother Lester because she has lived with them so long. They pay her no more attention than an inanimate object. If she complains, asks for food or snuff they knock her down. Jeeter and Ada's personalities are so distorted by financial want and hardship they can not even relate to Mother Lester's horrible suffering and death. They are literally depicted as dehumanized by their poverty.

Financial hardship is not the overwhelming problem in Penn Warren's novel Night Rider that it is in Tobacco Road; nevertheless, low income is the underlying cause of violence. In Night Rider Southern tobacco farmers are determined to raise the low market price they receive for their tobacco. To do so a large group of tobacco farmers form an Association to withhold the tobacco from the market and thereby force the price up. Soon it is obvious that there are non-members of the Tobacco Association who are still growing and selling tobacco despite the low prices. To counteract this a secret organization of night riders is formed to force the dissident farmers to destroy the young tobacco and that tobacco curing for market. When the night riders are on these forays their emotions run high and violence run rampant:

> One gang of hired guards was surprised, half drunk at its post, and the men were whipped, dragged through a creek, and left lying, bound and gagged by the roadside. The barns which they had been supposed to guard were burned. The night riders exchanged shots with another gang, and two men, under the cover of the firing that drove the guards back to the barn and flung two charges of dynamite against the wall. Galloping past the barn, they had lighted the fuses from cigars they held clamped in their teeth. The charges blew in one wall of the barn, and the curing fires in the barn ignited the tobacco.[39]

This is just one of several violent incidents for which the night riders are responsible. The purpose of their terrorist activities is to decrease the amount of tobacco on the market to force its price up. They start out as a group motivated by the price of tobacco, but they shortly become a group of terrorists producing more violence than profit from their clandestine activities. Again we see an attempt to right an imbalance of power through violence. Penn Warren uses violence to show that people of the South, as with desperate people anywhere will use extreme measures to get what they need or want.

The night riders have exhausted the civil and legal avenues through the Tobacco Association to get higher prices for their product from the big tobacco companies and feel that they have no other recourse but violence:

> People resort to violence when they have to or think they have no alternative, no other means

> of coping with a situation, or when they regard violence as a situation or (less often) when they obtain some pleasure, satisfaction, or reduction of tension from the act.[40]

The men who comprise the night riders feel that they have no other alternative than to compel dissenting tobacco farmers into withholding their crop from the market to force the price of tobacco higher. The night riders feel that they are the injured party and that their violence is justified. Mr. Munn, leader of the group, is a lawyer who feels no clash between his legal duties and his night rider activities. The night riders derive satisfaction, if not pleasure, in their violent activities because they feel they will receive monetary recompense which they consider to be their just dues.

Just as the want of more money brings about the night riders' lawless activities so it also causes the rise and the fall of Thomas Sutpen in William Faulkner's Absalom, Absalom!. Sutpen was born of poor white Scotch-English parents in the mountains of West Virginia in 1807. Many years later Sutpen suddenly appears with a large group of wild naked Negroes in Yoknapatawpha County, Mississippi to carve out his plantation which he names "Sutpen's Hundred". So grandiose are his plans that the "Hundred" represents miles and not acres. However, Sutpen is not above

working, naked and mud-smeared, with the Negroes to build a plantation and a fine mansion. In 1838 he makes a socially acceptable marriage to Ellen Coldfield of nearby Jefferson and has two children, Henry and Judith. Judith grows up to be a single lady and Henry kills Judith's mulatto lover and disappears after the Civil War is over. Colonel Sutpen returns from the Civil War to discover Sutpen's Hundred in shambles, his wife, Ellen, dead, and Henry, his heir, gone. Not one to mourn, Sutpen sets about the hopless task of reestablishing Sutpen's Hundred and begetting an heir for his plantation.. After a plan to have a baby with Rose, his late wife's younger sister, fails, Sutpen takes up with Milly. Milly is the young granddaughter of Wash Jones, a never-do-well who lives in a shack and pretends to look after the plantation and the Negroes while Sutpen is away in the Civil War. After two years Milly has a baby girl which is a disappointment to Sutpen who badly wants a male heir. His feelings are expressed in such a coarse and rejecting manner to the young mother that her Grandfather, Wash Jones, is violently offended. Sutpen made the comment to Milly that it is too bad that she is not a mare like his horse which recently had a male foal so he could give her a decent stall in the stable. This arrogant pronouncement causes Wash to attack Sutpen:

> 'Stand back. Don't you touch me, Wash.' 'I'm going to tech you Kernel!' and then she (Negro midwife) heard the whip too though not the scythe, no whistling air, no blow, nothing since always that which merely consummates punishment evokes a cry while that which evokes the last silence occurs in silence. And that night they found him, quiet and bloody with his teeth still showing in his parted beard . . . .[41]

Sutpen is so overly confident in his scheme to regain the grandeur of Sutpen's Hundred that he miscalculates the effect of his words to Wash's granddaughter. Also Sutpen doesn't realize that the penniless Jones is as motivated by wealth and social position as he is. Jones believes that when his granddaughter has the child he will be on the same social level as Sutpen and share in his estate. In Sutpen's ruthless plans to gain an heir he did not even think of Wash Jones becoming his equal. To him, Jones is only a poverty-stricken syncophant: someone he can rely on to put him to bed and sleep on the floor when he is drunk. Sutpen can never accept Jones or Milly as social equals but only as stepping stones in his grand design to be a great plantation owner once more. In this work the prominent Southern themes of poverty, identity, and the quest for personal power are woven together in Sutpen's violent death.

Sutpen's murder by Wash Jones might have been prevented if the two had discussed their plans for the future. On one level the murder can be seen as caused

by the lack of meaningful communication between the two men. Other Southern writers have focussed more intensely on the communication issue as it relates to violence. Jones never expresses his strong desire for social advancement and this constitutes a breakdown in communication. If deeply felt needs, feelings, and ideas fail to be expressed, the pent-up energy and frustration often results in an explosion. When the bond of communication breaks down sometimes the frustration is so great that only violent action can satisfy the individual or group. Fistfights, suicide, or even war can result from failed transmission of thought. This failure to express one's true thoughts probably dates back to the plantation era in the South where the truely cultured and genteel person never said exactly what he or she felt. The inability to convey ideas or feelings often leaves the individual feeling very helpless and striking out in violence is the only outlet that seems available.

Flannery O'Conner in "The Lame Shall Enter First", shows the inability of the newly widowed Mr. Sheppard to convey his love to his small son, Norton, which has tragic and violent results. Instead of centering his attention on the motherless Norton, Shepppard becomes obsessed with the rehabilitation of Johnson, a crippled juvenile delinquent having personality problems.

Sheppard brings Johnson into his home to live. He buys a telescope thinking that he can channel Johnson's negative energies into interest in astrology and thereby communicate with the beligerent boy. A hard core delinquent, Johnson cannot be diverted and shows only mild interest in the telescope. It is good that Norton can entertain himself as Sheppard ignores him completely because he is so busy with the indifferent Johnson. When Johnson is at last arrested for the crime of breaking and entering a nearby home, Sheppard finally realizes that Johnson is a hopeless case. With sudden insight Sheppard resolves to divulge his feelings to Norton:

> A rush of agonizing love for the child rushed over him like a transfusion of life. The little boy's face appeared to him transformed; the image of his salvation; all light. He groaned with joy. He would make everything up to him. He would never let him suffer again. He would be mother and father. He jumped up and ran to his room, to kiss him, to tell him that he loved him, that he would never fail him again. The light was on in Norton's room but the bed was empty. He turned and dashed up the attic stairs, at the top reeled like a man on the edge of a pit. The tripod had fallen and the telescope lay on the floor. A few feet over it, the child hung in the jungle of shadows, just below the beam from which he had launched his flight into space.[42]

Norton is too young and timorous to express his emotional needs to his negligent father. His father is too engrossed with the more aggressive and demanding Johnson to notice that Norton is a lonely little boy

who is still in mourning for his mother. He is very possessive of her memory and deeply resents Johnson for touching some of her possessions. Norton is unable to verbalize how much he misses his mother to his preoccupied father. Norton commits suicide and too late, Sheppard realizes that Norton is in more need of fathering than the independent Johnson who is not affected by any form of communication.

Another child who has problems with communications is thirteen year old Pearl in Caldwell's Tobacco Road. Pearl, her father Jeeter, and mother Ada Lester's youngest child has been married to Lov, a middle aged neighbor, for a year. During that time Lov is unable to get the pretty little girl to converse with him no matter what he does:

> Lov asked Pearl questions, he kicked her, he poured water over her, he threw rocks and sticks at her, and he did everything else he could think of that he thought might make her talk to him. She cried a lot, especially when she was seriously hurt but Lov did not consider that as conversation.[43]

Pearl's puzzling unwillingness to communicate frustrates her husband to the extent that he beats her, throws hard objects at her, and even ties her in bed with horse harness. As the abuse occurs it only intensifies the alienation Pearl feels. Seeing no other options she runs away. The abuse she suffers from her husband because she cannot communicate with him is a

tragedy. As a child in the Lester home Pearl is unable to relate verbally to her siblings or father with language so it is impossible for her to communicate with a man as insensitive and abusive as Lov. All of this results from father and daughter's inability to adequately express their felt love for one another.

While Pearl exhibits an inability for communicating with others, Randy in Eudora Welty's short story "The Whole World Knows" limits his communications with his young wife and instead indulges in fantasies. He is very angry with his pretty and coquettish wife, Jinny, because of her frequent flirtations with other men. Rather than tell Jinny how intensely she displeases him, Randy fantasizes how he will violently settle the differences between them. The following scene occurs only in Randy's wild imagination as Jinny sews a button on his cuff:

> I fired point-blank at Jinny more than once. It was close range--there was barely room between us suddenly for the pistol to come up. And she only stood frowning at the needle I had forgotten the reason for. Her hand never deviated, never shook from the noise. The dim clock on the mantel was striking--the pistol hadn't drowned that out. I was watching Jinny and I saw her pouting childish breasts, excuses for breasts, sprung full of bright holes where my bullets had gone.[44]

Randy's thoughts show that he is harboring very hostile feelings toward Jinny for the way she behaves

around other men but he is unable to express his anger verbally. If Randy would tell Jinny how furious her flirtations make him, she might be able to curb her displeasing behavior. Randy, however is immature and only handles his problem through imaginary actions, like a little boy. With a smooth and calm demeanor he convinces Jinny that there are no problems in their relationship while he seethes with inner tension. Randy's outlet of imagining violence gives vent to his objectionable feelings and removes the need for him to communicate with Jinny on serious domestic matters. Furthermore, it makes it possible for him to avoid a confrontation which might prove unpleasant or cause Jinny to reject him. Randy nurtures, not only his ill feelings but also an unrealistic Southern feminine stereotype of the sweet, modest female, a role that does not fit Jinny. Harboring his hostile feelings could eventually result in an outburst of very real violence when Jinny's behavior angers him and an imaginary response seems no longer adequate. Randy's imagined shooting of his wife is symptomatic of the South where, according to statistics, real violence occurs with startling frequency.

Physical violence is always dramatically apparent but violence in language, repeated often for generations, may be taken for granted and go unnoticed.

Violent language can mirror and project the potential physical violence in the area. Southern writers reflect the violent aura of the region and the "color" of actual speech through the language of their narratives and character. The language of their narratives and characters prove that for the South the first think to disintegrate is the language. According to W. H. Auden:

> As a poet, there is only one political duty and that is to defend one's language from corruption. And that is particularly serious now. It's being so quickly corrupted. When it's corrupted, people lose faith in what they hear, and this leads to violence.[45]

Essentially Auden is saying that violence ensues when there is a breakdown in communications caused by an emptying or cheapening of language so that it expresses things grossly. When there are no adequate words for self expression physical violence may result. For this reason negotiators for peace between warring nations and striking industrial workers strive so diligently to keep communications open between the disputing parties. Often when the talking ends the fighting begins once more. In the twenty-eight books I read by Southern writers Welty's Delta Wedding contains the most violent expressions. It outnumbers her other seven stories in examples of violent language. All of the ample violence in this novel is verbal,

also it is the only book that does not contain physical violence. In Delta Wedding violent language takes the form of exaggerated threats which are understood by both parties to be hyperbolic. The violence is thus psychological and leaves the recipient unharmed if not unruffled. Hyperbolic use of violent language is old, dating back centuries. The widespread use of hyperbole leads to a breakdown in communication. For instance, hyperbolic language can be used so frequently that the users may not even be aware of the great violence that they are suggesting with their "ordinary" conversational language. For instance, in Delta Wedding, the father calls his laggard children to dinner like this:

> 'Laura and Maureen,' said Battle, with the condensed roar in his fatherly voice carrying out the window, 'will you obey me and come to the table before I skin you alive and shake your bones up together and throw the sack in the bayou?'[46]

The children respond gladly and without any real terror of being tossed into the bayou. They fully understand their father and know he is only using the threat to get their attention and their compliance. The violent language is effective artistically here because it sets a tone that both mirrors accurately speech patterns of the South, and suggest the internalized violence of the major characters. This tone setting, it

can be argued, also creates a nurturing atmosphere for real violence.

The verbal threat of violence can add excitement to an otherwise staid relationship as in the case of George and Robbie. Robbie, the estranged wife of one of the many uncles attending the wedding, wrecks George's car and loses her suitcase outside Memphis. She walks from a nearby small town in high heels to the plantation home. After hearing her travel trials George is less than sympathetic:

> George glared across the room. 'What? You fought the mosquitoes clear from Fairchild? I ought to whip you all the way home.'[47]

Violent though it is, Robbie is not intimidated by her husband's harsh language. She ignores his threat and goes on with her story before they have a romantic reunion. The use of violence in language lets the user harmlessly expell emotional tension that otherwise might find outlet as physical violence. Robbie is on the pedestal of the pure and fragile concept of Southern womanhood which allows her husband to talk to her as if she is a little girl instead of a mature married woman. Being a product of the Southern social system she meekly submits to her husband's verbal chastisement.

Like Robbie, the child, Bluet, ignores the verbal chastising she receives from her father. On the night

of his daughter Darbey's wedding Battle's children are excited and have difficulty getting into bed and going to sleep. Bluet, the baby, persisting in talking from her bed until she is admonished by her exasperated father:

> 'Lie back down, Bluet!' yells her father from bed. 'Go back to sleep or I'm coming to break your neck!'[48]

Bluet is undaunted and asks another question. She isn't frightened that her father will abuse her physically because she knows her father to be loving and kind. The threat to break her neck is only his way of expressing mild displeasure with her behavior. Bluet knows that and gradually drifts off to sleep. The violent language is passed on, unquestioned, from one generation to the next. Such use of language may create an atmosphere in which the leap to actual violence is easier to make. No one can say, for instance, that such violence is "unheard of." Many of the more violent threats may date back to the days of slavery when tensions ran high between the two races.

Battle and Ellen have several children all of whom are energetic and mischievous. Their son, Roy, climbs to the top of the roof of the house. He is laughing and shouting to his cousin Laura that he can see all around even see his father who's in the distance. Laura shouts back how unhappy Roy's father

will be if he sees him on his high perch. "If he saw you he'd skin you alive!"[49] Laura calls to him. Laura is expressing her Uncle Battle's expected anger at Roy in an old medieval practice of flaying or skinning alive criminals and people in disfavor with high officials. The use of such violent terms as flaying is a throw back not to the middle ages but to the days of slavery when cruel and unusual punishment was used on runaway or disobedient slaves. The harsh treatment found in Southern jargon after the brutal practices fell into disuse.

Language of murder manages to find its way into an emotional outburst over kitchen privileges by one of the bride's many aunts, Tempe, who said:

> 'Who's going to make the beaten biscuit? I have to have the kitchen to myself when the cornucopias are made! I'll kill anybody making beaten biscuits around me.'[50]

Tempe is not about to commit murder over the all important pastries, she is simply giving vent to the stress she feels at that hectic period in the family's affairs. Such threats are not intended by the speaker to be taken literally. Instead, they are an outlet for intense emotions and tensions. The degree of such tensions in the South is underscored by these characters groping for the most extreme and violent imagery to describe them.

No violence arises out of the use of violent language in Delta Wedding because the exchanges are all within a close knit family who have a tacit understanding of the violent language used when communication breaks down over minor family crisis. In this case the language may serve as a healthy vent rather than a warning. A further explanation of the dynamics that take place within the Marmion family is suggested by a consideration of what language makes possible in the first place:

> Language arises from an underlying web of potentiality for understanding, an emphatic tie between people, a shared structure, a capacity to identify with another. This potentiality for understanding is much more than mere words: it implies a state of we-ness, a bond that potentially unites people . . . . From the dialectical bond with others, into and out of which we can move, there has evolved in profound and complex ways over the centuries the compacity for language. The individual is bound to others and independent from them at the same time. Out of this double nature of man are born the symbols and myths which are the basis of language and serve as a bridge over that chasm between human beings to establish the bond again.[51]

The description in the above quote fits the Marmion family perfectly. Since they are a family they have the built-in shared structure, and the potential for understanding beyond mere words. This deep understanding is what prevents the violent language used by the Marmion family from having any physically violent reactions. It is, in fact, the language bond that

allows the Marmion family to establish such deep ties. The violent nature of their language suggest the seriousness with which they take violence in their daily lives and the seriousness with which they take each other. It does not, however, make them violent people.

In Delta Wedding all of the violence is limited to the language. Language is of ultimate importance in keeping the pathways of communication open not only to big families, such as the Marmion's but to the great human family. If there is a break down in communication:

> We experience the despair of being unable to communicate to others what we feel and what we think, and the even greater despair of being unable to distinguish for ourselves what we feel and are. Underlying this loss of identity is the loss of cogency of the symbols and myths upon which identity and language are based.[52]

Each member of the Marmion family seemingly has a secure sense of identity, of being a member of the big clan. With this strong sense of identity comes a knowledge of the symbols of their language which the individual family members are familiar with so they do not feel threatened by the use of violent language. Failure to communicate causes much despair and frustration for all involved parties--be they warring nations or fighting families. A common

vocabulary must exist for understanding. This vocabulary needs to grow out of language that all parties take seriously.

The violent language is prominent throughout the South, not surprising considering the region's bloody heritage. Although Welty appears to be the writer using the most violent terms, O'Connor, McCullers, Faulkner, Penn Warren, and Caldwell also employ much violent imagery in the twenty-eight stories and novels read. The writers all use violent language to foreshadow some of the physically violent scenes and to intensify them by creating an atmosphere of imminent violence. The use of violence underscores the South's nostalgia for the past when some of the terms, such as "I'll skin you alive!" were threats to be taken literally. The violent speech serves to spice up and foreshadow in the stories as clues do the same for mystery stories.

Violent language in some stories serve as a prelude to violent physical action such as occurs in Faulkner's Intruder in the Dust. In it, the highly dignified Negro Lucas Beauchamp, later accused of killing a white man, is admonished by an irate white man, "Keep on walking around here with that look on your face and what you'll be is crowbait."[53] Lucas makes a reply that inflames the white man so much he

blindly picks up a single tree and flings it at Lucas. Fortunately, the store proprietor grabs the single tree so it falls against the cold stove, leaving Lucas unharmed. In this case violent language is followed by violent physical action and the only solution is to remove Lucas from the store. This incident establishes how racial tensions lie close to the surface and often reaches its initial expression in spontaneous bursts of language.

The violent language says several things about the South. First, violent language reflects the widespread use of physical violence in the region. Secondly, the violent language proves that the South is not the place of totally genteel, mild manners that sentimental novels would have the reader or viewer believe. Whether the violent language is simply an exaggeration of mild annoyance as with Battle Marmion family in Delta Wedding or an open death threat in Intruder in the Dust it demonstrates that Southerners have hostile feelings as near the surface or nearer than many other citizens. Third, the violent language reveals that the South is tradition bound in using very old cliches such as the "You'll be skinned alive!" in Delta Wedding. The use of violent language in Southern literature allows the writer to express some of the latent tensions of the region. Reasons

for the tensions are racial and economic disparity which are intimately related to the insecure identity of the region itself and its citizens, both black and white.

An excellent example of domestic tension occurs in Welty's "A Piece of News" in which an excited young wife reading in an out-of-state newspaper of a woman having the same name as she, is shot by her husband. When she proudly shows the article to her irate husband, he points out that it is a mistake, observing, "Someday I'm goin' to smack the livin' devil outa you."[54] That ends the discussion and the wife lapses back into her usual, passive silence. This husband harbors no fine concepts of Southern womanhood shrouded in fantasy. So rather than express outrage at the plight of his wife's namesake, he crudely deflates her bubble of excitement with the casual threat of violence. The use of such off hand violent threats reflects the everyday world of the South where violent abusive language is routinely used as a part of speech. This street language in reality, often incorporates obscene words to enhance the shock value of the phrasing. Surprisingly little to no obscene language appears in the work of the authors under discussion here. This fact may reflect simple literary pragmatism, as obscene language often led to legal

problems for publishers up until the last twenty years. The adverse publicity, while attracting some readers, often turned off many readers.

Vile language may not be accepted by many readers but gory physical violence is accepted. The thrust of this paper is to define violence, both physical and spoken, in Southern literature and to give reasons for both being so prevalent. Essentially, I have argued that this prevalence simply reflects realities of Southern life and its heritage. Slavery and the ensuing Civil War which set the slaves free left the region economically depressed and race relations in a confused state. The tensions resulting from these two historical realities have resulted in violence of mind and action that Southern writers have been faithful to record. The social upheaval of the bloody War and the constant pressure of unresolved racial tensions cause problems of social relationships in which identity, personal, and political power are in an unbalanced state, and a breakdown of communications among Southern citizens.

The people of both races have suffered untold agonies due to the Civil War and the Reconstruction of the War's aftermath:

> The South has known first hand the misery of rejection. Among people whose memories traditionally are long, the abuses of the

> Reconstruction period are recent, their effects still present. A war was lost, but not the cause which for the great majority of Confederate soldiers was the only cause: the right of self-determination. In defeat the need for asserting whatever was distinctive and valuable in Southern thought became increasingly important. Separation from the North during and after the war helped to define what was enduringly Southern. Those years were too hotly fierce to be denied, and the memory of their reality has prevented any easy accommodation later to more abstract ... entities: government by statistics, or a ready-made corporation mentality, through which people are wholly possessed by their possessions.[56]

The generations old wounds of the War and Reconstruction will not be totally dismissed from Southern memory until the racial issue is resolved to the satisfaction of all involved. Judging from past progress this ideal state will not be soon in coming. Though hopeful signs are there as the most glaring and institutionalized instances of segregation and racism disappear and blacks participate more fully in education, polities, business, and the like.

There is tragedy in the South's slow assimilation of blacks into the main stream of Southern life, economically, socially, and politically. This lack of total integration of black and white life styles still periodically results in violence. The Southern authors strive diligently to show the tragedy inherent in all of the physical violence. Flannery O'Connor does this most dramatically in the super violent short story "A Good Man is Hard to Find" in which an entire

family, including the elderly grandmother and small baby are massacred by escaped convicted killers. The tragedy is intensified by the fact that the family, enroute to a Florida vacation, get lost in the woods and encounter the killers. The senseless multi-murders are haunting long after the story is read and the reader is made to wonder why O'Connor feels compelled to make the story so violent. In her own words the author defends what seems to be excessive violence:

> With the serious writer, violence is never an end in itself. It is the extreme situation that best reveals what we are essentially, and I believe these are times when writers are more interested in what we are essentially than in the tenor of our daily lives. Violence is a force which can be used for good or evil, and among other things taken by it is the kingdom of heaven. But regardless of what can be taken by it, the man in the violent situation reveals those qualities least dispensable in his personality, those qualities which are all he will have to take into eternity with him; and since the characters in this story are all on the verge of eternity, it is appropriate to think of what they take with them.[57]

The characters in the story face eternity with that indispensable quality--hope--because they are unaware of the leader of the murderous gang, the Misfit's, intention to slaughter them all. O'Connor shows the tragedy of an entire family massacred but softens the grim situation by the hope of eternal salvation.

This writer can only hope that Southern conditions, particularly Southern race relations, reach a

state of balance and equity. After hundreds of years of racial strife and resulting tensions the region deserves harmony and peace that can only be reached through equality for both blacks and whites. Fortunately, the South has been blessed by a strong literary tradition, which has included many talented and significant writers like those discussed here, who through their dedication to presenting the truth of the tragic implications of such ubiquitous violence, hope to enhance human understanding and compassion.

Notes

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[3] Roger N. Johnson, Aggression in Man and Animals (Philadelphia: W. B. Saunders Company, 1972), p. 2.

[4] Charles H. Bohner, Robert Penn Warren (New York: Twayne Publishers, Inc., 1964), p. 20.

[5] Johnson, p. 187.

[6] David Abrahamsen, Our Violent Society (New York: Funk and Wagnall's, 1970), p. 8.

[7] Ibid., p. 10.

[8] Ibid., p. 21.

[9] Leslie A. Fiedler, Love and Death in the American Novel (Cleveland: The World Publishing Co., 1962), p. 142.

[10] Joseph Wood Kurtch, Edgar Allen Poe (New York: Alfred A. Knoff, Inc., 1962), p. 78.

[11] William Faulkner, The Unvanquished (London: Chatto and Windrus, 1967), p. 170.

[12] Robert Penn Warren, Wilderness (New York: Random House, 1961), p. 261.

[13] Joseph Laffan Morse, Ed., Funk and Wagnalls New Encyclopedia (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, Inc., 1972), p. 177.

[14] Warren, Wilderness, p. 67.

[15] Flannery O'Connor, "Everything That Rises Must Converge", in The Complete Stories of Flannery O'Connor (New York: Farrar, Straus, and Giroux, 1971), p. 536.

[16] O'Connor, "Judgement Day", p. 538.

[17] Carson McCullers, The Heart Is A Lonely Hunter in The Novels and Stories of Carson McCullers (Cambridge: The Riverside Press, 1936), p. 401.

[18] Carson McCullers, Clock Without Hands (Boston: Houghton Mifflin Co., 1961), p. 229.

[19] Ibid., p. 104.

[20] Eudora Welty, "Where is The Voice Coming From" in The Collected Stories of Eudora Welty (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Jovanich, 1980), p. 604.

[21] Bohner, p. 35.

[22] Leslie A. Fiedler, Love and Death in the American Novel (New York: Criterion, 1960), p. 395.

[23] William Faulkner, Light in August (New York: Random House, 1959), p. 439.

[24] Robert Penn Warren, Night Rider (New York: Random House, 1939), p. 206.

[25] Fiedler, p. 342.

[26] Erik H. Erikson, Identity Youth and Crisis (New York: W. W. Norton and Company, Inc., 1968), p. 465.

[27] Carson McCullers, Reflections in a Golden Eye (Boston: Houghton, Mifflin Company, 1941), p. 465.

[28] McCullers, Heart, p. 465.

[29] Erskine Caldwell, Claudell Inglish (Boston: Little, Brown, and Company, 1958), p. 206.

[30] Erikson, p. 29.

[31] Robert Penn Warren, All the Kings Men (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1946), p. 373.

[32] George Orwell, 1984 (New York: The New American Library, Inc., 1961), p. 220.

[33] Warren, Rider, p. 254.

[34] Carl J. Friedrich, The Pathology of Politics (New York: Harper and Row, 1932), p. 63.

[35] William Faulkner, The Hamlet (New York: Random House, 1931), p. 295.

[36] Eudora Welty, "Clytie", in The Collected Stories of Eudora Welty (New York: Harcourt, Brace and Jovanich, 1980), p. 90.

[37] C. Hugh Holman, "The View from the Regency-Hyatt" in Southern Fiction Today: Renascence and Beyond, George Core, Ed. (Athens: University of Georgia, 1969), p. 26.

[38] Erskine Caldwell, Tobacco Road, in Three by Caldwell (Toronto: Little, Brown, and Company, 1932), p. 215.

[39] Warren, Rider, p. 254.

[40] Friedrich, p. 185.

[41] William Faulkner, Absalom, Absalom! (New York: Random House, Inc., 1936), p. 185.

[42] Rollo May, Power and Innocence: A Search for the Source of Violence (New York: W. W. Norton, Inc., 1972), p. 67.

[43] O'Connor, "The Lame Shall Enter First", p. 536.

[44] Caldwell, Road, p. 3.

[45] Welty, "The Whole World Knows", p. 385.

[46] May, p. 65.

[47] Eudora Welty, Delta Wedding (New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1945), p. 115.

[48] Ibid., p. 169.

[49] Ibid., p. 230.

[50] Ibid., p. 276.

[51] Ibid., p. 199.

[52] May, p. 73.

[53] Ibid., p. 68.

[54] William Faulkner, Intruder in the Dust (New York: Random House, 1948), p. 19.

[55] Welty, "A Piece of News", p. 16.

[56] Leonard Casper, Robert Penn Warren - The Dark and Bloody Ground (Seattle: University of Washington Press, 1960), p. 7.

[57] Flannery O'Connor, "The Fiction Writer and His Country" in What is the Short Story?, ed. Eugene Current-Garcia and Walter R. Patrick, (Glenview, Illinois: Scott, Foresman and Company, 1974), p. 136.

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