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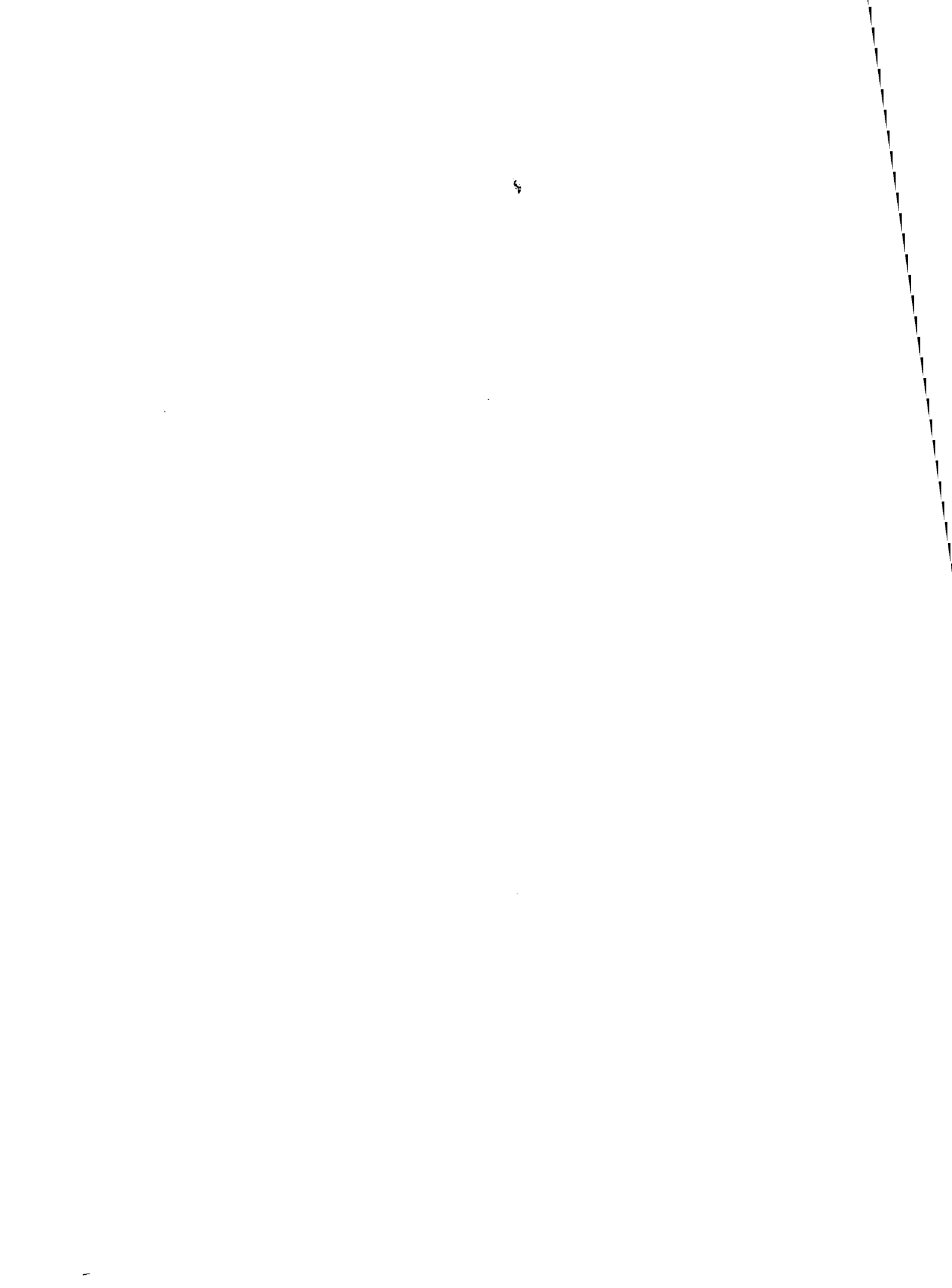
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**The motherless child: The absent mother in twentieth-century
Southern fiction**

Grimes, Margaret Katherine, Ph.D.

The University of North Carolina at Greensboro, 1993

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THE MOTHERLESS CHILD: THE ABSENT MOTHER
IN TWENTIETH-CENTURY SOUTHERN FICTION

by

Margaret Katherine Grimes

A Dissertation Submitted to
the Faculty of The Graduate School at
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

Greensboro
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Approved by


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APPROVAL PAGE

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PREFACE

The plaint of the old spiritual "Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child" might be that of numerous protagonists of fiction of the American South, especially maturation novels. The more Southern literature I read, the more I realized that in nearly every work, at least one child is motherless, either because of the death of the mother or because the mother is incompetent or incapacitated. As I set out to write a dissertation about this phenomenon, I found that I would have to limit my material.

First I limited by geographical region. For the purpose of this dissertation, the American South will be defined as the eleven states of the Confederacy: Alabama, Arkansas, Florida, Georgia, Louisiana, Mississippi, North Carolina, South Carolina, Tennessee, Texas, and Virginia. Although border states such as Kentucky, Missouri, and, to a lesser extent, West Virginia have Southern characteristics, their inclusion seems less relevant because they lost much less of their identity during the Civil War. Therefore, even though Mark Twain's Adventures of Huckleberry Finn, Puddin'head Wilson, and Tom Sawyer strongly support my thesis, I will mention them only briefly

in order to have more room to discuss works from the former Confederacy.

I also decided to limit my discussion to fiction, primarily to novels, again to narrow the scope of material. While my thesis applies equally well to other genres, especially drama, with plays such as Beth Henley's Crimes of the Heart, I felt that too much material would dilute the dissertation. When appropriate, autobiographical and historical novels, such as Richard Wright's Black Boy and Alex Haley's Roots are also included.

I defined Southern fiction as that written by authors who spent most of their childhood in the South, whether or not they were born here. I considered only works set primarily in the South as well, because of course Southern authors do not always write Southern literature.

Because I believe that the relevance of the absent mother is primarily thematic--that for white Southerners she represents the lost Old South--I considered only novels written since the Civil War, and generally in the twentieth century. This time limitation may seem less justifiable in terms of the black experience, as the loss of the black motherland, Africa, occurred much earlier; however, I see emancipation as a sort of second displacement, paradoxically giving African-Americans their freedom while removing them

from a second "home." Twentieth-century works by black Southerners often reflect this displacement when they describe the mass migration of freed slaves and their descendants to Northern cities.

Therefore, the pool of literature I have examined for this dissertation is limited to post-Civil War (and generally twentieth-century) novels and a few short stories written by authors who spent their formative years in one or more of the eleven states that had belonged to the Confederacy or the border state Missouri. All the works are also set in those states.

Sometimes I Feel Like a Motherless Child

Sometimes I feel like a motherless child,
Sometimes I feel like a motherless child,
Sometimes I feel like a motherless child,
A long ways from home,
A long ways from home.

Chorus

True believer,
Then I get down on my knees and pray,
True believer,
Then I get down on my knees and pray.

Sometimes I feel like I'm almost gone,
Sometimes I feel like I'm almost gone,
Sometimes I feel like I'm almost gone,
Way up in the heavenly land,
Way up in the heavenly land.

Chorus

Sometimes I feel like I want to go home,
Sometimes I feel like I want to go home,
Sometimes I feel like I want to go home,
As I kneel by the roadside and I pray,
As I kneel by the roadside and I pray.

Chorus

Sometimes I feel like an eagle in the air,
Sometimes I feel like an eagle in the air,
Sometimes I feel like an eagle in the air,
As I kneel by the roadside and I pray,
As I kneel by the roadside and I pray.

Chorus

Sometimes I feel like a motherless child,
Sometimes I feel like a motherless child,
Sometimes I feel like a motherless child,
Far away from home,
A long, long way from home.

--Traditional Spiritual

GRIMES, MARGARET KATHERINE. Ph.D. *The Motherless Child: The Absent Mother in Twentieth-Century Southern Fiction.* (1993) Directed by Dr. Charles E. Davis. 329 pp.

Many twentieth-century Southern works feature at least one dead, absent, or incapacitated mother, leaving the child vulnerable but also helping him or her develop maturity and strength. Generally, though, this literature is full of lost children who grow up to be lost adults.

The loss of the mother in Southern literature is more than a plot device or an appeal for pity; the absent mother in Southern fiction represents the loss of the motherland.

For white Southerners, the motherland is the antebellum South, in which one knew one's place. The New South is uncertain, like a child without a mother and, consequently, without an identity. White Southern women writers such as Porter, McCullers, Welty, O'Connor, and Alther often use the absent mother to represent freedom from the patriarchy of the Old South. Reynolds Price does so, as well. Generally, however, white men who write in the South, such as Faulkner, Warren, Price, Ehle, and Tate, mourn the loss of the mother and the motherland, as white men lose their identity and power.

For black Southerners, the motherland is Africa. Even more than white Southerners, black Southerners are displaced. The slave trade sometimes took them from their

birth mothers, as well as from their homeland. Upon emancipation, former slaves were again displaced, as they were later by migration to Northern cities. Black Southern writers such as Wright, Haley, Hurston, Margaret Walker, Alice Walker, and Angelou write about children with absent mothers, often as representative of the lost Africa or of the lost surrogate, the Old South.

The most effective mother substitute for a white Southern child is a black woman. Perhaps this phenomenon is a movement toward a gentler South that encourages an almost familial relationship between the races.

The absent mother in Southern fiction can thus represent both a lost past and a connection with the future.

CHAPTER I

LITERARY TRADITION AND THE MOTHERLESS CHILD

Frankie: . . . I don't remember [Mother] at all.

Berenice: Naturally! Your mother died the day that you were born.

--Carson McCullers, The Member of the Wedding
(Play)

Carson McCullers's Frankie Addams is not the only child in Southern literature who grows up without a mother. Scout Finch in Harper Lee's To Kill a Mockingbird and Joe Christmas in William Faulkner's Light in August are also motherless from birth. Lacy Buchan in Allen Tate's The Fathers, Celie in Alice Walker's The Color Purple, some of Addie Bundren's offspring in Faulkner's As I Lay Dying, and Laura McRaven in Eudora Welty's Delta Wedding all lose their mothers as children. Kunta Kinte is kidnapped by slave traders and consequently separated from his mother in Alex Haley's historical novel Roots. Marguerite Johnson in Maya Angelou's autobiographical I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings, like Richard Wright in his autobiography Black Boy, has a mother but lives apart from her for many years. Virginia Babcock Bliss's mother lies dying throughout Lisa Alther's Kinflicks. Finally, the Compson children in Faulkner's The Sound and the Fury and Mick Kelly in

McCullers's The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter have mothers in whose houses they live, but these mothers are ineffectual.

Of course, there are other motherless children in Southern literature; these are merely representative. A recent trend that emphasizes the Southern mother is the exception to the rule that mothers have been virtual nonentities, when they exist at all, in Southern literature of the twentieth century. And even this new recognition of the mother is primarily by writers who are women, such as Lee Smith and Candace Flynt. Books with mothers as central characters have not displaced the motherless child motif, as we see by Kaye Gibbons's Ellen Foster, Clyde Edgerton's Walking Across Egypt, and Reynolds Price's Kate Vaiden. Nor are all mothers in Southern literature now positive: witness Candace Flynt's painful Mother Love. The loving, successful mother in Marianne Gingher's Bobby Rex's Greatest Hit is by far the exception to the absent or useless mother of much Southern literature, and even to the worse-than-useless mother of some contemporary Southern works.

Authors in the American South certainly did not invent the motherless child. Sophocles writes of Oedipus's classic separation from (and ill-fated reunion with) his birth mother, as well as his children's similar loss. According to classical mythology, winter comes because Persephone is seasonally taken into the underworld, causing the

mourning of her mother, Demeter. Moses, too, is separated from his mother, although she then rears him, ostensibly as a surrogate. Because their dead mothers are not present to protect them, Cinderella, Hansel and Gretel, and other fairytale children become victims of wicked stepmothers.

Sir Thomas Malory brings the theme to England in Le Morte d'Arthur. According to Malory and other Arthurian legends, King Arthur was reared by Merlin, not by his parents; perhaps his separation from his mother contributed to his inability to understand his wife.

Shakespeare continues the use of legend, history, and romance in literature that we find in Malory. Again we find motherless children. In Titus Andronicus, Tamora, Queen of the Goths, sends her son by the Moor Aaron to his father to be killed so that her affair with the black man will not be revealed; Aaron saves his son, who is reared motherless. In The Merchant of Venice, Jessica is reared by her tyrannical father, Shylock; a mother is never mentioned. Perhaps the title character in King Lear would have had more loving daughters if he had had their mother to help rear them; their mother is not mentioned in the play. Hamlet sees his mother, Gertrude, as worse than ineffectual; he perceives her remarriage to his uncle Claudius after her first husband's death as betrayal.

But it is in Shakespeare's romances that children who grow up without their mothers truly abound. In

Pericles, Prince of Tyre, the title character's wife, Thaisa, apparently dies and is put into a chest and cast into the sea. Pericles takes their daughter, Marina, to Tarsus to be reared by the governor and his wife, who tries to destroy the girl because of jealousy for her own daughter. Visions lead Pericles to reunions with his child and her mother after Marina is grown. Imogen, daughter of title character King Cymbeline, is motherless and has an archetypal wicked stepmother. After Imogen marries someone other than the Queen's son, her stepmother plots to kill her. The Winter's Tale uses a very common plot: King Leontes fears that his wife, Hermione, is unfaithful and imprisons her, then sends their child to be killed by exposure. Instead, the girl, Perdita, is found by a shepherd. Hermione dies. Finally Perdita is reunited with her remorseful father, and they find a statue of Hermione, which comes to life. The ending of The Tempest, while also a happy one, does not include a reunion with Prospero's wife and Miranda's mother, who is not present in the play; Prospero rears his motherless daughter on his own throughout the tribulations of the romance.

Eighteenth-century English literature gives us the illegitimate Tom Jones, who does not learn his mother's identity until he is an adult, even though he grows up in the household in which she lives. Tom's love interest, Sophia Western, is motherless, as well. Henry Fielding

also wrote the tale of Joseph Andrews, separated from his parents as a baby, a story that plays comically on the traditional hero myth.

English Romantic and Victorian writers make perhaps the most frequent and effective use of the motherless child motif since classical mythology. Jane Austen abandons poor Emma Woodhouse to her own immature devices, one of which is to try to play matchmaker to another motherless girl. Austen first leaves Emma without a mother and then has both her older sister and her beloved governess marry, leaving the young woman with a doddering old father. Mary Wollstonecraft Shelley also makes the title character in Frankenstein motherless, as are his fiancée, Elizabeth, and the children whom the creature observes, the De Laceys. And of course the creature himself is motherless, created solely by a male. Another Romantic, William Wordsworth, in his autobiographical Prelude describes his motherless childhood.

Not only does Emily Brontë make Heathcliff an orphan in Wuthering Heights; she then has his benefactor die. In the next generation, young Catherine Linton, nee Earnshaw, dies, leaving her daughter, Cathy, motherless, as is Hindley Earnshaw's son, Hareton. Brontë's sister Charlotte also deprives children of their mothers and, sometimes, their fathers as well. Jane Eyre is an orphan, and her charge, Adele, is motherless. When Jane finds her

cousins, the Riverses, they, too are parentless. George Eliot sometimes abandons her characters to strangers or to relatives other than their mothers. Silas Marner takes in little Eppie after her mother, abandoned by her wealthy husband, dies near his cottage. Young Hetty Sorrel in Adam Bede is taken in by her aunt and uncle, the Poysers, and later abandons her own child, who, unfortunately, does not grow up motherless because it does not grow up. In Middlemarch, Dorothea and Celia Brooke are reared by their kindly, though somewhat daft, uncle after their parents' deaths.

Male Victorians pay as much homage to the motherless or orphaned child motif as do their female counterparts. Charles Dickens orphans title characters David Copperfield and Oliver Twist; Phillip 'Pip' Pirrip in Great Expectations; and poor Jo, Ada Clare, and Richard Carstone in Bleak House. This novel also features the supposed orphan Esther Summerson, who grows up in the houses of her aunt and then John Jarndyce and does not learn the identities of her parents until she is an adult. Thomas Hardy orphans Bathsheba Everdene in Far from the Madding Crowd and Jude Fawley in Jude the Obscure, and Tess Durbeyfield's mother, Joan, is childish almost to the point of worthlessness.

Twentieth-century British writers do not abandon the motif. In Dubliners, James Joyce orphans the narrators

of "The Sisters" and "Araby." Eveline in the story of which she is title character is motherless; her duty toward the rest of her family deprives her of happiness. Joyce's fellow Irishman, John Millington Synge, makes both Pegeen Mike and Christy Mahon in The Playboy of the Western World motherless. Christy's violence becomes laughable by the end of Synge's play, but when English author William Golding separates the boys of Lord of the Flies from their parents by abandoning them on an uninhabited island, most of them become cruel savages.

Continental European writers create orphaned or motherless characters as well, from the time of classical gods and heroes, through the time of the romances. And in what many people consider the first novel, Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra makes Don Quixote the guardian of the windmill-jouster's niece.

In French author Victor Hugo's Les Misérables, Fantine dies, and hero Jean Valjean rears her illegitimate daughter, Cosette. In Notre Dame de Paris, Hugo's poor deformed Quasimodo is abandoned by his parents and reared by monks in the great cathedral. Gustave Flaubert's Emma Bovary grows up motherless, reared by her old father and the nuns at the Ursuline Convent; when Madame Bovary dies, she leaves her motherless daughter, Berthe, to be reared by her father, who then dies and leaves Berthe to her aunt, who sends her to work in a cotton mill. And in Stendhal's The Red

and the Black, some of young Julien Sorel's admiration for Madame de Renal may be her kindness toward her sons, which contrasts the cruelty of his father's beatings, unmitigated by a mother's interference.

Russian playwright Anton Chekhov's Uncle Vanya is the guardian of a motherless niece, Sofia Serebriakov, whose father has remarried. The titular Prozorov sisters of Chekhov's play The Three Sisters also lose their mother before they reach adulthood. And in A Marriage Proposal, again by Chekhov, young Natalia Stepanovna must be guided in her choice of a husband by her father, as he is a widower. Leo Tolstoy's epic War and Peace is not without motherless and orphaned characters, either. Mademoiselle Bourienne, Princess Marya Bolkonsky's companion, is an orphan, and the princess herself and her brother Prince Andrey are motherless; Marya holds the family together. Andrey's wife, Liza, dies in childbirth, leaving her son, Nikolay Andreitch, motherless. The Rostov family take in a poor relative, Sonya, and a friend's child, Boris Drubetskoy.

A few examples will show that American writers, even those not from the South, continue the tradition. Cooper's Natty Bumppo is reared by American Indians, and in The Deerslayer, Thomas Hutter rears his daughter, Hetty, and her half-sister, Judith, after the death of their mother. The Last of the Mohicans, too, is about two daughters,

Cora and Alice Munro, who are being reared by their father, an English commander during the French and Indian War; their motherlessness leaves them in great danger on the frontier, because their father takes them to America with him. To emphasize the horrible plight of black slaves, Harriet Beecher Stowe has Uncle Tom's Cabin character Topsy proclaim not only that she now has no parents, but that she has been separated from them so long that she doubts that they ever existed.

The movement from Romanticism to Realism in American literature did not end the use of the motherless child motif. American-British author Henry James thwarts Isabel Archer's desire for independence in The Portrait of a Lady when that lady returns to mother her stepdaughter, Pansy Osmond, whose birth mother has left her in the care of her father and has not revealed her identity to the child. And a mother might have saved little Miles and Flora from the "ghosts" in James's The Turn of the Screw.

As the American novel moves westward, Willa Cather also orphans some of her characters, such as Jim Burden in My Ántonia, the title character of which grows up away from her own mother after the father of the Shimerda family commits suicide and Ántonia leaves the farm to go to town to work. O Pioneers! also leaves children to fend for themselves and each other because their father's death abandons them to the care of an ineffectual mother.

Sherwood Anderson in Winesburg, Ohio, writes of David Hardy, who is abandoned by his mother and reared by his maternal grandfather, who believes that the boy is the new messiah. The four-part story "Godliness," which presents the tale of David and his grandfather Jesse Bentley, is a reversal of the myths in which boys reared by someone other than their true parents turn out to be gods or heroes (e.g. Zeus, Moses, Oedipus, and Arthur).

Both F. Scott Fitzgerald and Ernest Hemingway write primarily of adults, but they include a few motherless children in their works. Charlie Wales, the main character of Fitzgerald's short story "Babylon Revisited," tries to get his daughter, Honoria, from his sister-in-law, who has reared her since Charlie's wife's death left the child motherless. In Hemingway's "My Old Man," the protagonist, Joe, is motherless and, in the end, fatherless as well.

Playwright Eugene O'Neill leaves Simeon and Peter Cabot motherless in Desire Under the Elms, then leaves their half brother, Eben, motherless after the death of their father's second wife. And in the partly autobiographical Long Day's Journey into Night, Mary Tyrone may be physically present, but her morphine addiction has left her ineffectual as a mother to her two sons.

John Steinbeck in East of Eden leaves Adam Trask's sons, Caleb and Aron, motherless by having their mother shoot their father, then run away to become a prostitute.

When the boys finally find her, they wish they hadn't. Their upbringing by the family's Chinese servant, Lee, is much better than it would have been under the evil influence of their mother. George Milton in Of Mice and Men becomes caretaker of the mentally retarded Lenny Small when the aunt who cared for Lenny after his mother's death also dies.

Perhaps the two most famous motherless children in American literature are Mark Twain's Tom Sawyer and Huckleberry Finn, from the border state Missouri. Perhaps a mother would have been better than Aunt Polly at keeping Tom out of trouble, and perhaps a mother could have saved Huck from Pap. But Twain chooses to follow the literary tradition of having his child heroes orphaned, giving both surrogates, one a family member and the other a black man. Black surrogates have become common in Southern literature, although male surrogates are relatively rare.

So the literature of Europe and America is filled with examples of motherless children.¹ The question, of course, is "Why?"

One possible answer is autobiography. Charlotte and Emily Brontë, for example, grew up without their mother, as did William Wordsworth and others, primarily because

¹For more literary works with orphaned, abandoned, and motherless children, see Appendix A.

of higher mortality rates in past centuries from childbirth and fatal diseases. An interesting side note to the theory of autobiography is some scholars' belief that Charles Dickens had David Copperfield's mother die in that semi-autobiographical work because he could not bear to tell the world (or perhaps even allow himself to remember) that his mother cooperated in sending young Dickens to work in a bootblack factory. But most writers who create motherless characters did not grow up motherless themselves.

Dead mothers are a fact of history. Although women rarely die in childbirth in developed countries today, not long ago they did, as visits to old graveyards will attest. And making it through childbirth was no guarantee of a long life; weakened by frequent childbearing and hard physical labor, women often died of infections, tuberculosis, and other ailments. Consequently, motherlessness was a common problem; witness accounts of orphan trains taking children to couples in the West and Midwest, to serve as inexpensive farm labor.

Drawing from life, writers such as Dickens and Harriet Beecher Stowe created motherless characters sometimes for social protest. The Jarndyce and Jarndyce lawsuit in Bleak House appears more horrible because it deprives poor orphans of their inheritance. And slavery seems even worse because it deprives poor black children such as Topsy in Uncle Tom's Cabin of any contact with their parents.

Motherless children are also more sympathetic than children with a complete set of doting parents. Surely we feel more sympathy for Charlotte Brontë's Jane Eyre than for Elizabeth Bennett of Jane Austen's Pride and Prejudice. And Henry David Thoreau's pioneering spirit seems less remarkable when we learn that he often went home to a mom-cooked meal and carried fresh-baked cookies back to Walden Pond to eat with his beans.

Depriving children of their mothers can also sometimes be a plot device. Had Emily Brontë's Heathcliff had a mother, his adoption by the Earnshaws would probably not have happened. Huckleberry Finn's mother's absence leaves her son vulnerable to his Pap, whose cruelty is the catalyst for Huck's trip down the Mississippi with Jim. Motherless children often lose the security of their own homes and are put out into the public world where they are more likely to experience conflict; from this conflict come the stories that become the short stories or novels.

Psychologists have more analytical theories about absent mothers in legend and literature. These theories, most notable those of Freud, Jung, Maslow, and Erikson, variously attempt to account for the absent mother phenomenon as a reaction to developmental stages, as an archetype, as a result of a psychological problem of the author, or as the author's attempt to explain the behavior of a character.

Perhaps less well known than Sigmund Freud's Oedipal complex theory but more important for an understanding of the absent mother phenomenon is the theory of the Electra complex. In Greek mythology, Electra is a descendant of the House of Atreus, the story of which is told in Aeschylus' Oresteia. Electra is the daughter of Agamemnon, who sacrifices Electra's sister, Iphigenia, to insure good winds as his army sails to Troy to bring back Helen, wife of Agamemnon's brother, Menelaus. Electra's mother is Clytemnestra, who, with her lover, avenges Iphigenia's death by killing Agamemnon when he returns victorious from Troy. Orestes, her brother, is required by tradition and the gods to avenge his father's death when the boy reaches manhood. Urged on by his sister, he kills his mother and her lover but is tormented by guilt until Athena cleanses him of it. Electra's loyalty to her father and hatred of her mother gave the name to the female counterpart of the Oedipal complex. Hence, a female's child's love of her father and desire for her mother's death so that the child can replace the mother with the father, the Electra complex, explains for Freudians the common absence of mothers in myth and literature, especially in works by women.

Karl Jung reacted against his mentor's views that sex is the paradigm on which all personality is based. He replaced Freud's theories of the individual subconscious

with an archetypal theory based more on anthropological studies than on psychoanalysis. In his study of the literature of various cultures, he found a common hero: a boy child born to a king and a noble virgin but separated from his true parents at birth, later to learn his real identity and become king in his own right. Because of the universal ubiquitousness of these myths, Jung believed that people have racial memories which are buried in their unconscious and which can be retrieved through psychonalysis. Consequently, a newborn is predisposed by his or her racial memory to behave in certain ways, one of which is to bond with the mother. Every child, then, has a specific mother complex which combines predisposition and actual experience with the child's specific mother into a group of feelings and memories. Part of the male child's experience with his mother, Jung believed, is related to his unconscious archetype of woman, which is personified in his mother, birth or adopted, because she is the first important woman in his life. Thus the common myth of the hero could represent one of two possibilities: all children fear the loss of the mother and myths reflect our fears; or all children need to separate from their parents in order to mature, and myths represent our secret desires.

Abraham Maslow's hierarchy of needs again provides for the possibility that the dead or absent mother in myth

and literature symbolically represents both human need and human desire. Maslow ranks human needs from most necessary to least necessary; the primary needs must be fulfilled before the later ones can be actualized. Primary needs are physiological (hunger, thirst, and sex); the second level is safety (security and order); next are belonging and love; then comes self-esteem. Finally, a human being who has satisfied all the needs to this point can work toward self-actualization. Because the mother is the first provider of fulfillment of almost all these needs (except sex), her loss is the most destructive event that can occur in a child's life. Paradoxically, for a person to reach the pinnacle of need fulfillment, self-actualization, a break from the mother must occur.

Erik Erikson has proposed a developmental strategem that combines Freud's theories of psycho-sexual development with Jung's awareness of a world outside the individual and Maslow's building-block idea of growth. Erikson postulates an eight-step developmental scale, at each step of which a person can move on to mental health or emotional difficulty. The first step, the question of trust or mistrust, depends entirely on the mother. The second step, autonomy vs. shame and doubt, again depends upon the parents, as does the third, initiative vs. guilt. Not until the fourth step, when a child reaches school age, does a force outside the family help determine his or her

well-being, shaping the child's movement toward industry or inferiority. All later stages--identity vs. identity diffusion, intimacy vs. isolation, generativity vs. self-absorption, and integrity vs. despair--develop as the individual relates to a world beyond the family. But the basis for human development occurs in the home, and an absent mother can be the catalyst for weak mental or emotional health. Consequently, a person who succeeds in achieving well-being without a mother is remarkable indeed--or has had some impressive surrogate interference.

Myth and legend give orphaned or displaced children unusual mother substitutes: Romulus and Remus's she-wolf, Paris's she-bear (Rank, Myth 23), Siegfried's doe (Rank 57), and the she-goat of the seven brothers in the Flemish People's Book (Rank 62-63). However, with the exception of Mowgli's wolf-mother in Rudyard Kipling's The Jungle Books and Tarzan's ape-mother in the Edgar Rice Burroughs series, most surrogate mothers in Western literature of the last two centuries have mirrored foster mothers in the real world.

Of course, the first alternative in most cases of motherless children is another relative, although this relative might not be the best choice. Fathers who rear their children after the death of the mothers include the loving Michael Flaherty in John Millington Synge's The Playboy of the Western World and Mr. Woodhouse in Jane

Austen's Emma, neither of whom can save his daughter from making mistakes about men; the caring but misguided Adam Trask in John Steinbeck's East of Eden; and the horrible Pap in Adventures of Huckleberry Finn (although "rear" might be too positive a word to use in connection to Pap's treatment of Huck). Extended family members include Dorothea and Celia Brooke's eccentric uncle in George Eliot's Middlemarch, innocuous but not particularly helpful, and Jane Eyre's absolutely cruel Aunt Reed.

When family members are unavailable, orphaned or motherless children have, like Blanche DuBois in Tennessee Williams's A Streetcar Named Desire, sometimes "depended on the kindness of strangers." Sometimes those strangers are indeed kind, as are John Jarndyce to Esther Summerson in Dickens's Bleak House and even Daddy Warbucks in the Annie comic strip, but more often the stranger wants to use--and often abuse--the child, as do both Fagin and Bill Sykes in Oliver Twist. Heathcliff of Wuthering Heights experiences both aspects of the stranger-as-guardian phenomenon; when Mr. Earnshaw brings the waif home, the man treats the boy kindly, as one of his own children, but after his father dies, Hindley treats Heathcliff as he might a mongrel dog. These strangers can also work in institutions such as orphanages or workhouses. The orphanage is a common motif in novels written in Victorian England; Dickens's Oliver Twist and Charlotte Brontë's

Jane Eyre both spend time in them, and times there are rarely bearable, much less pleasant.

In European works, motherless literary children of the upper classes are often reared by nannies or governesses--although children do not have to be motherless to have other female caretakers, as P. L. Travers's Mary Poppins books attest for literature and Jonathan Gathorne-Hardy's The Unnatural History of the Nanny explains about real life in turn-of-the-century England. Governess situations can be generally neutral; Jane Eyre is an adequate but not particularly loving governess to Adele. They can be wonderful; Maria von Trapp tells us of falling in love with her employer and marrying him after lovingly caring for his many children. Or they can be horrible; one of the most credible readings of Henry James's The Turn of the Screw is that the governess becomes obsessed with real or imagined ghosts and terrifies her young charges, one even to death.

The stepmother is one of the most common fictional replacements for the dead mother. Fairy tales almost invariably paint her as evil: Cinderella's stepmother uses her stepchild as a drudge, but Cinderella's fate is bliss compared to that of Hansel and Gretel, whose stepmother convinces their father to abandon them in the woods. More recent fiction makes much less use of the cruel stepmother archetype, but she has not been replaced

by the kind stepmother, either, with one notable exception: Isabel Archer in James's The Portrait of a Lady, who returns to her overbearing husband Gilbert Osmond in order to save from him and destruction his daughter, Pansy, whose mother has given up her claims to her illegitimate child.

Hansel and Gretel are not the only children left to make their own way in the cruel world. Jo in Bleak House is another such waif, as most of the boys Fagin takes in have also been. Dickens draws from life; street children were not uncommon in England before the twentieth century.

Even worse, some children were left not to make their way in the cruel world. The legendary theme of child abandonment because of a dream or prophecy is common in almost every culture; perhaps the best-known example is Oedipus, from Sophocles' plays. But in heroic tales, the child is discovered by a good animal or a person of lower standing (Rank Myth). More recent European and American literature does not allow these children such a happy fate. Instead of being found and saved, children abandoned by their unhappy mothers die, as does the infant born to Hetty Sorrel in Eliot's Adam Bede. Little Tommy Johnson in Stephen Crane's Maggie: A Girl of the Streets is not so much abandoned by his mother as neglected to death. And Jo in Dickens's Bleak House, a street urchin, dies of smallpox. Perhaps these children are more symbols of society's ills than developed characters; after all, we

do not even know the gender of Hetty's child. Nonetheless, their deaths show the extreme results of motherlessness.

Of course death is probably the worst fate that can befall a child. But the second worst is lack of love and security, and that is the lot of many of literature's motherless children. In fact, many of these young people are bounced from one loveless, insecure situation to another. Heathcliff is abandoned on the streets, then later tormented by Hindley Earnshaw. Jane Eyre is tormented by her Aunt Reed, then later almost starved and frozen in an orphanage. Dickens' motherless David Copperfield is sent by his cruel stepfather first to a school where he is ill treated, then into child labor. He finds happiness with an aunt, then with a kind lawyer, his educator. And Huck Finn lives for a while by his wits, with two well-meaning strangers who stifle him, with his violent drunkard of a father, in the care of his fatherly companion Jim, in the exploitative companionship of "the earl" and "the duke," under the care of Tom Sawyer's Aunt Sally, and finally again on his own as he heads west.

Although motherlessness need not doom a child to a horrible life if the right people (or animals, in some tales) intervene, literature would have us believe that the usual plight of a motherless child in the Western world is challenging at best and dismal at worst.

The question, then, is what makes Southern novels about children different from the countless other motherless and orphaned child myths, legends, stories, biographies, autobiographies, poems, and novels. The answer is that the dead or absent Southern mother serves, in addition to all the devices and themes the absent mother has served throughout literature, as a symbol of the dead motherland.

For the white South, the lost motherland is the Old South, a land both glorious and horrible, whose children both mourn and celebrate her loss. We see this ambivalence in Faulkner's Absalom, Absalom! when Shreve McCannon asks Quentin Compson why he hates the South and Quentin replies, twice, "I dont [sic] hate it," a denial he then repeats to himself time after time, the same way he might if someone asked him why he hated his mother. The ante-bellum South may be gone, but its memory and influence linger, the way the memory of one's dead mother lingers. The survivor tries to forget the bad and remember only the good, but the influence remains where the memory fails. The white Southerner romanticizes the Old South because of his guilt about loving a flawed, sinful motherland so much that he or his ancestors fought to the death to save it; he feels guilt also at having failed to keep it from being destroyed.

Some white Southerners have less anguish about the lost ante-bellum South. Women are often grateful that they are no longer under the restrictions that the

patriarchy of the Old South imposed upon them. Of course the patriarchy has not died completely, but the white woman now is less its victim than was the plantation mistress or the poor white woman at the mercy of both poor white men and wealthy ones, as well. Therefore, the dead mother in some Southern fiction, primarily by women, represents the death of the role that the girl will not have to grow up to play.

For the black Southerner, the dead motherland is Africa, a land remembered primarily through tales and legends, because for most African-Americans in American literature, Africa is much farther back in their history and of course literally much farther away than the Old South is for white Southerners. This lost motherland is remembered as almost purely good, as the mother from whose breast black Americans' ancestors were dragged kicking and screaming, as was Kunta Kinte in Alex Haley's historical novel Roots. So the lost mother is mourned, and her death abandons the black child to a cruel surrogate, the white slave-holding South, a surrogate whose passing the black Southerner can only celebrate, even though it, too, displaces the already displaced child of Africa. Again, the death or absence of the mother both devastates and liberates the child.

The motherless theme in the South is different also because, unlike most European countries where class is

the great separator, in the American South race is a much stronger divider. An English child reared by a nanny is exposed to a person of a different class, perhaps, but the nanny is a product of the same culture and willingly, for the most part, promotes the values of the child's parents. A continental governess has been well educated by the schools of her charges' family's culture. But a black caretaker of white Southern children (the reverse is almost unheard of in American literature) is a product of a much different culture, a culture which the white child's culture considers profoundly inferior. The nanny or governess is expected to remember her place as an employee of the household, but the black caretaker, the "mammy," is expected to remember her place first as slave, later as servant.

On the other hand, the black caretaker in a white household, especially if that household has no mother, becomes the mistress of that household. She brings to the white children a taste of a culture other than their own, and she feeds it to them the way a mother would. So in a sense, a white household with a black surrogate mother is integrated racially and culturally at the heart. This integration can be seen as a positive movement toward a less divided New South, a South in which a descendant of slaves can mother the descendants of her ancestors' owners.

Motherlessness in Southern literature, then, can be as horrible as motherlessness in any literature. It can also be as ambivalent, representing both loss and freedom. But because of the possibility that the death or absence of a white mother will allow the white child to be mothered by a black woman, motherlessness in some Southern literature can be read as a step toward a brighter future for the South.

CHAPTER II
THE ROLE OF THE MOTHER AND
THE EFFECTS OF MOTHERLESSNESS

"All human life on the planet is born of woman."
--Adrienne Rich, Of Woman Born

Children's love for their mothers is complicated. For a time, one's mother is, as Adrienne Rich says, "the whole world" (Of Woman 218), but soon that world becomes too confining. The child then is torn between love for mother and desire for independence. The child both needs the mother and despises the need, causing ambivalent feelings. The child's love for the mother makes the mother's death the child's greatest fear, and the child's quest for independence creates his or her guiltiest desire: freedom resulting from the mother's death. The child might not be able to articulate the fear and guilt; therefore, they are often sublimated and manifested in other ways.

Literary history bears out this ambivalence, with fairy tales and myths replete with evil mothers who abandon their children, leaving them to be reared by kind surrogates, and good mothers who die and are replaced with evil stepmothers. Anthropologists, sociologists, psychologists (especially psychoanalytical theorists), and literary critics--especially feminists--have studied various aspects

of this phenomenon; many have their own agenda, but their studies and theories have merit nonetheless.

The dialectic is the tension between the belief of social scientists that long-term separation from or loss of the mother is almost always harmful to the child, making this loss the child's greatest fear, and the belief of many literary critics, especially feminists, that children have a secret desire for freedom from their mothers' dominance in order to develop independence and their own identities. Of course, no one asserts that the actual loss of the mother is healthy for the child; the dichotomy is the child's fear and desire, not harm and good. Otto Rank, an early psychoanalytic theorist and disciple of Freud, studied mythical archetypes of abandoned children. His research is the fulcrum on which the dialectic balances.

The archetypes Rank examined concern primarily the ancestry of mythical and legendary heroes. His research supports many of Karl Jung's theories and, like those theories, leaves the student of the hero myths wondering whether the frequency of separation from the mother represents a universal fear of losing her or a universal desire to break free from her.

Freud used the term Familienroman, or family romance, to refer to the phenomenon of the child's recreation of his family circumstances (for Freud, the male child was almost always the subject of interest); Freud found that

the child often imagines himself orphaned by his noble "real" parents and left with "foster" parents who are beneath him (Hirsch 9). Thus, the child dreams of getting rid of his inferior parents and replacing them with parents of "higher social standing" (Hirsch 55). Although Rank generally discounted Freud's theory of the Oedipal complex, believing it grew out of Freud's closeness with his own mother (Freud viii), Rank did see merit in Freud's theory of the Familienroman and set out to study it by tracing patterns in literature and myth.

In nearly all the numerous cultures he studied, Rank found myths and legends concerning heroes reared by people other than their own parents. Sometimes the surrogate is an animal: One myth about Paris has his mother dream that he will bring destruction to Troy, so he is exposed and "nursed by a she-bear" (Rank, Myth 23); Romulus and Remus are cast out by King Amulius of Alba, but they are discovered and nursed by a "she-wolf" (Myth 44); Siegfried's mother, to protect her son, puts him in a glass vessel and sends him down the river, from which he is rescued by a doe after the vessel breaks (Myth 57); and--finally, a heroine--Queen Semiramis of Syria is cast out by her goddess mother, "fed by doves and found by shepherds" who rear her; she finally regains her throne (Myth 93n).

Shepherds often figure in hero myths, probably because they are considered to be of low birth. Oedipus, for

example, is found by a shepherd and taken to be reared by a king. Occasionally the child is found by someone highborn, as Moses is discovered by the Pharaoh's daughter and in one myth Hercules is found by two goddesses, first Hera and then Athena (Myth 49). In both of those legends, the young boy is returned to his own mother to be nursed.

Based on the examples, or archetypes, he found, Rank then defines the myth of the hero:

The standard saga may be formulated according to the following outline: The hero is the child of most distinguished parents, usually the son of a king. His origin is preceded by difficulties, such as continence, or prolonged barrenness, or secret intercourse of the parents due to external prohibition of obstacles. During or before the pregnancy, there is a prophecy, in the form of a dream or oracle, cautioning against his birth, and usually threatening danger to the father (or his representative). As a rule, [the child] is surrendered to the water, in a box. He is then saved by animals, or by lowly people (shepherds), and is suckled by a female animal or by an humble woman. After he has grown up, he finds his distinguished parents, in a highly versatile fashion. He takes his revenge on his father, on the one hand, and is acknowledged, on the other. Finally he achieves ranks and honors. (Myth 65)

Rank then attempts to explain these archetypal myths as growing out of childish fantasies. The child first sees his or her parents as glorious, but as the child matures, he or she needs to break free from parental authority. One way to do so is to perceive oneself as adopted or as a stepchild. This fantasy/fear also explains any strange behavior on the part of the parents. The child

then fantasizes that the real parents are much less mundane, much more attractive and successful, and desires to be reunited with them. But the desired reunion is really with the memory of the childhood belief in the parents' greatness. Or the child might wish to exact revenge on the parents for a real or imagined wrong but cannot do so to the true parents, so must defeat imagined ones. The real parents, at least the mother, are kept as either animals or humble people, good and loving, but not sufficiently great to be the magnificent parents the child fantasizes for him- or herself (Myth 65-71).

Rank also postulates explanations for other common aspects of these myths. He sees the placement of the child in a box, basket, or other vessel and then in the water as resembling the child's floating in amniotic fluid in the womb (Myth 73) and exposure as a reflection of birth (Myth 75). Another possibility is that "exposure in the box and in the water asexualizes the birth process . . . in a childlike fashion; the children are fished out of the water by a stork [or some other animal], who takes them to the parents in a basket" (Rank Myth 91). The mythological idea of the virgin birth Rank sees as "repudiation of the father" (Myth 81), although it seems possible that the virgin birth could have two other explanations: elevation of the mother to a spiritual and not a sexual being, as Christians have done with Mary,

and elevating the father to the status of a god, again as the Christian story of Jesus does. Rank sees the dichotomy in hero myth between birth-mother and suckler as an attempt "to remove the bodily mother entirely, by means of her substitution through an animal or a strange nurse"; he goes on to say, however, that the resulting belief of the child is "The woman who has suckled me is my mother" (Myth 92), a theory that becomes more relevant in discussing the role of surrogates in literature with absent mothers. Another possible explanation is that ". . . the lowering of the mother into an animal . . . is meant to vindicate the ingratitude of the son who denies her" (Myth 91); the highborn woman in myth bears the child, leaving "the lowly woman . . . [to] content herself with the function of nurse" (Myth 91).

A few of Rank's theories somewhat resemble Freud's Oedipal complex, which Rank purportedly disdained. Rank believes that the incest motif is very important in hero myth; the boy's desire for his mother leads him to fantasize that his father has rejected him and deserves to be killed (Myth 81-85). Another reason for this, Rank says, is that children fear being engulfed by the egos of their same-sex parents and therefore form attachments with the opposite-sex parents ("Forms" 313-14). On the other hand, Rank argues that the Oedipal complex is not as common in reality as it is in myth, nor is it as important as Freud first

believed. In fact, Rank says, children often love and admire the same-sex parent more, and children also realize that they have a vested interest in keeping parents together, not in splitting them up ("Forms" 297-98).

Finally, Rank writes, in referring to a Meyerbeer opera, "There seems to be a certain necessity for the prophet to deny his parents; . . . the prophetic hero is allowed, in favor of his mission, to abandon and repudiate even his tenderly loving mother" (Myth 66). Yet Rank calls these myths "the neurotic family romance" and says that they are common among paranoiacs (Myth 93). Perhaps some contemporary evidence for his theory is that Perry Smith, one of the murderers immortalized in Truman Capote's In Cold Blood, had dreams of being rescued by a big yellow bird (long before Sesame Street) who "winged him away to 'paradise'" when he lived in an orphanage as a boy of seven and later visited him when needed, even when Perry was an adult (110). The animal as rescuer is common in hero myths, and young Perry's separation from his mother, as we see in his being in an orphanage, is the setting for his desire to be rescued. This separation, prevalent in hero myths, is factual in Smith's case; it is the bird fantasy that relates to the hero delusion.

Otto Rank is convincing regarding the pervasiveness of the hero myth and proposes provocative theories. But in the end, he does not settle the question of whether

the myth is a fantasy or a fear. Do children fear that their parents will desert them--or that they have--or do they fantasize freedom from their parents? Can there be a combination: the child fantasizes that the parent is dead, then feels guilty about the fantasy, and therefore fears that the fantasy will become reality? Must these feelings be mutually exclusive, or can they coexist?

Rank's importance is his combining of psychology and literature, using each to comment on the other. Whereas Karl Jung sees archetypes as the result of collective or racial memory, Rank believes that the myths and legends were generated because of common emotions, or affects, as psychologists would call them. So he examined the literature to understand children's normal development and how it can become distorted. These findings can then be applied to more recent literature to help explain characters' and authors' motivations.

Freud and Jung often used highly speculative theories to explain individual behavior and that of groups or societies. Rank examined literature to explain archetypes, which he then applied to individuals. Recent behavioral scientists have used techniques from the hard sciences, observation and experimentation, to try to understand human behavior and help those who are harmful to themselves or others. The effects, good and bad, a mother can have on a child have been the subject of many such studies.

One of the most frequently cited psychoanalytical theorists who have studied the importance of the mother is John Bowlby, who was Chair of the Staff Committee of the School of Family Psychiatry and Community Mental Health at the Tavistock Institute of Human Relations in London when he published most of his findings. Bowlby's primary motives were to analyze the effects on the developing child of long-term or repeated separation from or loss of the mother; the results of these studies could then be used to prevent or treat debilitating effects. Bowlby was also commissioned to do research for the World Health Organization because of frequent motherlessness or orphaning of children in less developed countries.

Bowlby explains that anthropologists in nearly every human society have found that the fundamental family unit consists of mother and child or children. Adult males, especially fathers, may also be part of this unit, as may other adult females (aunts and adult daughters) or other children (grandchildren). But with few exceptions, such as earlier kibbutzim in Israel, the basic family unit in humans replicates that of most of the rest of the animal kingdom: mother and offspring (Attachment 61).

Bowlby argues that a child's attachment to a mother or mother figure is instinctive (Attachment 133). He then looks at four theories usually postulated for the mother-child bond. Most theorists adhere to the secondary

drive theory, the belief that the child becomes attached to that which feeds and keeps the child warm. Some believe that the child becomes attached to the breast itself, and then to the person attached to the breast. Others believe that the child innately clings to a human being, the way a chimpanzee or monkey clings to one of its species. And one group of scientists believes that the child resents being expelled from the womb and wants to return to it (Attachment 178). This last theory might explain the common box or basket archetype in the hero myth.

Bowlby dismisses the secondary drive or food-and-shelter theory, citing the experiments with monkeys who clung to terry cloth dummies even though they fed from wire dummies with bottles attached. He also refers to studies that show that animals will move toward whatever has been near them in infancy, even a television set, which provides neither shelter nor food, or a human being who doesn't feed them and punishes them for approaching (Attachment 213). These studies also refute the attachment-to-breast hypothesis. Even more vehemently he dismisses the return-to-the-womb theory, finding no studies to support it (Attachment 180).

Instead, Bowlby argues that attachment behavior is rooted primarily in the need for protection from predators. Bowlby cites several animal studies to show that attachment behavior such as moving toward and clinging to a mother

or mother figure increases during frightening or strange situations (Attachment 223-28). He also argues that dependence is not the same as attachment, as infants are dependent, yet not attached, and older children are more attached, yet less dependent. Dependence, he says, is a condition, while attachment is behavior (Attachment 228).

The theory that attachment behavior is related to protection, for which Bowlby cites ample evidence, lends credence to the argument that the absent mother fantasy is frightening to the child, not desired or desirable. Applying his theories to the archetypes studied by Rank would lead to an interpretation of these myths not as heroic delusions but as fears of desertion or abandonment, mitigated only by the hope that someone, either human or animal, would rescue the helpless child.

According to Bowlby, attachment behavior in humans begins as early as four months, when the child notices the difference between the mother or mother-figure and other people and objects (Loss 427). More recent studies of fetal movement and neonatal pacifier-sucking upon hearing the mother's voice, but not the voices of other people, would indicate that attachment behavior may actually begin much earlier. Crying for the mother or mother figure, reaching for her, and later crawling toward her are observable behaviors by the end of the child's first year (Bowlby, Attachment 202). By age one, a child will also

look for his or her mother when she is out of sight (Bowlby, Loss 428). The more the child interacts with the attachment figure, the sooner attachment begins (Bowlby, Attachment 318). Even though the child attaches to other family members such as father and siblings, studies indicate that the mother-child bond, with few exceptions, is the strongest (Bowlby, Attachment 202, 304-5). Nancy Chodorow sees as part of the reason for this strong attachment the child's close identification with the mother. Chodorow says that the infant views the mother not as a separate person but as a part of the child's self (59). Josef Langmeier and Zdeněk Matějček, authors of Psychological Deprivation in Childhood, support the emphasis of Bowlby and others on attachment; they write that the child's primary need is a reciprocal "close, stable attachment" to a person whose presence is consistent, usually a mother or mother surrogate. They explain that for a while, a mother is a child's world, as well as the facilitator for the child's preparation for the larger world (311). Chodorow agrees; she writes, "An account of the early mother-infant relationship in contemporary Western society reveals the overwhelming importance of the mother in everyone's psychological development, in their [sic] sense of self, and in their [sic] basic relational stance" (76).

The result of this strong attachment is that a well-mothered child usually develops into a psychologically

healthy adult. On the other hand, a child whose mother is physically or emotionally separated from the child or a child whose mother is dead may suffer deep emotional trauma from which he or she might never recover. Langmeier and Matějček write,

The absence of the mother poses the most serious threat to child development, especially at an early age. On her depends not only physical care, but also the satisfaction of most psychological needs. She is the primary source of the child's relationship with other humans and of his security in the external environment, the person who creates the home for the child. (121)

John Bowlby has written two lengthy volumes on the effects of separation from and loss of the mother on the child. He writes, ". . . [M]any forms of psychoneurosis and character disorder are to be attributed either to deprivation of mother care or to discontinuities in a child's relationship with his mother figure" (Separation xi). Even temporary separations can be disturbing: when reunited with their mothers, children often continue to show signs of disturbance, either by clinging excessively or by rejecting the parent's love. These children often grow up to be either extremely dependent adults or "affectionless" and even "psychopathic" (Bowlby, Attachment xiii-xiv). Thus, in reality, loss of the mother is usually quite damaging to the child, and the negative results can be lifelong.

The reasons for adverse reactions to separation from the mother, Bowlby asserts, are that separation anxiety throughout life is part of the instinctive fear of having to face life's dangers alone (Separation 86) and that the "presence or absence of the mother figure is itself . . . of the greatest significance in determining a child's emotional state" (Separation xiii).

Bowlby describes six theories of separation anxiety. Sigmund Freud's theory is that attachment behavior results from physical sexual excitement which is displaced by separation, transforming libido into anxiety. His disciple, Otto Rank, believed that separation from the mother replicated birth trauma. Signal or secondary drive theorists, including Freud, thought that because separation from the mother is so risky, the child develops anxiety to ensure continuous contact with her. Melanie Klein's theory of "depressive anxiety" is that the child has ambivalent feelings about the mother and, therefore, when they are separated, the child fears that he has killed her, possibly by eating her. Klein also believes it possible that the child sees the mother's departure as punishment for the child's misbehavior, a theory called "persecutory anxiety." Other theorists, primarily anthropologists, hold to the primary theory of "frustrated attachment," meaning that separation from the attachment figure is inherently stressful (Bowlby, Separation 375-77).

Bowlby cites studies that show that some children as young as one and a half can remember a parent from whom they are separated, even for several days (Loss 423). Samuel L. Blumenfeld writes that separation anxiety begins when the child realizes that the mother is separate from the child, at which time the child realizes that the mother can leave (181-82). If the child is actually separated from the mother after that time, he or she goes through three stages of reaction: protest, despair, and detachment (Bowlby, Attachment 27). Any parent who has left a child in day care knows the protest stage, the stage in which the child reaches for the parent and cries not to be left. Day care, however, does not constitute dangerous separation, for the mother or mother figure returns for the child long before the ill effects of separation begin to set in, and caretakers are usually constant and attentive, allowing another, though weaker, attachment to take place. Despair sets in if the child is left for long periods of time; during this stage, the child often sobs, refrains from play, and cannot be consoled by other caretakers. Detachment occurs after the mother and child are reunited. Bowlby describes detachment as a defense mechanism against further hurt (Loss 21); during this phase the child often ignores the formerly absent parent or expresses anger and hostility toward her; the anger may be interrupted, after a time, with episodes of clinging (Separation 256).

Bowlby also explains that types of agoraphobia can result from repeated lengthy separations from the mother. He contrasts true phobias, which are the fear of the presence of a feared object or situation (e.g. snakes or heights), with what he calls "pseudophobias," fears of the absence of an attachment person or a secure place (Separation 260). Repeated separation from the mother, Bowlby argues, can cause a child to fear going to school (school phobia) or to other places not because the places themselves are frightening but because the child is afraid of being left there or of returning home to find the mother gone.

Langmeier and Matějček call separation a "severe pathogenic agent" (17). They cite a 1951 study conducted for the World Health Organization that found that

repeated long-term separations of a child from his mother or mother surrogate during the first three to five years of life usually result in permanent disturbance to the mental health of the child and that this significantly affects total personality development. (17)

Perhaps the most unusual and most disturbing reaction to repeated separation from their mothers was the murder of two mothers by their adolescent children. These adolescents said that they killed their mothers in order to prevent them from leaving again. Bowlby explains (although of course he does not excuse) this paradoxical

behavior as a combination of extreme anxiety and detachment (Separation 251).

If temporary separation from the mother in childhood can be psychologically damaging, her permanent loss can be devastating. In "Reminiscences," Virginia Woolf writes, after several pages of description and praise of her mother,

If what I have said of her has any meaning you will believe that her death was the greatest disaster that could happen; it was as though on some brilliant day of spring the racing clouds of a sudden stood still, grew dark, and massed themselves; the wind flagged, and all the creatures on earth moaned or wandered seeking aimlessly. . . . [N]ow and again on more occasions than I can number, in bed at night, or in the street, or as I come into the room, there she is; beautiful, emphatic, with her familiar phrase and her laugh; closer than any of the living are, lighting our random lives as with a burning torch, infinitely noble and delightful to her children.
(40)

Langmeier and Matějček explain,

The sudden death of the mother or father produces in the child emotional hunger, mourning, a bitter feeling of injustice at being dispossessed, and, in addition, a loss of security resulting from lack of support and guidance. . . . Such a situation usually creates conflict, since feelings of hostility towards the dead parent are aroused and reinforced, and this engenders feelings of guilt. . . . (127)

In order to understand the effects of loss of a parent, especially a mother, on a child, John Bowlby first looked at grief in adults, especially those mourning the death of a child or the death of a young spouse, as those deaths would seem particularly painful and untimely. He found

that among adults, mourning goes through four stages: numbing, which lasts from a few hours to a week and may be interrupted by periods of anger and distress; yearning, which often lasts months but can linger for years, during which time the mourner is sometimes angry and sometimes searches for the lost person; "disorganization and despair," when the mourning is deeper seated and less active; and finally reorganization, when the mourner finally begins to return to normal activity (Loss 85). Of course some grief-stricken persons take longer to reach the reorganization stage than others, but most adults do reach the point that they can begin to go on with their lives.

Bowlby quotes part of a letter from Freud to Ludwig Binswanger, who was mourning the death of his son:

Although we know that after such a loss the acute state of mourning will subside, we also know we shall remain inconsolable and will never find a substitute. No matter what may fill the gap, even if it be filled completely, it nevertheless remains something else. And actually this is how it should be. It is the only way of perpetuating that love which we do not want to relinquish. (qtd. in Loss 23)

Bowlby also found that most cultures share three common elements of mourning: the belief that the dead person's spirit lingers for a time with the living; ritualized anger, sometimes at the person for dying but often at a third party for causing the death in some way; and a prescribed time for the end of ritual mourning (Loss 128-30).

Bowlby asserts that children are at a considerable disadvantage while mourning. He cites six reasons for this: children with little support from others suffer doubly from separation anxiety; children often know and understand little about death; children are often told little, and much of what they are told, such as that the dead person is merely asleep, is misleading; if loved ones are unsympathetic, children cannot go find someone who is more understanding; children fear that if one parent can die, so can the other and so can the children themselves; and children live more in the present and are less able to see that their grief will lessen (Loss 290-92). Children can go through a normal grieving process, Bowlby believes, if three conditions are met: they had a good relationship with the parent before the death; they were told the truth about the death and allowed to attend the funeral; and they have someone, preferably a close relative, who can take over as caretaker and attachment figure (Loss 276, 320). Bowlby has found that under such conditions, children as young as two and a half can grieve for dead or absent parents almost as an adult would (Loss 397).

But even under the best of circumstances, a child's grief at the loss of his or her mother is long-lasting; a child as young as thirteen months can protest, then despair, for quite some time (Bowlby, Loss 9-11). Children who lose a parent yearn for the deceased loved one, although

sometimes unconsciously; they often blame the person for dying and sometimes blame themselves, and they often refuse to believe in the permanence of the loss (Bowlby, Loss 15-16).

Such an attempt to conquer the pain of being left by a parent is Sylvia Plath's "Daddy," an autobiographical poem about Plath's reaction to her father's death when she was a young child. Because of his death, she feels abandoned and, consequently, hurt and angry, so much so that she likens her plight to that of Jewish victims of the Nazis, accusing her father of playing the part of the executioners. The anger is a defensive attempt to purge the pain. Plath writes, "Daddy, I have had to kill you. / You died before I had time--" (ll. 6-7); she puts a "stake in [his] fat black heart" (l. 76) and says "I'm through" (l. 80).

In Stepmothering, Donna Smith attempts to explain the agony of the death of a child's mother by asserting that to lose one's mother is to lose part of oneself (124), and she may be right; this theory echoes Chodorow's assertion that the infant sees the mother as part of him- or herself (59). Blumenfeld writes that the child who loses his or her mother during the attachment phase may never recover emotionally (184).

If children have difficulty coping with loss under ideal conditions, we must remember that most children

dealing with grief are struggling under more difficult circumstances. Children who feel guilty and children from homes where parents quarreled or had frequently been away from their children are less likely to adjust well after the death (Bowlby, Loss 315-16). Children whose remaining parent is overly dependent on them or who is dishonest about the death have more trouble coping as well (Bowlby, Loss 313-14). Fathers who lose their wives often lose touch with their children, either literally or emotionally, just when the young ones need them most (Bowlby, Loss 294).

Those children who do not have healthy conditions under which to grieve may react in several ways: they may have persistent anxiety, especially because of fear that they or someone else might die; they may desire to die to reunite with the dead parent (in "Daddy," Plath says to her dead father, "I tried to die / And get back . . . to you," ll. 58-59); they may continually blame others or themselves; they may become overactive and uncontrollably aggressive; they may refuse care from others, instead compulsively taking care of someone else; they may experience denial to the extent that they act euphoric and become depersonalized (two possibilities for such inappropriate behavior are that the child's relationship with the parent was so destructive that the child is actually relieved by the death and that the hyperanimation is an attempt to contradict the immobility of death); they

may experience symptoms that identify with the way the loved one died, such as chest pains if the parent died of a heart attack; or they may have accidents similar to ones related to the death of the parent, such as falls (Bowlby, Loss 351-80). A child whose remaining parent handles the death badly, especially if he or she turns to the child for support, is likely to experience extreme anxiety because both attachment figures have failed (Bowlby, Separation 167).

Many of these children do not outgrow their problems. At the least, children who have lost a parent or had unsupportive parents often grow up to be wary of strong emotional ties (Bowlby, Loss 224-25). Children from divorced families or with a deceased parent suffer more physical illness and emotional distress as adults (Loss 297) and "children who lose a parent to death are more likely than others to become psychiatric casualties" (Loss 295). Victims of childhood bereavement are more likely--no matter what the cause of the parent's death--to consider suicide, have anxious attachments to or overdependence on others, and be severely depressed (Loss 301). Studies show that many delinquents and psychopaths lost one or both parents in childhood, that neurotics often lost parents when the children were quite young (preschool age), and that psychotics had a higher than average number of absent mothers (Langmeier and Matějček 120); schizophrenics are

more likely than other people to have lost a parent (usually the mother) or both parents before the age of nineteen (Langmeier and Matějček 51).

Again Sylvia Plath comes to mind. Her father's death occurred before she was ten; she tried to commit suicide when she was twenty, spent time in a psychiatric institution, and finally killed herself when she was thirty. Ironically, the pain and anger Plath experienced when her father died she inflicted on her own young son and daughter by her death.

Bowlby found that children who lose a parent of the same sex suffer greater emotional trauma than those who lose their opposite-sex parent (Loss 298); this information seems strange because most studies cite the difficulty posed by the death of the mother. The explanation may lie in the child's identification with the same-sex parent, causing the child to fear that he or she, too, might die. Bowlby also says that women who suffer depression because of the loss of a parent by death are more likely to be psychotic, while those who lose a parent by other means are more often neurotic (Loss 308), perhaps because with loss by other means there is still hope of recovering the lost person. A child whose parent, especially the mother, dies before the child is ten years old is more likely to be disturbed, and childhood bereavement is more problematic for girls (Bowlby, Loss 300). In fact, "[w]omen who develop

a depressive disorder in adult life are more likely than others to have suffered the loss of mother during their childhood"; although the loss of the father can also produce psychological distress, it does so less often and less severely (Bowlby, Loss 257).

Children who lose a parent to suicide are especially burdened and are more likely to suffer from psychological problems, even psychosis, than children who lose their parents in other ways. Many are "sad, guilt-laden, withdrawn, fearful and inhibited," while others are "angry, truculent and defiant, and given to ill-organized and aggressive behaviour," according to Bowlby (Loss 384). Some of the reasons that suicide is more difficult for the child are that the death is even more likely to be spoken of in hushed, secretive tones or lied about; circumstances preceding the death were probably less than ideal; and mourners, including the child, often have, in addition to grief, guilt about not being able to save the suicide victim.

Even if the child is an adult when the parent commits suicide, the suffering is still great. The story of Truman Capote's mother's death illustrates almost all these points. Nina Capote, née Lillie Mae Faulk, died of an overdose of Seconal and alcohol when Capote was twenty-nine. As a child, Truman had been severely neglected by a mother who did not want him. Before her death, her husband,

Truman's adoptive father, had lost his job, and Nina had turned again to alcohol. Her death was publicly attributed to pneumonia, but Truman's friend Harper Lee found out the truth. In Capote: A Biography, Gerald Clarke writes,

For years . . . Truman almost never talked about the way his mother had died. He mentioned it just once to [his friend] Phoebe Pierce, and then only after Phoebe's own mother had killed herself. Yet, as with all children, including Phoebe, who have lost a parent to suicide, the manner of her death never ceased to bother him. "I don't think Truman has ever written a word about Nina," said Phoebe. "I don't see anything of her in any of his characters. But I know that when my mother killed herself, it almost killed me as well. You can bury such a thing miles deep, miles and miles and miles deep, but it must be a central experience in your life." (256)

Separation and loss are painful for children, but having a parent, especially a mother, who is cruel or psychologically disturbed can also be damaging. Langmeier and Matějček cite studies that show that contact with a "psychopathic mother" caused more disturbance to the child than an "impersonal relationship with a nurse" (74). Judith Arcana writes, "Some mothers are spiritually removed from their families, or at least from motherhood, even when they are present" (11).

Destructive mothers appear frequently in literature, as bad parents do in real life. Thomas Wolfe's mother's overbearing nature is the prototype for the personality of Eugene Gant's mother in Look Homeward, Angel, and Candace Flynt's Mother Love is about the attempt to overcome the

effects of a childhood with a mother whose presence was probably as harmful as her absence would have been.

Other parents threaten to abandon their children, and even if the threat is never carried out, it is still terrifying; Bowlby has found that the threat to abandon a child is more harmful than the threat to withdraw or withhold love (Separation 226). He explains that threatening the child with separation or isolating him or her for punishment harms the child's psyche because the child's greatest needs, security and attachment, are in jeopardy (Separation 209). And oddly enough, during prolonged hospital stays, children with hostile or irritable mothers, according to Bowlby, were even more distressed by their mothers' absence (Separation 220-21), perhaps because of threats of abandonment made by those mothers.

Whereas most psychoanalytical theorists see separation from or loss of the mother as horribly traumatic for a child, a few others believe that the child also, perhaps unconsciously, desires the death of the mother, or perhaps of both parents. The primary motivation for this desire, they postulate, is that the child wants to be free from the parents. But the desire is sublimated because the child feels too guilty to express it.

The theory of desired freedom from parental authority can again be traced to Otto Rank's research, but the interpretation is different. Those who believe that the

myths represent the child's desire to overcome the limitations imposed by parents the child perceives as unworthy set the stage for an understanding of the child's normal attempt to find his or her identity. But the myth of the hero can also represent a perversion of this normal developmental stage into the psychological disorder called delusions of grandeur, often seen in schizophrenic adults.

The psychological theory has also been translated into literary theory. The prolific and respected Harold Bloom has applied the idea to his literary criticism, and feminists have used it to explain the need of women to break free of parents in a patriarchal society.

Whereas noted literary critic Northrop Frye sees literary tradition as a line of writers building on the work of the previous generations, Harold Bloom writes in A Map of Misreading that "[p]oetic strength comes only from a triumphant wrestling with the greatest of the dead . . ." (9) and that a "poet . . . is not so much a man speaking to men as a man rebelling against being spoken to by a dead man (the precursor) outrageously more alive than himself" (19). Bloom also equates the poet's struggle with his precursor and a son's struggle against his father. He writes, ". . . no strong poet . . . can choose his precursor, any more than any person can choose his father" (Map 12) and "[b]attle between strong equals, father and son as mighty opposites, Laius and Oedipus at the

crossroads; only this is my subject here. . ." (Anxiety 11).

Bloom doesn't argue that precursors have no value. He admits in The Anxiety of Influence that even though our "precursors flood us, and our imaginations can die by drowning in them, . . . no imaginative life is possible if such inundation is wholly evaded" (154). In the same work he says,

. . . [S]trong poets keep returning from the dead, and only through quasi-willing mediumship of other strong poets. How they return is the decisive matter, for if they return intact, then the return impoverishes the later poets, dooming them to be remembered--if at all--as having ended in poverty, in an imaginative need they could not themselves gratify. (140-41)

Because this theory allows for the possibility of the younger poet's refusal to allow the precursor to subsume him, it is somewhat optimistic. Bloom does see this refusal as possible in strong poets such as Thomas Hardy. Bloom writes, "[i]nitial love for the precursor's poetry is transformed rapidly enough into revisionary strife, without which individuation is not possible" (Map 10). The struggle, Bloom says, is not kind: "Nothing," he writes, "is less generous than the poetic self when it wrestles for its own survival" (Map 18). But the struggle goes on, he asserts, particularly in America, partly because of the example of Whitman and the admonitions of Emerson (Map 24).

According to Richard H. King in The Southern Renaissance, Bloom's theory that all writers want to create a new tradition echoes Otto Rank's belief that in the artist is the desire for originality, the desire to "become his own father" (139). For Bloom, then, Rank's archetype is fantasy, not fear. The writer, like the child, must acknowledge the precursor/parent (usually the father), but then see him as inferior, as someone the writer/child must destroy in order to find his or her identity.

Very few critics before the advent of feminist theory explored the female writer's relationship to the hero myth. Most critics had also been far more interested in the overthrow of the father than in the loss of the mother. Marianne Hirsch in The Mother/Daughter Plot sees the plot of the dead or worthless mother as "maternal repression" and identifies it with Freud, especially the Oedipal myth. Hirsch sees the family romance as male-dominated (54), with mothers generally ignored, except as they relate to their sons. She cites the example of Iocastê in Oedipus Rex (2-3); Iocastê is not important as a character so much as she is a device for her son's tragedy.

Hirsch writes that in patriarchal literature, "The mother became either the object of idealization and nostalgia or that which had to be rejected and surpassed in favor of allegiance to a morally and intellectually superior male world" (14).

One possible explanation for the archetypal separation from or loss of both parents in hero myths is that it is even more egocentric than the overthrow of the father alone, going beyond immaculate conception to the point that one needs neither father nor mother, that one is either self-created or god-created, with no human intervention. Of course the other possibility is that the child fears total abandonment. Again we are left with the possibility that the child both desires and fears being orphaned.

Like Bloom, feminist critics would argue the fantasy theory. They believe that the child, usually daughter, who destroys the mother in imagination or the author, usually female, who destroys the mother in a novel, play, or short story is trying to break away from the mother's repression, which is often seen as a reflection of the repression of patriarchy. The major difference between Bloom and the feminists is that Bloom believes that the writer wants to overthrow the father in order to become the father. Feminists believe that the female writer wants to overthrow the mother in order not to become the mother, because they see mothers as victims of a patriarchy from which the female child and adult want to break free.

Of course feminists do not believe that actually losing the mother is good for the child, or even for the adult daughter. Judith Arcana writes in Our Mothers' Daughters,

Some of us anticipate that death [of our mothers] long before it comes. . . . Because we are inextricably bound up with our mothers, their deaths diminish us. Perhaps more important, we often feel that our relations with our mothers are incomplete and unsatisfactory, so that their deaths create even greater frustration than we felt while they lived. If we have never been able to receive from our mothers the truth of their hearts--and if we have never told them our own deepest feelings, their deaths are tragedies for us. Probably it is that understanding which makes us mourn them as we do, and fear their deaths while they live. (166)

But even though most women, feminists included, love their mothers and their children, the institution of motherhood in a patriarchy offends many educated women of the twentieth century. In Of Woman Born: Motherhood as Institution and Experience, poet and feminist Adrienne Rich argues,

. . . [T]he institution of motherhood must be destroyed. . . . To destroy the institution is not to abolish motherhood. It is to release the creation and sustenance of life into the same realm of decision, struggle, surprise, imagination, and conscious intelligence, as any other difficult, but freely chosen work. (280)

But if one of the aims of feminism is to release women from the bonds of the institution of motherhood, why the attack on mothers themselves, who seem to be the victims? Rich provides several explanations. She argues that "[t]he power-relations between mother and child are often simply a reflection of power-relations in patriarchal society . . ." (Of Woman 38); therefore, the child's rebellion

against the mother reflects her rebellion, conscious or unconscious, against the patriarchy; it is also a rebellion against all repressive institutions. Rich writes, "Certainly the mother serves the interests of patriarchy: she exemplifies in one person religion, social conscience, and nationalism. Institutional motherhood revives and renews all other institutions" (Of Woman 45).

In the Akan society in Africa, where the mother keeps the family together, a proverb states, "When mother is no more, the clan is no more" (Oduyoye 24). But in our society, because the mother tailors the child to fit into other more rigid aspects of society, Rich asserts, a son in a patriarchy sees his mother as "controlling, erotic, castrating, heart-suffering, guilt-ridden, and guilt-provoking; a marble brow, a huge breast, an avid cave . . ." (Of Woman 186). Rich believes that these fears follow the son into manhood, when for a man a woman "is first of all the Mother who has to be possessed, reduced, controlled, lest she swallow him back into her dark caves, or stare him into stone" (Of Woman 112). This fear of being reabsorbed or "redevoured" by the mother, according to Rich, is more common among sons than daughters because daughters can imitate their mothers by giving birth (Of Woman 188).

Instead of fearing their mothers, Rich believes, daughters fear becoming their mothers. She writes,

Thousands of daughters see their mothers as having taught a compromise and self-hatred they are struggling to win free of, the one through whom the restrictions and degradations of a female existence were perforce transmitted. Easier by far to hate and reject a mother outright than to see beyond her to the forces acting upon her. (Of Woman 235)

Rich reiterates,

Few women growing up in a patriarchal society feel mothered enough; the power of our mothers, whatever their love for us and their struggles on our behalf, is too restricted. And it is the mother through whom patriarchy early teaches the small female her proper expectations. . . . Many daughters live in rage at their mothers for having accepted, too readily and passively, "whatever comes." A mother's victimization does not merely humiliate her, it mutilates the daughter who watches her for clues as to what it means to be a woman. (Of Woman 243)

Judith Arcana agrees: "The job of mothers is to prepare their children to maintain society as it is, so they perpetuate their own situations" (54). The result is that husbands benefit from the socialization of women by their mothers; therefore, the mothers are rewarded by society's approval when their daughters marry and have children because the patriarchy is preserved (Arcana 45).

But some daughters refuse to take their places in this scheme. The result of rejecting her mother's place in the patriarchy and, consequently, her rejection of her mother is that the daughter also rejects part of herself.

Rich explains,

Matrophobia can be seen as a womanly splitting of the self, in the desire to become purged once and for all of our mothers' bondage, to become individuated and free. The mother stands for the victim in ourselves, the unfree woman, the martyr. Our personalities seem dangerously to blur and overlap with our mothers'; and, in a desperate attempt to know where mother ends and daughter begins, we perform radical surgery. (Of Woman 236)

This need to affirm the birth yet deny motherhood is evident in a feminist poster that reads, "I am a woman giving birth to myself" (qtd. in Rich, Of Woman 156).

Men also have ambivalent reactions to their mothers and to women in general, according to Rich. She asserts that part of the reason for men's fear of feminism is that women will no longer care for men as if all males were children (Of Woman 213-14). (A study cited by Maxine Margolis in Mothers and Such might support this theory; Margolis reports that women in households with husbands did more housework than single women with children.) The paradox is that men need women to nurture them as mothers would but rebel against female (maternal) authority over them (Rich, Of Woman 214). This behavior seems less sexist when one realizes that this is exactly what every child experiences when torn between security and independence, leaving us with the question Otto Rank could not answer in his study of hero myths: Are these fears or fantasies?

Rich also tells us that attitudes toward mothers and motherhood have not always been so confused. The earliest

god-images we have are mother-goddesses (Of Woman 93), which Johanna Kohn-Roelin would not find at all surprising. Kohn-Roelin says that a child's image of God is based on his or her image of the mother. If parents are loving, the child believes in a loving God, whereas if the parents are cruel, the child sees God as cruel (70-71).

But these maternal goddesses changed; they became the mothers of men's or gods' children rather than goddesses in their own right. According to Rich, many scholars see this change as a patriarchal rejection of a strong female deity (Of Woman 120-21). By the time Greek and Roman mythology evolved, bad women, especially mothers such as Medea and Clytemnestra, abounded. Rich's theory is that in that male world, women lacked education and love, so that they tried to live through their sons, who felt stifled and retaliated by creating bad mothers (Of Woman 121-23). But the possibility exists that mythologists created bad mothers for the same reason Salem citizens burned independent women as witches: strong women upset the patriarchal order and frighten men, so they must be evil.

For Rich, then, attack on the mother is a misguided attack on patriarchy. Rich says, "The mother-child relationship is the essential human relationship. In the creation of the patriarchal family, violence is done to this fundamental human unit" (Of Woman 127). And because in patriarchy the children see the mother as in collusion

with the father to subordinate, even victimize the children (Rich, Of Woman 187), they rebel against the mother as well as the father.

Rich writes that women have traditionally been expected to find creative expression and fulfillment in motherhood and leave more worldly pursuits to men (Of Woman 40). She notices that many of the greatest women writers have been childless, at least at the time they did most of their writing. She mentions Charlotte and Emily Brontë, George Eliot, Emily Dickinson, Virginia Woolf, Simone de Beauvoir, and others (Of Woman 252). One could add Carson McCullers, Eudora Welty, Flannery O'Connor, and Harper Lee, none of whom had children. These women have, among them, produced numerous works with motherless children: Jane Eyre, Wuthering Heights, Middlemarch, The Member of the Wedding, Delta Wedding, The Violent Bear It Away, and To Kill a Mockingbird. And Virginia Woolf's To the Lighthouse is about the death of a mother.

Surprisingly absent from the list are black women writers. Toni Morrison, Gwendolyn Brooks, Maya Angelou, and Alice Walker were all mothers before they reached the prime of their careers. Rich may have provided some explanation for this difference. She says that in non-white families, mothers and other female ancestors are the role models and transmitters of culture, including oral literature (Of Woman xxviii-xxx). In the article "The

Black Writer and the Southern Experience," Walker writes, "My mother . . . is a walking history of our community" (17). Alex Haley's descriptions of his female relatives' conversations about their ancestors also confirm Rich's observation. Perhaps a culture that allows women to create both as mothers and as storytellers puts less pressure on them to choose between motherhood and art.

Adrienne Rich's primary theses are that being a mother is wonderful (although she sometimes undermines that assertion, particularly in describing some of her own experiences and in her strong defense of women's choice of abortion over motherhood), but that the institution of motherhood in a patriarchy is oppressive to both mother and child. In order to break free of that oppression, creative women often refuse to perpetuate the institution, both by remaining childless and by destroying the mothers in their literature. For Rich, then, breaking away from the mother spells freedom, not pain; and childlessness, too, is freedom, not emptiness.

Other feminists have studied the mother-child relationship, especially that between mother and daughter. Marianne Hirsch is concerned primarily with the objectification of the mother in literature. Hirsch argues that with few exceptions, mothers are still the objects, not the subjects, of literature (10-11). Hirsch asserts that the heroine must separate her identity from that of her

mother, who has conformed to tradition (10-11). Therefore, Hirsch points out, "[M]others tend to be absent, silent, or devalued in novels by Jane Austen, Mary Shelley, George Sand, the Brontës, George Eliot, and Kate Chopin" (14). And in Chopin's The Awakening, Edna Pontelier wants to escape marriage and motherhood to find herself (Hirsch 65). About these writers, Hirsch explains,

In order to write, nineteenth century women writers . . . must separate their heroines from the lives and the stories of their mothers. Plot itself demands maternal absence. . . . However, for female writers, motherlessness means freedom not only from constraint but also from the power that a knowing connection to the past might offer, whether that past is powerful or powerless. (67)

Like Rich, Hirsch believes that the Victorian woman writer had to eschew motherhood. To Rich's list of writers who did not combine writing and motherhood she adds Jane Austen, Dorothy Wordsworth, Mary Shelley, and Elizabeth Gaskell, all of whom had no small children during the time they were most prolific as authors (45), although many of them, such as Austen and Wordsworth, did have responsibilities for the care of other people's children. Hirsch also thinks that Victorian women who write cannot identify with their mothers' limited lives.

But daughters' fears of repeating their mothers' meaningless lives did not end with the Victorians, Hirsch says. Even in the 1920s and 1930s when contraception and

changing attitudes reduced family size and the burden of child rearing, the writers who celebrated motherhood were in reality celebrating their own mothers, dead by the time of the writings (97). Even now, Hirsch asserts, daughters' fears of this repetition cause them to destroy their mothers, metaphorically, so that they can break the cycle. The problem now, she says, is that, while psychoanalysis has helped feminists understand their relationship to society, it has limited their approach to that of a child, not of an adult woman; therefore, mothers are still seen as objects (167-68), as barriers to be overcome so that the child can develop into a woman (168).

Therefore, Hirsch writes, "Dead mothers do elicit a certain nostalgia; nevertheless their absence invariably furthers the heroines' development" (48). The mother's absence, then, creates space for the heroine's plot (Hirsch 57). Hirsch also sees the dead mother plot as related to the Oedipal myth. She believes that the family romance is male-dominated (54) because males "hold the keys to power and ambition" (56). Mothers, then, must be eliminated to avoid weakness, so that the child can identify with the father, who is stronger (56). Whereas, as Hirsch points out, Freud felt that the mother must be removed so that the daughter can gain power by figuratively marrying the father (57), the woman now destroys the mother so that the powerful father can become her role model.

In relating to mothers and patriarchy, feminists have constructed a type of sisterhood, according to Hirsch. This sisterhood has four components: Feminists see motherhood as a "patriarchal construction" binding women to men; they see maternity as lack of control; they often refer to the body only metaphorically because they are uncomfortable with it (French feminists especially use the body to represent language); and they objectify mothers and assert separateness from them because they are angry at both their mother's power over them and their mother's powerlessness in a patriarchal society (165-67).

Hirsch's answer to the question of whether the dead or absent mother in literature is fear or fantasy is the same as Rich's: it is fantasy. The child, especially the daughter, wants her freedom. The paradox for Hirsch is that the child must separate from the mother both because the mother has power over the child, which the child does not want, and because she has power nowhere else, power the child does want.

In the article "Melodramas of Beset Womanhood," feminist Nina Baym believes that the need to escape the mother applies to sons as well as to daughters. She writes,

. . . [W]e all--women and men alike--experience social conventions and responsibilities and obligations first in the persons of women, since women are entrusted by society with the task of rearing young children Thus, although women are not the sources of social power, they are experienced as such. . . .

So from the point of view of the young man, the only kind of women who exist are entrappers and domesticators. (72-73)

This theory is not only Baym's. In "To Bear Children for the Fatherland: Mothers and Militarism," Mary Condren writes that part of men's violent nature results from their desire to be different from women because they perceive their mothers as powerless (88). She points out that this rebellion against the mother is ritualized in some societies to the extent that in some tribal initiations, young warriors "actually step on their mothers' bellies" to prove their separation from these weaker beings (85). Baym asserts that male writers see women as a threat and portray them as such in novels (73).

Otto Rank also explains that in a patriarchy sons must move from their mothers to a male world. In "Forms of Kinship and the Individual's Role in the Family," he writes,

In a primitive matriarchal culture, the mother alone had real possession of the child. Later on, when a patriarchal culture established itself with legal and religious sanctions, it was the father alone. In our present small family (with its marriage system), the parents possess the child in common only insofar as the mother trains him in an early period and the father claims him later, when, however, he has to compete for his son with the community (the State). (302)

Ironically, Rank sees the mother as the preserver of the community, from whom the child must break, to become the

heir of the individual father and then a person in his or her own right ("Forms" 301). To Rank, then, the mother conspires with the community to force the child to conform; a break with the mother is thus an assertion of independence from parents and of individuality.

Feminist Judith Arcana says that women, like men, have rejected their mothers because they are both victims of and conspirators with the patriarchy. Her theories echo those of Rich and Hirsch:

We [daughters] have, by and large, abandoned our mothers to the burden patriarchy has laid across their bodies, disavowing our connection to them. . . . Not only do we perceive our mothers through the sexist vision that degrades all women, blaming and slandering mothers in particular, but we are kept from experiencing power or fulfillment through our mothers in a patriarchal culture. (214)

Arcana found that of the women she interviewed, sixty-three percent said that they tried not to be like their mothers (9). Even women who said that they admired their mothers as people often rejected their roles as mothers. Arcana explains, "Others admire their mothers, even idolize them, but don't want to live their lives the way their mothers did" (12). The reason, Arcana believes, is that mothers and daughters share an oppression resulting from society's misogyny (18). She writes,

Women cannot respect their mothers in a society which degrades them. . . . Mothers socialize their daughters into the narrow role of wife-mother; in frustration

and guilt, daughters reject their mothers for their duplicity and incapacity--so the alienation grows in the turning of the generations. (1)

One of the results of this rejection, according to Arcana, is that some daughters act as though their mothers were dead because their presence is too painful (169-71). So the dead mother in literature may be a way of rejecting mothers as models (171).

Nancy Chodorow, author of The Reproduction of Mothering, makes a similar argument. Because one's earliest relationship is to one's (usually but not necessarily biological) mother, an "intense and relatively exclusive bond" (58), the "infant comes to define itself as a person through its relationship to" her (78). She says that women learn as girls to define themselves as continuous with the outside world because of their sameness with their mothers, whereas boys see themselves as distinctly separate because of their difference from the world as they first perceive it, through their mothers (169). The result, she believes, is that "[f]or children of both genders, mothers represent regression and lack of autonomy" (181). Consequently, the child turns to the father and away from the mother in a move toward independence, especially for the girl (121).

Elaine Showalter, in her essay "Toward a Feminist Poetics," from her book The New Feminist Criticism, ties

Rank's hero myth to feminist criticism. She writes,

As the death of the father has always been an archetypal rite of passage for the Western hero, now the death of the mother as witnessed and transcended by the daughter has become one of the most profound occasions of female literature. (135)

Like other feminists, Showalter believes that "[m]uch women's literature in the past has dealt with 'matrophobia' or the fear of becoming one's mother" (135). She cites Sylvia Plath's The Bell Jar, in which Esther begins to recover from her psychiatric problems only after she admits that she hates her mother (135). But Showalter goes one step further. She asserts that more recent works by women, such as Margaret Atwood's Surfacing, emphasize a quest for the mother (135). However, she also cites Lisa Alther's Kinflicks as a quest-for-mother book. That assertion, I believe, is tenuous at best, as the mother in the novel is dying slowly, and the protagonist, her daughter, is unresolved even at the end about her desire and ability to be a mother to her own child.

Judith Kegan Gardiner, in her essay "A Wake for Mother --The Maternal Deathbed Scene in Women's Fiction," explains works such as Kinflicks by saying that killing the mother may be essential for the daughter's pursuit of her own identity, a common feminist theory which Gardiner takes one step further into what she calls "matricidal rage"; this anger comes out in books about mothers dying slowly

and often painfully, but always of "natural causes" so that the protagonist, and by extension the author, can avoid guilt. Gardiner writes,

In the Oedipus myth, the son murders the father in order to replace him. Contrastingly, in the new woman's myth, the daughter "kills" her mother in order not to have to take her place. This dynamic is particularly clear in fictions which kill the heroine's mother in the course of the narrative. (146)

Like other feminists, Gardiner blames patriarchy for the "hostility between mothers and daughters" and sees the daughters' separation from mothers as a kind of "rebirthing" (146).

Gardiner points out the use of stepmothers in fairy tales and myths as a way that women have dealt with their ambivalent feelings for their mothers. She says that we personify our hatred for our mothers in the wicked stepmother and our love into angelic, but dead, mothers (147). Donna Smith, herself a stepmother, has explored this topic further. In Stepmothering she explains that our feelings toward our mothers are ambivalent: we love them and need them, but we also fear their power; therefore, in fairy tales we idealize the beloved mother and separate her frightening power, animating it, usually as evil, in the form of the stepmother (37). She explains that this dichotomy fits the two Jungian archetypes of the mother (37-38).

In The Robber Bridegroom, Eudora Welty makes use of the dead mother-evil stepmother archetype. The protagonist, Rosamond, is beautiful and blond. Her stepmother, Salome, locks her in her room for singing (32) and sends her out alone, hoping she will be kidnapped by Indians, because ugly Salome is jealous of her stepdaughter's beauty (33). Rosamond knows that if her dead mother knew of her hard life, "her heart would break" (34). Only when Salome thinks that Rosamond has snared a husband does she give her stepdaughter "a look of true friendship" (122), after which the two women "sit by the well, like a blood mother and daughter" (122). It is true that the stepmother is still planning trickery, but it is also important that Salome begins to treat Rosamond like a daughter only when the girl marries and joins the patriarchal scheme. Finally Salome dances herself to death trying to make the sun --time--stand still (162-63). But the mother figure cannot stop time; the daughter must carry it on.

Phyllis Chesler has another explanation, in addition to the ones commonly offered by feminists, for women's rejection of their mothers. In her introduction to Judith Arcana's Our Mothers' Daughters, she writes,

How can we ever forgive our mothers for not preferring us to men? How can we ever forgive our mothers for trying to bind our feet, cripple us "for our own good"? How can we face what patriarchy has done to most of our mothers? How can we live with the possibility that we may not be able to rescue our mothers? (xiv)

Samuel L. Blumenfeld, in The Retreat from Motherhood, rejects all these feminist ideas of patriarchy and its restrictions on women, especially mothers. He argues, in fact, that patriarchy is necessary because women need to be mothers, and fathers' providing for families allows women to mother their young. Basically, his book is an attack on women's finding other jobs more important than mothering (10), so it is a thinly veiled attack on the women's movement in general. However, he also blames the breakdown of families partly on men, saying that when men abandon family responsibilities, women abandon theirs, leaving the children abandoned on all fronts. From this theory we can extrapolate that the absent mother in literature is a reflection of the breakdown of society. Two examples of this are from autobiographical novels, Richard Wright's Black Boy and Maya Angelou's I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings. In both books, the protagonists are abandoned, at times, by both their fathers and their mothers, leaving the children with other relatives and, in Wright's case, in an orphanage temporarily. The breakdown of these families reflects what sociologists see as a common experience among African-American families, in which often the father is absent, the mother cannot rear a child alone, and the extended family steps in.

Blumenfeld writes, "A strong ego is probably a human being's most valuable asset in trying to master his

environment, and there is no doubt that strong mother-love is the major contributing factor" (164). In addition, he asserts,

Everyone needs to belong to someone, and the worst fate that can befall anyone is to belong to no one. . . . That early sense of belonging [to one's parents] is very important to our healthy emotional growth, and if it is missing or mutilated in our childhood we suffer its deficit for all of our lives. (121)

Blumenfeld also says that the mother is the most important person in every human's life, partly because human mammals are dependent on their mothers longer than any other animal young are (10). He also believes that maternal "instinct" is less inherent than learned. He writes,

Women . . . get their maternal instincts from their mothers. The mothers they had seem to pass on to them a positive feeling about child-mother intimacy, a positive feeling about mother-love. Men too can acquire the same maternal instinct from their mothers, and they translate it as adults into father-love. But because women, through their bodies, can experience the full added maternal dimension in physical terms, they can experience a stronger bond with their children than most men. I believe that the maternal instinct is learned in much the same way that the ability to love is learned, from one's own early childhood emotional experiences. (117)

Samuel L. Blumenfeld would not be happy about the following statement, but it is probably true: he and the feminists are saying the same thing. Women learn to be mothers in a patriarchy from their mothers. Therefore,

in order to break free of the bindings of the patriarchy--bad according to Blumenfeld but good according to the feminists--the child has to be separated, either literally or symbolically, from the mother.

According to social psychologists, long-term or repeated separation from or loss of the mother is devastating for a child. According to archetypal psychoanalytic theorists, children and even adults in many cultures imagine being separated from their parents; however, these theorists cannot reach a consensus about whether these imaginings are fears or fantasies. Feminists see the figurative destruction of the mother as negative and hostile when committed by men but necessary for women so that they can free themselves from the constraints of patriarchy, constraints their mothers have adopted and thus represent.

In literature, therefore, the dead or absent mother cannot represent any one theme, any one attitude. She might abandon a child who needs her, represent her child's greatest fear, represent her child's need and desire for freedom, or symbolize an indirect blow against patriarchy. In Southern literature, she probably does all this and more, because the Southern mother is a complex woman, in an extremely rigid, patriarchal society.

CHAPTER III

"SOMETIMES I FEEL LIKE I WANT TO GO HOME":

THE SOUTH AS MOTHERLAND

"I am a grandchild of a lost War . . . , and I have blood-knowledge of what life can be in a defeated country on the bare bones of privation."

--Katherine Anne Porter, The Days Before

All Southerners, white and black, are descendants of defeat in a way that most other Americans are not. And they are products of a region with a strong sense of history, both real and mythic. The myths do not always correspond with either reality or one another, but they are essential to the understanding of the South and Southerners. Southern identity is composed primarily of place and history, and history is composed of fact and myth.

For white Southerners, the myth is the Old South, the antebellum South, the South of gentlemen sitting on the veranda toasting, with mint juleps, pure Southern (white) ladies. For black Southerners, the myth is Africa, a land of freedom to which, blessed with the right gifts, a chosen few could "fly away home."

Whatever the myth or the history, Southerners see the South in which they live as a surrogate, not the real motherland. The Southerner believes him- or herself to

be the child of an inferior mother, of an unworthy surrogate, and believes that under the right circumstances, he or she can find the real mother and be restored to greatness. White Southerners believe the Yankees robbed them of their motherland; black Southerners believe that white Americans stole them from their motherland. Of course some truth lies in both beliefs, but basically, for both white Southerners and black, the hero myth archetype explained by Otto Rank applies. Both groups believe that they descended from mothers, or came from motherlands, far greater than their present ones.

In Of Woman Born, Adrienne Rich writes of her love for her own mother. She says that her father used to recite the poem "Helen" by Edgar Allan Poe, and Rich thought of her own mother, Helen: "She was, Helen my mother, my native shore of course . . ." (220). For every child, "mother" and "native shore" are connected. Stark Young explains this conjunction of mother, roots, and place:

As for the notion . . . of kin and family, . . . it goes back to one of the oldest racial instincts and is rooted in the most human poetry of the imagination. A man's thought of his mother, loving him before he was born, thinking of her own mother during this that has now come to her; his thought of his father, of his father's hopes for him, and of what his father as a young man felt . . . how can he not love . . . this line of hopes and struggles and love? (347)

The mother is connected to the past, to tradition and place, and to the future through her children. Thus, the Southern

mother is so connected with the South as to be almost inseparable from it. As Tennessee Williams shows us in The Glass Menagerie, the Southern mother, no matter where she is, is still a Southerner, and being out of the South does not take the South out of her.

Historian C. Vann Woodward says the interest in place is not an American idea but a Southern one. He contrasts Thornton Wilder's idea that Americans are little concerned with place and Eudora Welty's notion that in Southern literature place is absolutely essential ("Search" 23-24). Place to a Southerner is both permanence and identity, for land that belongs to a person today may have belonged to his or her ancestors for generations. The agrarian tradition celebrated by white Southerners is not peripatetic. The word "roots" has two meanings for a white Southerner: the family roots that got transplanted from Europe decades, maybe even centuries before and have remained in the same place ever since, and the literal plant roots--probably cotton or tobacco, as well as a few vegetables in the kitchen garden--that have sustained that family on that piece of land since the family settled it.

Social psychologist John Bowlby explains that attachment to place is a normal part of human development, partly because a child relates place to person. Developmental psychologist Jean Piaget, among others, has found that, even if an adult is in view, when asked about

that person, the child will look not to the adult but to the place that person usually occupies.

Eudora Welty explains the importance of place more poetically: "[P]lace is where [a writer] has his roots, place is where he stands; in his experience out of which he writes, it provides the base of reference; in his work, the point of view" ("Place" 117). Furthermore, "feelings are bound up in place" ("Place" 118). Welty believes that one of the reasons we attach ourselves to a certain place is that its identity predates ours ("Place" 119). Therefore, even though place cannot give writers a theme, for "[h]uman life is fiction's only theme" ("Place" 129), "one place comprehended can make us understand other places better" ("Place" 128). Welty writes, "Location . . . is not simply to be used by the writer--it is to be discovered . . ." ("Place" 129). Woodward agrees with Welty about the importance of place in literature but says that, even though other parts of America have regional writers, only the South has a true sense of past and place. Other American literature, Woodward argues, is centered in the present, with no sense of connection ("Historical" 30-31).

Southern literature has been most important in preserving Southern history, real and imagined. Welty offers an explanation: "[Of] all the arts, [writing] is the one least likely to cut the cord that binds it to its

source" ("Place" 118). Southern fiction has been the most effective in speaking the truth, says Welty, because "the novel from the start has been bound up in the local, the 'real,' the present, the ordinary day-to-day of human experience" ("Place" 117). Woodward says that Southern writers treat characters as part of a continuum, part of a community, part of history, not as lone persons in conflict with outside forces ("Historical" 37).

Of course Southerners' sense of place is related to family. Stark Young explains that in the South ". . . a sense of family followed our connection with the land . . ." (347), and that one's love for one's ancestors passes to love for generations to come, giving the family immortality (348). Young defines place:

No matter where you are . . . [when] some old song suddenly heard again, or a childhood dish tasted, or some fragrance remembered from a garden once, or a voice or word, brings tears to your eyes because of its memory of some place, that place is your country. (344-45).

The connection of past and place proved painful to the South after the Civil War and Reconstruction. As Woodward points out, the South is the only region in the United States to have been defeated in a war. F. Garvin Davenport, Jr., elaborates:

The South--unlike any other segment of the nation--has experienced social ostracism, military defeat and occupation, radical reconstruction, and institu-

tional segregation in all of their fury and degradation. (4)

After the Civil War, the South had to reconcile its strong Jeffersonian agrarian tradition with the coming of industrialization (Davenport 11). Many people believed that the South's strong sense of history might have helped the region cope with its problems better than the rest of the nation could have done (Davenport 11). Actually, the South turned not so much to history but to myth. As W. J. Cash says, the military defeat and humiliation of Reconstruction left the South with "immense regret and nostalgia" so that it "yearned backward toward its past with passionate longing" (127). But as Davenport asserts, ". . . history is not so much what happened as what people believe happened" (viii), and Cash writes that because the Old South was jerked away from Southerners, it became even more idealized in retrospect (127), a legendary land in which gentlemen and ladies lived in mansions, with white trash several rungs below them (Cash ix), a mythical place filled with cavaliers and plantations (Woodward, "Search" 12).

Cash also asserts that part of the reason Southerners mythologize the past is that they are inherently romantic and tend "toward unreality" (46). In fact, he says, a Southerner is a "child-man" who likes to play (47), a person who does not face the truth well. Therefore, during the

nineteenth century, Southerners constructed a fantasy about themselves and their past, such as the fiction that all planters were aristocrats, and, Cash says, the rest of the world bought the South's image of itself, despite slavery (63-65). He writes that Southerners saw themselves as the Chosen People, holders-on to the true religion, tested by God in the Civil War (135). Lewis P. Simpson says that Southern novelists are conscious of the fundamental connection between "history and self" (154). He says as Southern writers became aware of the South's participation in history,

They created in the Southern novel a compelling drama of self and history--one, notably in the works of William Faulkner, suggesting the range and depth of Remembrance of Things Past, The Magic Mountain, and Ulysses. (155)

After the test of the Civil War, Southerners tried to preserve their dignity by looking increasingly to the past, partly by tracing their lineage back to ancient legendary heroes (Cash 127). Paradoxically, while they were proud of their ancestors, real or imagined, they also wanted to be self-made men, proud of overcoming tremendous odds to achieve success (Cash 239-40).

The Civil War made Southerners even more distrustful of the North than they had been before. Cash defines the Southern "savage ideal": "the patriotic will to hold rigidly to the ancient pattern, to repudiate innovation

and novelty in thought and behavior," especially if it came from the North (327). Therefore, they insulated themselves with what Davenport calls the four concepts that make up the "myth of Southern history": union, Southern uniqueness, Southern mission, and Southern burden (12).

The concept of a unified South, according to Cash, did not really exist before the Civil War. Generally before that time, loyalty was to state or locality, not to the region or country (68-69). We see this in Robert E. Lee's loyalty to Virginia in the Civil War; while Virginia was in the Union, he was prepared to fight for the Union, but when his state seceded, he led the Confederate Army. The Civil War and Reconstruction strongly united the South, both against the North and against Negroes (Cash 109). Woodward says that the South's identity comes from a unique but common history, a "collective experience" ("Search" 15-16). Woodward's explanation of this experience points to the reason the South feels defeated and abandoned:

. . . [T]he South had repeatedly met with frustration and failure. It had learned what it was to be faced with economic, social, and political problems that refused to yield to all the ingenuity, patience, and intelligence that a people could bring to bear on them. . . . It had learned to live for long decades in quite un-American poverty, and it had learned the equally un-American lesson of submission. For the South had undergone an experience that it could share with no other part of America . . . the experience of military defeat, occupation, and reconstruction. ("Irony" 190).

Although the South has much diversity, Cash reminds us that the white South also has much in common, such as beliefs, "social pattern," values, and especially prejudices (viii).

Davenport says that the plantation represents "Southern uniqueness . . . order, innocence, and white supremacy as well as the important concept of stability and permanence unaffected by history" (85). But the plantation was affected by history, perhaps uniquely so. The emancipation of the slaves destroyed the feudal system on which plantation life was based, revealing that the innocence, white supremacy, and stability were shams.

The South saw its mission as the upholding of values in a society it perceived as increasingly valueless, the dedication to religion in a country it perceived as worshipping progress rather than God, and the preserving of a way of life with family and land rather than machines as its center. Southerners hoped they could hold on to this belief system and possibly preserve it for the rest of the country.

Woodward sees part of the Southern burden as lack of innocence. He explains that part of the American identity is innocence ("Search" 20-21)--what R. W. B. Lewis would call the "American Adam" myth of Fenimore Cooper's Natty Bumppo. But Woodward says that since the time of the Declaration of Independence, Southerners have lived

"half [the] time . . . intimately with a great social evil and the other half with its aftermath" ("Search" 21). Cash writes that the South had its doubts about the morality of slavery long before the Civil War; in fact, there had been many abolition societies in the South before the mid-nineteenth century (63). Cash explains,

This Old South, in short, was a society beset by the specters of defeat, of shame, of guilt--a society driven by the need to bolster its morale, . . . to justify itself in its own eyes and in those of the world. Hence a large part . . . of its history . . . is the history of its efforts to achieve that end, and characteristically by means of romantic fictions. (63)

This burden, this shame, according to Louis Rubin, helped prompt Southerners to create a memory of "a society that should have existed," one in which God, nature, and morality were paramount ("Introduction" xiv).

Part of Southern myth was (and still is, to an extent) white supremacy. At the turn of the century, as Southern history continued to belie myth, Thomas Dixon wrote novels such as The Clansman (the basis of D. W. Griffith's film The Birth of a Nation) and The Leopard's Spots. Dixon, friend of segregationist and president Woodrow Wilson, dramatized the South's fears of former slaves, miscegenation, and capitalism. He argued that segregation was necessary to maintain racial purity and that the South was the repository of America's morals (Davenport 23-43).

Dixon's attitude reinforced stereotypes of the South as much as anything before Margaret Mitchell's novel Gone With the Wind. When the Clark Gable-Vivien Leigh film version of the book came out in 1939--almost seventy-five years after the end of the Civil War--going to see the movie became almost a pilgrimage in the South (Cash 430-31). Davenport bemoans the popularity of the novel in the 1930's, saying that the preference given to Gone With the Wind over William Faulkner's less romantic novel Absalom, Absalom! exemplified the desire to hang on to the myth of the South instead of facing the truth about it (92).

Attacks on Southern intelligence, especially during the uproar that surrounded the Scopes trial in Tennessee in 1925, triggered the Southern literati's interest in the myth of the South. A group of men based at Vanderbilt University--John Crowe Ransom, Allen Tate, Robert Penn Warren, and Donald Davidson--asserted their Southernness by becoming the Fugitives, and later joined with several other white Southern men to form the Agrarians; both groups defended what they saw as Southern values and the Southern way of life. Davenport writes that ". . . the attacks on the South by Mencken and others stirred the future Agrarians into a new mood of defensive anger, followed by concentrated study of their region" (52).

According to Allen Tate, another catalyst for myth-making was that the South realized after World War I that

the present and future were splitting from the past. If the United States could not maintain itself separate from the international community, certainly the South could no longer insulate itself as a separate entity. Feeling the loss, the South looked to the past for identity. Tate says ". . . [T]hat backward glance gave us the Southern renaissance, a literature conscious of the past in the present" (qtd. in Woodward, "Historical" 32).

The third decade of this century, then, took the Southern myth beyond the popular realm and into the literary world. It was examined by the Southern intelligentsia, some of whom defended it, while others dissected it. Many did both.

The defenders were primarily the twelve Southerners who called themselves Agrarians. In 1930 they published a treatise, I'll Take My Stand: The South and the Agrarian Tradition, which took its title from the Rebel anthem "Dixie." The Fugitives were writers, teachers, historians, journalists, and psychologists, but most of all they were conservative Southerners who wanted to preserve the values of the Old South, not just for the South but for the country, which they saw as selling out to industrialization.

Throughout I'll Take My Stand, says Richard King, the Agrarians portrayed the Civil War as a conflict of economies and cultures and Reconstruction as a merciless attempt to wipe out what was left of Southern culture after

the war. They saw the Old South as best because it struck a "balance of yeoman and planter" (Southern 55). Cash says that the group "turned its gaze sentimentally backward" (389) because "[b]eing Southerners, [they were] subject . . . to the old powerful drive toward idealization of the fatherland, . . ." which they saw as "Arcadia" (Cash 391).

But Cash does not believe that the Agrarians were fooling themselves completely, with a fairy tale of "once upon a time"; he says that the New South is still rooted in the Old, with an agrarian mindset even in an industrial age (x). Anyone who doubts this fact should interview millworkers in a small Southern town to find out how many of them have gardens and maybe even a few chickens. Even writers are not immune: Poet Betty Adcock, a Texan living in North Carolina, has owned goats, and North Carolina fiction writer Doris Betts raises horses. Poet Michael Chitwood often returns to Virginia to visit his parents, who make fine salaries but still have a garden and turkeys. And Flannery O'Connor had chickens as well as her famous peafowl.

The Agrarians did not say that the South was not defeated. Stark Young admits his region's defeat, but he refuses to concede that the South is dead (328). The Agrarians were concerned that the defeat of the South would be the end of a way of life, a way they believed should

be preserved and propagated throughout America in order to prevent the country's total loss of values.

In his 1962 introduction to the Torchbook edition of I'll Take My Stand, Louis D. Rubin, Jr., explains that the precursors of the Agrarians, the Fugitives, were interested in the flaws in America and saw the South resisting many of these problems because of its agrarian rather than industrial lifestyle. Rubin says that the Fugitives in the 1920's feared change, conformity, and loss of values (viii). Thirty-two years before the Torchbook edition, in their own introduction to the first publication of their book, the twelve Southerners themselves wrote that in losing the agrarian tradition represented by the South, America was losing "manners, conversation, hospitality, sympathy, family life, romantic love . . . the social exchanges which reveal and develop sensibility in human affairs" (xxv). Therefore, the collection of essays supports "a Southern way of life against what may be called the American or prevailing way; . . . the best terms in which to represent the distinction are . . . Agrarian versus Industrial" (Twelve Southerners, "Introduction" xix).

In his essay "A Mirror for Artists," Agrarian Donald Davidson says that the Civil War was fought over the conflict of agrarianism versus industrialism (52). John Crowe Ransom also argues against progress. He says that

men want to work their will on nature, and women want to keep up with other people. The result is ambition, leaving no leisure, no good life ("Reconstructed" 9-10). Ransom also writes that the South was based on European traditions and culture ("Reconstructed" 3); therefore, a shift to the lifestyle exhibited by the rest of the United States is neither suitable nor desirable. Lyle Lanier writes that even worse than the loss of tradition and leisure, the family itself was being lost to industrialism. He says that the family is the most important social, moral, religious, and educational unit; therefore, its loss to progress, which required that both men and women work and often send their children into the factories most of the day, would lead to the breakdown of society (146-47).

Amidst those who denounced the industrialization of the North and glorified Southern agrarianism were a few Agrarians who were less tied to myth than to reality. One of those is Stark Young, who writes,

If anything is clear, it is that we can never go back, and neither this essay nor any intelligent person that I know in the South desires a literal restoration of the old Southern life, even if that were possible; dead days are gone, and if by some chance they should return, we should find them intolerable. (328)

Young advocates keeping the best of what the Old South stood for--pride, manners, sincerity, friendliness, and love for family. But he cannot blind himself or his readers

to the exploitation which the Old South also represents. Young is not totally devoid of nostalgia, but neither is he blind to the South's past; he is a gleaner, trying to sort the grain from the chaff.

The true history of the South contains the myth but is also both more and less than the myth. Plantations were factual; they took up much of the land, leaving little for immigrants and therefore keeping the established population fairly stable and homogeneous (Cash 33). But even the landed Southerners were essentially frontiersmen or their immediate descendants, not the aristocracy the myths would have us believe, not even English squires, according to Cash (30-32). They were still rooted in frontier values and activities, such as drinking and proving their manhood through violence such as hunting (Cash 31-32), fighting, and even lynching (Cash 44-45). (Almost no Southern historian concerns himself with women, except as they are objectified by men). This frontier spirit also expressed itself, despite the concept of Southern hospitality and cooperation, in a strong sense of individualism; Cash says that Southerners believed "that every man was completely and wholly responsible for himself" (80). In reality, there was almost no aristocracy in the Old South because aristocrats had no reason to leave Europe, and they would not have been able to fight the frontier and eke out a living if they had come to America. Planters

who flourished took several generations to become wealthy enough to educate their sons. Therefore, the aristocracy in the South was a long time coming, and even then was quite small (Cash 3-9). So the Southern aristocracy personified by the O'Haras and the Wilkeses in Gone With the Wind was more myth than real. On the other hand, the scrappy individualism immortalized by Faulkner in Absalom, Absalom!'s Thomas Sutpen was more reality than fiction.

Absalom, Absalom! and other works by Faulkner, as well as the writing of many of his contemporaries, illustrate the other side of the feelings of Southern literati in the mid-1900's. While the Agrarians were preparing their apologia, William Faulkner, Erskine Caldwell, Thomas Wolfe, and other writers were portraying the South in all its squalor. Cash calls them the "hate-and-honor school" (389). Agrarian Donald Davidson says of his generation, ". . . we moderns have shattered all myths in our wish to flood our brows with the light of reason . . ." (30). Woodward writes that in the 1920's Southerners who were intellectuals either

took a defensive attitude toward the history of their region, or affected indifference. It was an attitude compounded of several factors: the college boy's revolt against the ideas and values of his parents, the striving to cover up a consciousness of provincialism, and an eagerness to appear abreast of the times, if not a little in advance. ("Historical" 27)

But Cash asserts that these writers

hated the South a good deal less than they said and thought. Rather, . . . they hated it with the exasperated hate of a lover who cannot persuade the object of his affections to his desire. Or, perhaps more accurately, as Narcissus, growing at length analytical, might have suddenly begun to hate his image reflected in the pool.

All these men remained fundamentally Southern in their basic emotions. Intense belief in and love for the Southern legend had been bred into them as children and could not be bred out again simply by taking thought; [this love] lay ineradicably at the bottom of their minds, to set up conflict with their new habit of analysis and their new perceptions. And their hate and anger against the South was both a defense mechanism against the inner uneasiness created by that conflict and a sort of reverse embodiment of the old sentimentality itself. (386-87)

Eudora Welty writes, "The challenge to writers today, I think, is not to disown any part of our heritage" ("Place" 133). But for Southerners, sorting heritage from myth, then realizing that myth, too, is part of heritage, may be the hardest challenge. Davenport says that the Agrarians defined the South by its agriculture, but argues that the true distinguishing factors of the South are the exploitation of black people and the Civil War (65). In Killers of the Dream, Southern novelist and essayist Lillian Smith writes that Southerners learned but "could not admit" that

the burden our fathers had believed to be the "colored race," was our own historical past, the weight on our spirits was that of our childhood, the change we felt unable to make was the change in ourselves. We were beginning to see how intertwined are the white man's beliefs about sin and sex and segregation and

money, and his mother, and his wife, and himself; how they loop over each other and send out roots into the mythic mind, then climb into the rational mind, making a jungle hard to find a way through. (228)

The jungle was made thicker by the North's writing of Southern history, according to Frank Lawrence Owsley, who says that after the Civil War, Northerners came South to educate Southerners, Northerners wrote the history texts, and Northerners told Southerners that "the South had no history" or that Southern "history was tainted with slavery and rebellion" and should be abandoned in favor of national history (65). But at home Southerners were being told of the glory and the grandeur of their heritage, resulting in the "hate-and-honor" attitude that bred defensiveness, guilt, and pride--some of it false.

When we look at the history of the South--and we cannot really examine its literature without looking at its history--we must acknowledge the pervasive racism that did not end when slavery did and the related ambivalent attitude toward women. In these two areas Southern myth and Southern history try hardest to meet and clash the most strongly. The Southern patriarchy tried to justify both slavery and its subjection of women by paternalism, the idea that strong white Southern men would take care of child-like black people and white women. Paradoxically, in both cases the promised protection led to a victimization of both groups.

In defense of lynching, for example, Governor Cole L. Blease of South Carolina said, "Whenever the Constitution [of the United States] comes between me and the virtue of the white women of the South, I say to hell with the Constitution!" (qtd. in Cash 253). The Southern Association of Women Against Lynching disputed the claim of Blease and others that lynching protects "Southern Womanhood," and the group had some success in the decrease of lynching (Cash 311).

The defense of white Southern women gave white Southern men excuses for many of their actions. Cash explains what he calls the "gyneolatry" in the Old South (89): he says that the isolation of homes and the sentimentality placed much emphasis on family, so ". . . there grew up an unusually intense affection and respect for the women of the family--for the wife and mother upon whose activities the comfort and well-being of everybody greatly depended" (88). But Richard King says that there was a darker side to the myth of the Southern family; he asserts, in fact, that "Southern family" was in reality a contradiction, for black, illegitimate children of white fathers were denied familial status, while the myth that slaves were part of the family persisted (Southern 36). Cash also refers to miscegenation in his discussion of the worship of Southern white womanhood. He writes that "gyneolatry" was the Southern white woman's compensation for her

husband's unfaithfulness to her with his slaves (89). "She was the South's Palladium this Southern woman. . . . Merely to mention her was to send strong men into tears--or shouts" (Cash 89). Sermons and speeches paid tribute to her, and Cash asserts that the Confederacy probably thought that it was "for her that they fought" (89). He says that Southerners, as all losers, fought "for God and Womanhood and Holy Right," not for anything so crass and unbeautiful as the preservation of slavery" (130).

A toast at a fraternity party at the University of Alabama began with the leader standing on a block of ice and holding a glass of water. The men toasted

To Woman, lovely woman of the Southland, as pure and chaste as this sparkling water, as cold as this gleaming ice, we lift this cup, and we pledge our hearts and our lives to the protection of her virtue and chastity. (qtd. in Cash 339-40)

The cold, inhuman objects in the similes indicate the lack of humanity with which Southern white women were perceived.

According to Cash, the presence of black people in the South helped sentimentalize the Southern white woman. Because the white man made her inaccessible to the black man, her value seemed to increase (87). Cash also writes, "What Southerners felt, therefore, was that any assertion of any kind on the part of the Negro constituted in a perfectly real manner an attack on the Southern woman" (119). He theorizes that part of the desire to protect

white women from black men was a desire to preserve the purity of the white race (119), a concern that did not exist when white men had sex with black women, as the offspring of such a relationship would be considered black, not white. Many lynchings resulted from rape hysteria, the fear that after emancipation freed black men would rape white women (Cash 117). That white women represented the South made an attack on one of them an attack on the whole region (Cash 118), resulting in communal response even to the threat of such an assault. Smith says that segregation put white Southern women "on that lonely pedestal called Sacred Womanhood" (Killers 137), which silenced her; convention did not allow her to accuse her husband openly of miscegenation (Cash 88). The myth of the Old South reinforced that of the Southern lady and "Southern virtue," placing even more restrictions on her (Cash 131).

In Killers of the Dream, Lillian Smith analyzes the treatment of Southern women and black people in the first half of this century. Richard King denigrates some of Smith's ideas, criticizing her for "trying to redress an imbalance in her own life" by directing a girls' camp and emphasizing "the importance of the body" (Southern 190). (We might suspect King of homophobia, as a woman, Paula Snelling, was Smith's companion much of her life.) On the other hand, King argues that Smith's theories work

better for men than for women, citing her explanation of miscegenation as partly a result of white man's "desire for the black mother's breast" (Southern 190). King also says that Smith sentimentalized the black surrogate mother (Southern 191). But he does not refute all Smith's theories of the South and racism. He explains,

At the heart of Smith's analysis was the family romance and the problem of the "two mothers." Of all the analysts of the South, Smith alone focused on women's role in the patriarchal tradition. According to her, the key to race relations was the "mammy" tradition in the comfortable classes of the South. Among a relatively small but crucial segment of Southern society--the upper class and the relatively well-off middle class--young white children were commonly brought up and even nursed by black women who worked for white families. (Southern 187)

Smith explains that though lower-class white women did not have this experience, the romance perpetuated the myth that all Southern culture resembled the fantasy. Also, King summarizes,

Poor white women envied the elevated status of better-off white women, and poor white men accepted the white upper-class male fantasies about black women. Thus the cultural tradition and its fantasized ideals pervaded white Southern society.

The chief victims were white women. Their idealization and etherealization meant that husbands and children, particularly sons, looked to black women as the source of warmth and security, of sensuality and the pleasures of the body. (Southern 187-88)

Smith herself says that white men dehumanized women of both races, white women by encouraging frigidity and

chastity; black women by using them as slaves and sex objects (Killers 120).

Smith speaks of her own experience as a Southern child, especially her relationship with Aunt Chloe, her black nurse. Smith tells of a time Aunt Chloe chewed food and gave it to her when she staged a hunger strike to protest her replacement as the baby (Killers 130). But she learned that Aunt Chloe was not to be loved like a mother; "The mother who taught me what I know of tenderness and love and compassion taught me also the bleak rituals of keeping Negroes in their 'place'" (Killers 27). So, Smith writes,

I knew that my old nurse who had cared for me through long months of illness, who had given me refuge when a little sister took my place as the baby of the family, who soothed, fed me, delighted me with her stories and games, let me fall asleep on her deep warm breast, was not worthy of the passionate love I felt for her but must be given instead a half-smiled-at affection similar to that which one feels for one's dog. I knew but I never believed it, that the deep respect I felt for her, the tenderness, the love, was a childish thing which every normal child outgrows . . . and that somehow . . . I too must outgrow these feelings. . . . I learned to cheapen with tears and sentimental talk of "my old mammy" one of the profound relationships of my life. (Killers 28-29)

The black mother surrogate is at the heart of Smith's discussion of the Southern family. Smith writes that the black woman was often the wet nurse, giving her tremendous influence in white families, who seemed unable to rear their own children (Killers 129-30). Smith says she often saw "a black woman with a dark baby at one breast and a

white one at the other. . ." (Killers 130). Consequently, white women seemed out of control of their own homes; "[i]n the front yard was a patriarchal system; in the back yard a [black] matriarchy" (Killers 117), and the white woman was squeezed out. As a result, "[i]n the big white house a white lady was corseting her feelings and those of her children in an effort to be 'pure'" (Smith, Killers 117). Smith writes that the white "patriarchal-puritanic system psychically castrated its women, who in turn psychically castrated their children . . ." (Killers 118). She says that Southern white women, victims of repression, repressed their children, who repressed black people while trying to escape repression. Unfortunately, escapes often took the forms of "alcoholism, neuroses, divorce, . . . race-hate and brutality . . ." (Killers 153).

Smith explains the two-mothers dichotomy and its result: Southern white women's rigidity and fear, caused by patriarchy, forced them to make their children into automatons, who rigidly adhered to duty. Black nurses, on the other hand, encouraged them to be free and act like children. Therefore, goodness and unhappiness were associated with white mothers, while badness and joy were associated with black nurses (Killers 151). White mothers, Smith says, instilled a strong "conscience" in their children, including loyalty to Southern tradition (Killers 136). They taught children the rules of their society, especially

sexual and racial taboos, reinforcing chastity and segregation (Killers 83-84). In order to take back some power from patriarchal husbands and beloved black nurses, some white Southern mothers became compulsive "about the training of their children" (Smith, Killers 150). These women mounted the pedestals men created for them and "played 'statue,'" Smith says (Killers 141); she calls the women who silently mourned their loss of family, power, and identity "ghost women" (Killers 139-40) because they were hardly seen as people, even in their own homes. She calls "humiliating" white women's having to share their men and children with black women, especially having to pretend not to object to black women's taking over their roles as mothers (Killers 138-39).

Lillian Smith argues that the repression felt by the white mother and passed on to her children caused them to feel torn between love for their black nurse and loyalty to their white mother (Killers 131-32). She writes, ". . . [N]early all men--and women--of the dominant class in the South suffered . . . this special southern trauma in which segregation not only divided the races but divided the white child's heart" (Killers 134). The love these children felt for their black nurses, Smith says, came about not only because white mothers were repressed but also because "these old black matriarchs knew secrets of child rearing and of sanity" that neither psychiatrists

nor white mothers really knew (Killers 117). While white mothers were teaching children to toe the class and race line, "Mammy in Dixie and Nanny in England" were teaching "moderation and justice and mercy and value of human life" (Smith, Killers 137). Although Smith admits that those affected were few, white upper- and upper-middle-class people, she believes that the effects were profound (Killers 128). In fact, she believes that the attraction of white men to black women was Oedipal, an attempt to recreate the love they felt for their black "mammies" (Killers 127-28). Smith describes three Southern "ghost relationships: white man and colored woman, white father and colored children, white child and his beloved colored nurse . . ." (Killers 134).

Even lower-class white women, Smith believes, were strongly affected by the racial code. Although treated almost as badly as black people--segregated from men in church, required to work hard on the farm (and later in factories), impregnated almost yearly, and not allowed to vote--they were flattered that they were "Southern women," and thus to be protected from black men (Killers 169).

So to Lillian Smith, everyone in the South was victimized by a racist patriarchy: white men were confused because their wives seemed frigid and black women seemed both alluring and maternal; white women were powerless

because white men ruled the public world and black women ruled white families; white children were confused about why their mothers seemed aloof and powerless, while their black surrogates were loving but not really family; black men feared lynching because of myths of their interest in white women; black women were victims of white men who could use them sexually with impunity and of a system that put them in white homes but told them they did not belong in a white world; and black children had to share their mothers with white children. Smith's indictment of a segregated South exposes most of its myths as lies. Smith condemns a way of life glorified in Southern rhetoric and literature before the twentieth century (and still mourned today in parts of the South).

The idea that the upper-class Southern child was torn between white mother and black, perhaps even isolated from the white one by the black one, is, according to Leslie Fiedler, a theme in Edgar Allan Poe's The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym. Fiedler notes the common critical opinion that Pym is probably Poe, for the most part, and reminds us that Poe was a Southerner, reared, though not born, in Richmond. The critic says,

It was . . . his mother whom Poe was pursuing in his disguise as Pym: that lost, pale mother, white with the whiteness of milk and the pallor of disease; and the imaginary voyage is a long regression to childhood. But hostilely guarding the last access to the White Goddess, stands the black killer, Too-Wit. In the

ultimate reaches of his boyhood, where he had confidently looked for some image of maternal comfort and security, Poe-Pym finds both the white chasm and cascade and the black womb sealed off by black warriors. Surely, the latter fantasies represent memories of the black mammy and the black milk brother, who has sucked at the same black breast. (88-89)

Fiedler continues, ". . . [I]n dreams . . . the foster-brother arises to destroy and crush, to block the way to the lost, pale mother who preceded the Negro nurse" (89).

Lillian Smith would say that the patriarchal system, not the black foster-brother, blocked the white child from both birth mother and foster mother. But she would not deny the accuracy of Poe's nightmare of the separation of the child and the two mothers.

Richard King writes of the Southern family romance that dominated popular literature both before and after Reconstruction. The romance glorified plantation life, patriarchy, and racial and gender stereotypes. The South was seen as a metaphoric extension of the family ("Simple" 26-38). King writes that in this genre, the father was central, and that "[p]owerful though the Southern woman might be in fact, she was distinctly subordinate in the romance to the powerful and heroic father," dominant over only slaves and children ("Simple" 34-35). King says that the woman in the family romance was "mistress of the plantation," like Ellen O'Hara in Gone With the Wind.

She was seen as asexual, almost a virgin mother, like women in Victorian England (King, "Simple" 35).

Agrarian John Donald Wade in I'll Take My Stand wrote an essay in the form of a story, "The Life and Death of Cousin Lucius," a romantic tale of a man from the Old South who, unfortunately, lives in the New. His wife, Cousin Caroline, is a stereotypical Southern lady. Although the family is financially distressed by the Civil War and Reconstruction, Caroline still has parties and brings back "the tradition of generous living that seemed native to them" (279). Despite her frailty, Caroline perpetuates traditions such as religious devotion and family values, including helping her husband develop a closer relationship with his father (Wade 279-80).

Although many nineteenth-century Southern writers both before and after the Civil War glamorized the Old South, Northern writers had long attacked slavery. Using religious, sentimental, moral, and other arguments to refute Southern romances and political rhetoric, writers such as Harriet Beecher Stowe had a tremendous impact on the nation. Exposing the selling of children and parents away from each other was a powerful way to show the horrors of slavery. Miscegenation became one of the themes by which the abolitionist writers, especially women, attacked slavery because it almost always resulted from a white man's abuse of a black woman, betraying both black women

and white and demoralizing black men. Lorenzo Dow Turner points out that Stowe and her imitators used the separation of parents from their children not only to condemn slavery but to show its immoral effects on masters (72-79, 94).

At the turn of the century, most Southern writers were still writing sentimental "I wish I was in de land ob cotton" novels. As Theodore Gross writes, "Southern writers of the Reconstruction did not create a literature of artistic merit--they produced propaganda. . . . [T]hey promoted the lasting impression of the 'tragic era'" (71). Such propaganda did not end with Reconstruction. A notable exception was Mark Twain, not a true Southern writer because he was from Missouri, a slave state that did not secede, but a soldier (albeit briefly) for the Confederacy before becoming an abolitionist. Of course Adventures of Huckleberry Finn attacks the immorality of slavery, but Twain's more pointed attack on the institution is Pudd'nhead Wilson. Like earlier abolitionist writers, Twain treats the theme of miscegenation. Like many other writers, Southern and not, he makes one of his characters motherless. And as was not uncommon in the South, even when the white mother was alive, a black woman reared both her child and a white one. The confusion, of course, arises from miscegenation: The "black" woman is only one-sixteenth black, and her "black" child has a white father. The death of the white child's mother allows the nurse to change

the identities of the babies, illustrating how ludicrous the entire system is and how much of racial identity is induced by society. Leslie Fiedler says the novel illustrates that

all sons of the South, whether counted in the census as black or white, are symbolically the offspring of black mothers and white fathers, products of a spiritual miscegenation at the very least, which compounds the evil of slavery with an additional evil. The whitest aristocrat has nestled up to a black teat; the dullest slave may have been sired by some pure-blooded F. F. V. blade, discharging his blind lust upon a field wench or a house servant. (95)

Miscegenation, black women's rearing white women's children, and the selling of children away from their parents all show the connection of the treatment of women and of black people in the slave-holding South. Of course, selling children and parents away from one another ended with slavery, but miscegenation and the black nurse did not. Both practices left children confused about racial and family identity.

The Southern racist patriarchy that lingered long after the Civil War took great pains to clarify those identity crises, with rules about bloodlines and designations such as mulatto, quadroon, and octoroon (all of which meant "black" for most purposes) and myths that echoed the family romance. All this posturing was to keep black people from feeling that they belonged in the homes where they served or the land to which they had been dragged.

As a result, black Southerners did not see the South as the motherland. Whether or not they remembered Africa, most considered it their homeland, with America, especially the South, a poor substitute. One of the common themes of many spirituals is the desire to be taken "home." Of course that home is almost always seen as a spiritual home--heaven--but the predominance of the motif indicates that black Southerners certainly did not believe they were "home" in the South. So they sang "Swing low, sweet chariot, coming for to carry me home" and "Sometimes I feel like a motherless child, so far from home," and "Sometimes I feel like I want to go home."

The idea that home was Africa is expressed in the myth among slaves that some black people had the gift of being able to fly back home. Toni Morrison uses this myth in Song of Solomon, in which the protagonist searches for his roots by tracing his father's and aunt's migrations backward to the South, then using clues from a children's game song and stories told to him by his grandparents' townspeople to trace his roots back even farther. He learns of an ancestor, Solomon, who, according to legend, fled slavery by flying back to Africa.

The desire to flee the South is understandable, both during slavery and for decades after emancipation. Any student of American history hardly needs to be reminded of the horrors of slavery, when entire families lived in

one-room cabins no bigger than tobacco barns (the one Booker T. Washington was reared in still stands, as does the larger tobacco barn, in Virginia), when rations of food and clothing were barely enough for subsistence, when slaves were worked literally as long as the sun shone, when black women were subject to the sexual whims of white men, and when at any time any slave could be sold away from his or her family.

Although they did not fly, some former slaves did return to Africa, to colonize Liberia, founded in 1821. But colonization was the idea of white people rather than black; for a time, many abolitionists, including Thomas Jefferson and other Southerners, strongly favored sending freed slaves back to Africa (Lorenzo Dow Turner 44-48, 100). Even Stowe thought that black people could reach their fullest potential only in Africa; unlike most Southerners, though, she did advocate educating and Christianizing former slaves before colonizing them (Lorenzo Dow Turner 103).

Many people objected to colonization, however. Some abolitionists feared that removing free black people from America would leave slaves as the only black people here (Lorenzo Dow Turner 45). Slave owners believed that colonization was just another way to take from them their means of maintaining their livelihood. The result of all these objections was that only a few thousand liberated black

people settled in Liberia, and the colonization movement never became very large (Divine et al. 313). Agrarian Robert Penn Warren asserts that the movement failed not because of objections of white people but because black people themselves did not want to go to Africa for fear of the jungle ("Briar" 246). Writings by black people, however, do not appear to support Warren's contentions.

The African colonization idea resurfaced in the early 1920's with Marcus Garvey, a black Jamaican, who argued for black separatism. He wanted to unite black people internationally, freeing Africa from foreign empiricism and colonizing it with black people only. Garvey's plan was controversial with both black and white Americans, but the number of black adherents would not support Warren's claim that for them "America . . . was home" and "the jungle . . . was mysterious and deadly" ("Briar" 246). In fact, Malcolm X's father, the Reverend Earl Little, was a fervent Garvey disciple (Malcolm X 1-3). Garvey failed, partly because his plan would have required Caesar, Napoleon, and Genghis Khan together to carry out, and partly because he did not have the business sense to run the ocean liner company he started (Divine et al. 734-35). But Garvey's efforts reminded black Americans of their African heritage and emphasized black pride (Divine et al. 735).

That pride in African heritage also appeared in literature. In Lorraine Hansbury's play A Raisin in the

Sun, daughter Beneatha Younger becomes interested in a Nigerian student, Joseph Asagai; she listens to African music and eschews straightened hair for a natural look. In Alice Walker's short story "Everyday Use," college student Dee becomes interested in her African heritage as well. On a visit home, she greets her mother with the news that she has changed her name to Wangero Leewanika Kemanjo and introduces her boyfriend, Hakim-a-barber, or so her mother hears. She then proceeds to celebrate her more recent heritage by trying to take useful objects, such as a butter churn and quilts, from her mother's home to use as decorations. Dee/Wangero's mother's decision to give the quilts to her other daughter, Maggie, who will put them to everyday use, illustrates Walker's position that one's heritage is one's life, not artificial names and decorations. In The Color Purple, Walker uses the connection to Africa in a more positive way; Celie is reunited with her children and sister when they return from Africa, symbolically reuniting the black people of both continents.

The African heritage movement continues to be quite popular, with many black Americans--Muhammed Ali, Kareem Abdul-Jabbar, Imamu Amiri Baraka, and El-Hajj Malik El-Shabazz (Malcolm X), to name a few--converting to the Muslim faith and taking African names. Even the desire to be called African-Americans reflects this pride.

The displacement of black Americans occurred not once, but three times. First, Africans were taken from their motherland and brought to America, where they were treated not as adopted children, not even as step-children, but as chattel. That the South, where most black people were slaves, did not become home to them is not at all unbelievable. The second displacement took place when slaves were emancipated. As Lillian Smith points out, after the Civil War, the

South was in chaos. Many [white Southerners] had lost their citizenship, homes, possessions, and were psychological aliens in their own beloved country. And suddenly four million Negroes were "freed" with nowhere to go, nowhere to sleep, no work, no food, "no place," no schools. (Killers 63)

The result was massive migration. Freed slaves were promised "Forty acres and a mule" by those in charge of Reconstruction, but that promise was broken. Most black people stayed in the South for three generations (Woodward, Burden 223); a few even stayed on the plantations where they had been slaves, working for wages or share-cropping, still homeless and living on someone else's property; some went West to find land; but most looked for other free black people and set up communities wherever they could. Ernest Gaines in his novel The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman writes about this phenomenon, and Margaret Walker and Alex Haley chronicle it in their respective historical

novels about their ancestors, Jubilee and Roots. White writers have not ignored the migration, either; William Faulkner mentions it in The Unvanquished, for example. Many families were displaced by emancipation, and some were separated. An Indian whose daughter had become separated from her mother, a slave, left the child with some of my Grimes ancestors when she was nine; she lived with members of my family until her death over eight decades later. Other former slaves wandered in search of family members who had been sold away, so emancipation sometimes led to reunions as well as separations.

Because slavery had been so horrible, it may seem strange that the displacement of emancipation was unsettling. But slaves had created some stability for themselves even on plantations. Most black families were two-parent households, and with the conversion to Christianity came an emphasis on marital fidelity, even among people from polygamous African nations (Divine et al. 347). There was also a strong sense of extended family:

Kinship ties were not limited to blood relations. When families were broken up by sale, individual members who found themselves on plantations far from home were likely to be "adopted" into new kinship networks. Orphans or children without responsible parents were quickly absorbed without prejudice into new families. (Divine et al. 348)

The third loss of motherland for black Americans was the mass migration to Northern cities at the turn of the

century. Although many black Southerners had established homes in the South, trying to eke out a living as a share-cropper became increasingly difficult as the land became even more depleted and agribusiness took over most of the agricultural market. In 1880, per capita wealth of Southerners was \$376, compared to \$1,186 for other Americans (Woodward, "Search" 17). The likelihood is that black Southerners fell far below the average. Another problem in the South was huge population growth, resulting in a glut of workers, leading to low wages and, consequently, emigration, as well as to less land and smaller farms (Cash 283-84). Some Southern industries would not hire black people. Others would, but when jobs became scarce in the South, the North, where Jim Crow laws and lynch mobs were less common, seemed inviting. Life for black Americans was not perfect in the North, either; there were race riots in the cities, and wages were so low in factories that every member of the family, including children, had to work ten to twelve hours a day just to make ends meet. However, white people were working just as hard for just as little, and black people who returned to the South to live or to visit reported that legal equality did exist in the North (Cash 319).

Besides economic reasons to leave the South, black Southerners wanted to escape the racism that permeated the region. In the 1890's, Mississippi and other Southern

states had passed poll taxes, grandfather clauses, literacy tests, and property qualifications for voting in order to disfranchise black men (King, Southern 24); women, no matter what their race, were not yet allowed the vote. King points out that the South was really more segregated after the "separate-but-equal" Plessy v. Ferguson decision in 1896 than it was before the Civil War (Southern 23). Legally sanctioned racism reflected the attitudes of white Southerners, even the educated. In the 1920's, John Crowe Ransom wrote, "Slavery was a feature monstrous enough in theory, but, more often than not, humane in practice . . ." ("Reconstructed" 14). Another Agrarian, Frank Lawrence Owsley, called former slaves "half-savage blacks" (62) and said that part of the reason slavery had to be preserved for so long was to control black people, who were "cannibals and barbarians" (77). Tremaine McDowell asserted that black people are optimistic, funny, talented, pious, lazy, deceitful, irresponsible, grumbling, rebellious, licentious, insolent, barbaric, adaptable, fatalistic, and always happy (68-69). Cash writes that "the Negro is notoriously one of the world's greatest romantics and one of the world's greatest hedonists" (51). Woodward says that white romantics saw black people as

the natural man, the simple child of nature, untainted by the malaise of civilization and untrammelled by its inhibitions, its compromises, and its instinctual deprivation. The Modern Negro, like the Noble Savage,

was endowed with the compensatory graces of simplicity, naturalness, sponteneity, and uninhibited sexuality. ("What Happened" 180)

If these were the opinions of the intelligentsia, one can imagine the attitudes of uneducated white Southerners toward their black neighbors, attitudes that were expressed not just in words but also in beatings and lynchings.

World War I exacerbated the northern migration of black Southerners. The war caused a shortage of labor in Northern factories, so industries recruited black laborers to fill those jobs. This caused labor shortages in the South, and white Southern factory and farm owners, out of desperation, used violence to try to keep black workers from leaving. Of course, the violent tactics backfired, making black people even more anxious to leave the South. Therefore, the mass migration to the North escalated (Cash 312-13). By the time of the Civil Rights movement, more black people lived in the North than in the South (Woodward, Burden 225-26).

The result of the three displacements of black people in America--from Africa, from Southern plantations, and from the South itself--is that they are three times removed from a motherland. The first has become the mythic motherland, a place that exists on a map but not in the memory of most black Americans, and not in reality as it did when their ancestors left it. The second was always,

at best, a wicked stepmotherland, forcing black people to do all the work while its own children made all the rules and reaped all the benefits, including going to the balls. The third is a sort of surrogate motherland, opening its arms to black laborers when they are needed and giving them a sort of equality with their siblings, but not providing the warmth and sense of belonging that a real motherland would.

Of course, only American Indians can truly claim America as their motherland. But white Americans who chose to come to the New World have made America their homeland, most remembering no other, real or mythic. Black Americans and Southern Americans do not have the same experience with this country that white Americans from other regions have. Most black Americans did not choose to be here. And the South feels in ways like an abused stepchild, beaten severely by the country that wanted to keep it in the family and that, in the process, killed the true motherland, the Old South.

The result is that Southerners, both black and white, continually write fiction, historical novels, and autobiographies in which mothers are dead, absent, paralyzed, or incompetent. In these works, young protagonists are sometimes unmothered, sometimes have other family members to care for them, and sometimes have kind surrogates. But all of them are somehow displaced, and

all of them seem to be searching to belong to someone or something. White children in these works are usually, but not always, at home but deserted, in one way or another, by their mothers. Black children are more likely to be not only motherless but also removed from home, if there has even been a home.

The phenomena of motherlessness and displacement from the motherland are joined in the histories of Southerners, white Southerners left motherless after the defeat of the Old South in the Civil War, and black Southerners removed not only from the original motherland, Africa, but also from their foster homes. The dead or absent mother, then, is the lost motherland, more glorious in memory and myth than either could have been in reality.

CHAPTER IV

THE ABSENT MOTHER AS FREEDOM

Scarlett wanted very much to be like her mother. The only difficulty was that by being just and truthful and tender and unselfish, one missed most of the joys of life, and certainly many beaux. And life was too short to miss such pleasant things. Some day when she was married to Ashley and old, some day when she had time for it, she intended to be like Ellen. But, until then . . .

--Margaret Mitchell, Gone With the Wind

Richard H. King, discussing literature by and about white Southerners, says, ". . . [T]he question of the mother must be raised: where is she?" He continues,

Tate's The Fathers opens with the death of Lacy Buchan's mother. . . . In Lillian Smith's writings her mother remains opaque, and Carson McCullers's fiction lacks the stabilizing or energizing force of (white) female figures. And, indeed, in Faulkner the mother and women in general seem to move more and more to the periphery as we move from Flags in the Dust to "The Bear." When a woman makes an appearance she is the promiscuous sister or neurasthenic mother (The Sound and the Fury), the ethereal mother and mindless daughter (in Absalom, Absalom!), or the grasping temptress-wife in "The Bear." At best, she stands sexless and Cassandra-like on the fringes, passing judgment on the foolishness of men. But she is never at the center. (Southern 140-41)

Of course, there are Southern novels with white women at the center: Kate Chopin's The Awakening, Margaret Mitchell's Gone With the Wind, Eudora Welty's The Optimist's Daughter, Lisa Alther's Kinflicks, Candace Flynt's Mother

Love, Jill McCorkle's Tending to Virginia, Clyde Egerton's Raney, and numerous others. But most were written by women in this half of the twentieth century, and even those are rarely about mothers; when they are, the mothers are often dead by the end of the novel and worthless or even harmful while alive.

The phenomenon of the absent mother is so common in literature that it should not seem odd in Southern novels. However, very few other cultures revere women the way the South does. Almost no Southern historian or scholar in the field of Southern culture fails to mention the high esteem in which white Southern women have been held. In Encyclopedia of Southern Culture, Thomas D. Clark writes that even in the rural patriarchal South, the mother held the family together; she was responsible for religion, medicine, and family events (9). At Stone Mountain in Georgia, a statue called "Sacrifice" of a woman with a baby on her shoulder stands as a tribute to Southern womanhood (Edgar 646). Anne Goodwyn Jones points out that the Southern lady is the only woman seen as the personification of her region ("Belles" 1528). Orville Vernon Burton says that ". . . to insult any southern mother is to insult Virtue, Piety, Honor, and the South" (1111).

If the Southern mother, especially the Southern white mother, is such an important ideal, why is she so often absent in Southern literature? That question is no easier

to answer than whether the absent mother archetype in Otto Rank's hero myth is fantasy or fear. In Southern literature, too, the answer is probably both.

Literature by white Southerners in which mothers are dead or absent divides into two general categories: fiction in which the loss of the mother represents the end of the past--specifically, the death of the Old South--and fiction in which the absence of the mother frees the child, usually from the oppressive patriarchy of the South. These categories are neither exhaustive nor mutually exclusive, but the patterns are recognizable.

In works by white Southern women, the absent mother often symbolizes freedom. Because the role of the Southern mother is partly to prepare her daughter to live in a patriarchy, the daughter who chooses to be someone other than a self-sacrificing wife and mother needs to free herself of the person who wants to mold her into those roles and to remove that example of the way women must live. Therefore, despite the fact that very few female Southern writers have actually been motherless, many have made their characters, especially those who are female, motherless.

In some works by Southern women, the absent mother does represent the lost South, and sometimes the motherless child suffers greatly from her absence. Motherless boys in literature by female Southerners seem especially lost.

But girls more often seem freed from following the pattern of the powerless, idolized Southern woman.

A look at the lives of Southern white women provides ample reasons for women to want to break free of the mold. Even though the Southern lady was cherished, an attitude which carried over to other white women, the pedestal was more a prison than a throne. The Southern belle was a flirt, with limited freedom and responsibility, except to be innocent enough to be marriageable, flirtatious enough to snare a beau, and wise enough to entice the right man (one wealthy and well born enough to meet her father's approval). Martha E. Cook writes that the "prevailing roles in fiction for the southern white female are the lady-mother and the belle" (868) and that "refusal to play the role of belle can have grave consequences, as seen in Faulkner's *Drusilla Hawk* and *Caddy Compson*" (869).

Refusal to play the belle also often led to failure to marry, although surely some women chose not to marry because they had witnessed the lot of the Southern wife and mother and did not want to follow that path. Catherine Clinton points out that in Southern literature, many women choose not to marry in order to maintain their freedom ("Maiden" 1553-54), but, historically, the lot of single Southern women has not been desirable, either. They were the spinsters, the "maiden aunts," perhaps loved by the family, but without the status or even the money of married

women, for they forfeited their dowries by failing to marry (Clinton, "Maiden" 1553). They often stayed with married siblings, caring for children, cooking, acting almost as servants in order to earn their keep. Acting as surrogate mothers to their nieces and nephews often was carried even farther; occasionally a sibling who had several daughters would let one live with an aunt who had no daughters of her own, and often a woman who feared she would die in childbirth asked her unmarried sister to care for her children if needed, and maybe even to marry the widower (Clinton, "Maiden" 1553). But generally, the unmarried Southern woman was totally dependent on the kindness of her married siblings and later her nieces and nephews, as without a husband she had neither status nor money to support herself, and going to public work would degrade her if she were not of the lower or lower middle class.

So most women in the South married, usually when they were still teenagers. They moved from their fathers' houses to those of their husbands. Expectations upon them were enormous and often contradictory. Charles Reagan Wilson says that the Southern white lady was expected to be fragile, pure, and spiritual ("Beauty" 600). Anne Prior Scott says that she should be "timid and modest, beautiful and graceful" (qtd. in Wilson, "Beauty" 600). Burton says that the Southern woman was seen as flighty and dependent (1112). (We remember Scarlett O'Hara's frequent

"fiddle-dee-dee.") Richard H. King asserts that in a patriarchal society, white women "were seen as children of sorts . . ." (Southern 128).

On the other hand, the Southern woman had a tremendous amount of responsibility. When she married, she went from being the belle to acting as the manager of a household. An 1852 Alabama code spelled out the responsibilities of both husband and wife: The husband was to provide a home and other material needs for his family, while

[t]he legal responsibilities of a wife [were] to live in the home established by her husband; to perform the domestic chores (cleaning, cooking, washing, etc.) necessary to help maintain that home; to care for her husband and children. (Hull 1556)

Burton writes that the Southern woman in the nineteenth century had duties not very different from those of any other American woman:

Historically, the southern woman was the guardian of the family. She had children with remarkable frequency. . . . When she was not confined to bed in pregnancy or childbirth, environmental, social, and economic conditions dictated her day to day routines: gardening, canning, preserving, cooking; spinning, weaving, sewing, knitting; washing, ironing, cleaning; nursing and caring for husband, children, friends, and animals. (1111)

Emory Thomas says that especially during the Civil War women worked hard; in addition to family duties, they served as nurses, farmers, and even factory workers (604). Burton also writes that the Southern woman was expected to be

morally superior to her husband and to inculcate morals in her children (1111). Anne Jones asserts that after marriage, a belle becomes a lady of responsibility, who submits to patriarchy, stays out of public life, and becomes a symbol of the traditional South. Jones says that the rules for the Southern lady are similar to those for any American lady or Victorian Englishwoman: "All deny to women authentic selfhood; all enjoin that women suffer and be still; all show women sexually pure, pious, deferent to external authority, and content with their place in the home" ("Belles" 1527-28). But the Southern woman is even more restricted by her symbolic role as personification of her region (Anne Jones, "Belles" 1528). In general, writes W. D. White,

Southern life has been dominated by the Victorian notion of the primacy of the patriarchal family, centered around a deference to the father and idealization of the mother, extended in concern and caring to children, cousins, and other kin. . . . Rooted in an unacknowledged sexism, the cultural ideal of the family elevated women to a special status and role. Women represented the altruistic virtues of nurturing, compassion, morality, and religious piety. Their place was in running the home, in educating the young, and in caring for the sick. (669)

Carol Ruth Berkin writes that our idea of the Southern woman as happy martyr, willingly doing all for her family and accepting the tribulations of a patriarchal society, is not accurate. She asserts,

Had people been listening, they would have heard

southern ladies protesting their lives. Plantation mistresses resented their lack of control over their own sexual lives . . . , and they objected to their husbands' sexual behavior. Many hated slavery, if not for its immorality and injustice, then for the burden it placed upon them as plantation mistresses. They were exhausted by their duties as arbiters of so many complex and tension-filled interracial and intraracial relationships. They resented their lack of education and the intellectual and physical isolation of their lives. Their discontent challenged the cherished image of boundless maternal devotion. (1521)

Mary Boykin Chesnut, an upper-class nineteenth-century South Carolinian who ran a plantation after the Civil War, voiced similar concerns about the burdens of a plantation mistress; she hated slavery because miscegenation was ignored in order to protect the honor of white women (Betty L. Mitchell 851).

By contrast, women in New England could protest their second-class status, demonstrating against adverse working conditions, speaking for women's suffrage, and protesting against society's tolerance of prostitutes, who lured their husbands into sin. Some even used a connection with anti-slavery protests to remind America that women, too, were not treated as equals in this democracy, a connection abolitionist William Lloyd Garrison encouraged.

Southern women were not allowed such protest. They were too isolated from one another to organize, and their churches and society reminded them constantly of how noble, wonderful, and ethereal they were, certainly not the sort

of people who would mention that their children looked stangely like some of the slave children, or that their husbands were in the slave quarters awfully late, or that being on a pedestal is not as enjoyable as being a person. And some did not want to protest; Louisa McCord argues that Southern men were so violent that women needed to stay on their pedestals for their own protection (Anne Jones, "Belles" 1529).

Therefore, most suffered in silence. A few, such as the Grimké sisters, daughters of a slave-owner but abolitionists themselves, escaped to the North. Some pretended to submit but surreptitiously rebelled (Anne Jones, "Belles" 1530). Some were fortunate enough to have husbands whom they loved, husbands who were truly decent, not just sham gentlemen, Ashley Wilkeses rather than Thomas Sutpens. But most Southern women were, in their own ways, victims of a slave-holding patriarchy, in which a strong double standard celebrated "the virtue and purity of wives and mothers" while making "certain concessions to the animal nature of males" (White 669).

If slavery was so much of the problem, why did Southern women remain discontent after emancipation? Lillian Smith and other critics of the South have pointed out that slavery did not end victimization in the South, either for former slaves or for white women. Turn-of-the-century racist and novelist Thomas Dixon, according to James Kinney,

"argued for three interrelated beliefs still current in southern life: the need for racial purity, the sanctity of the family centered on a traditional wife and mother, and the evil of socialism" (880). Kinney writes of Dixon, "Throughout his work, white southern women are the pillars of family and society, the repositories of all human idealism" (881). Dixon attacked women's suffrage, saying that women who came outside the home to participate in politics would be corrupted, and then the social morality of the entire South would be destroyed (Kinney 881). Burton says that the "madonna-whore" attitude of Southern men has persisted: Upper-class white women are worshipped, while lower-class white and all black women are considered fair game (1112). The South is traditionally anti-feminist; nine of the eleven Southern states failed to ratify the Nineteenth Amendment, and only two, one of which later rescinded its endorsement, ratified the Equal Rights Amendment (Wheeler 1543). Beauty pageants continue to extol the belle image; Robin Morgan says of them, "Where else could one find such a perfect combination of American values? Racism, militarism, and capitalism--all packaged in one 'ideal' symbol: a woman" (qtd. in Wilson, "Beauty" 603).

But what does all this stereotyping and victimization of Southern women, especially Southern mothers, have to do with dead or absent ones in literature by Southern white

women? Burton points out that Lillian Smith, Flannery O'Connor, and William Faulkner all show the damage the South has done to women trying to live up to the image of motherhood (1112). It is possible that these authors removed the mothers to show that the Southern patriarchy destroys women.

One novel that illustrates this probability is Margaret Mitchell's Gone With the Wind, published in 1936 but set during the Civil War and Reconstruction. Five or six female characters are important in that work, four of whom are white and make relevant counterparts. Two of them, Melanie Wilkes and Ellen O'Hara, submit to the patriarchy, going quietly about their business with tremendous strength, especially as nurses during the War. The other two, Scarlett O'Hara and Belle Watling, rebel.

Mrs. O'Hara has put up with her plantation-owner husband's wild antics and silliness, running the plantation and taking care of the slaves as well as the local poor whites and, with the help of Mammy, rearing her three daughters. During the War, she wards off the Yankees. But in the end, her efforts of mercy--this time, taking care of the overseer's sick wife--kill her. Ashley, Melanie's husband, goes away to fight in the War immediately after their marriage, leaving her to have their baby without a doctor. Despite ill health, Melanie nurses sick soldiers and later puts up with Scarlett's indiscreet

advances to Ashley. Ellen and Melanie are the sainted Southern women, the paragons. And they die. Anne Jones writes, "Because Ellen dies before the war ends, we do not see what Scarlett's model of the great lady would do after the war, and we are left only with the prewar vision of total acceptance" ("Bad" 108).

Belle Watling is a madam. She certainly lives outside the social code. She may be condemned and ostracized, but men have a lot of fun at her place, and she has enough money to give a sizeable amount to the Confederate hospital in Atlanta. Belle also gives the vigilante husbands of the fine Southern women an alibi when the men go to clean up the shanty town where Scarlett was attacked; the wives sit reading Dickens as the brothel owner saves their husbands.

But the book's heroine is Scarlett, a Southern belle, then matron, then widow, then matron, then widow, then matron. But generally people remember her as the belle of Tara and the scrappy woman who eats a carrot and wears draperies, the woman who fits two Southern stereotypes: the flirtatious belle with several beaux, and the tough woman who can run a plantation or a lumber mill single-handedly, with a little help from some loyal former slaves. In reality, Scarlett fits the stereotypes, but only on the surface. For Scarlett is not subservient to men. She uses her first husband to get back at Ashley Wilkes

for marrying Melanie, her second to get money to save Tara, and Rhett Butler for a bit of everything. It is true that she is a victim of Rhett's sexual infidelity at Belle Watling's brothel, but he is also a victim of her vanity. Scarlett takes care of her children (although the movie gives Scarlett only one child, Bonnie Blue, in the novel she has three, one with each husband, and one miscarriage), as well as Melanie and her son, Beau; the plantation, Tara; and assorted dependent servants. She even shoots a Yankee. Louis Rubin points out that the Civil War liberates Scarlett, who "does not wish to be a lady" ("Scarlett" 179). Like Atlanta, he says, Scarlett takes advantage of the War to develop into a commercial success ("Scarlett" 178). But Scarlett's independence begins when she returns to Tara near the end of the war and learns that her mother is dead. Thereafter, Scarlett no longer has to try to live up to the woman she had always confused with the Virgin Mary (Margaret Mitchell 60).

And if Rhett doesn't give a damn? There is little doubt that Miss Scarlett will be just fine. Scarlett has all the mettle of the Southern woman with none of the subservience. She is the mistress of her own fate, as well as Tara and the lumber mill. So, except for the loyal "darkies," Gone With the Wind is not nearly as much a celebration of the myth of the Old South as most people think. Almost no Southern man wants to be Ashley Wilkes,

and almost no Southern woman wants to be Melanie or Ellen O'Hara. Rhett and Scarlett, who thumb their noses at Southern conventions, are the hero and heroine of that novel, and they are New South, with just a veneer of the Old, entrepreneurs, not agrarians.

It is also probable that Southern women who write novels with dead or absent mothers are saying symbolically, "This is what the patriarchy does to women, and we want no part of it." To understand the relevance of this argument, one must remember two ideas: First, girls learn to be women from their mothers; second, in order to gain freedom, an adolescent must symbolically destroy his or her restrictive parent or parents. Therefore, if an author wants to let a girl grow up to be free from the strictures of the Southern patriarchy, that girl must not be hampered by a mother who submits to it and has control over the child. So Faulkner creates girls such as Caddy Compson, who rebel completely against their mothers' submissiveness. But most white female Southern authors free female adolescents from the patriarchy by disposing of the mother altogether.

New Criticism has pushed biographical criticism out of favor, perhaps rightly so. But any student of Southern female writers cannot ignore the fact that almost all of the important ones, except Katherine Anne Porter, whose mother died when the author was two, were not motherless,

as many of the Victorian novelists who wrote of motherless children were. In fact, most female Southern writers had mothers who were very important in their lives. Carson McCullers's mother reportedly wrote to her daughter every day the first time the two were apart (Virginia Spencer Carr 47); the two women were quite interdependent and often lived together. In One Writer's Beginnings, Eudora Welty writes frequently about her mother's influence on the writer's love of books and her great fear that she would lose her mother. Harper Lee's mother was known throughout Monroeville, Alabama. A brilliant woman who neighbor Truman Capote says could do the New York Times Sunday crossword puzzle as fast as she could move a pen, she was also a bit odd; one of Capote's first essays was a comic piece about Mrs. Lee. Flannery O'Connor, too, spent much time with her mother, living with her during the years the writer suffered from lupus.

Even more interesting, most of these authors either never married or were divorced, and almost none of them had children. Eudora Welty and Harper Lee, who became a lawyer like her sister, have never married; Flannery O'Connor died without marrying; Lillian Smith had a long-standing relationship with a woman. Carson McCullers and Katherine Anne Porter married but divorced, both more than once; McCullers also had brief relationships with women. Even Margaret Mitchell divorced her first husband

after three months, and, although she spent many of her adult years looking after men--her father, brother, and second husband--she never had children; in fact, none of these women had children, although McCullers had a medically induced abortion because of her chronic ill health (Virginia Spencer Carr 342).

The point of all this biography is that most Southern women writing in the first half of this century found a way to break out of the mold of the Southern woman. Not all of them were happily single or divorced or childless, but, nevertheless, they were not living the lives of Ellen O'Hara or Melanie Wilkes, or even of the women whose fate Lillian Smith bemoans in Killers of the Dream, who must share their men and children with black women. These authors did not sacrifice their own identities to the Southern patriarchy.

Women in the second half of this century have not been as consistently outside the norm because the norm has changed. Even in the Bible-belt South, divorce is common, and women often maintain their own identities and careers, married or not. Modern conveniences--appliances, stores, cars, and day care--make all of us less bound to the daily chores of running a household. But in the first fifty or so years of the twentieth century, almost no successful female Southern author lived a life that would have been considered typical for a Southern woman. Perhaps

their desire for freedom from conformity was one of the reasons they freed their female adolescent protagonists by removing the primary Southern female role model: the mother.

Kate Chopin, who was from St. Louis, lived only part of her life in the South, in Louisiana. However, as an early Southern woman who rebelled in her writing against the female stereotype prevalent in the South, she should be mentioned. This rebellion might have resulted, at least in part, from Chopin's being an outsider to the culture of southern Louisiana; her perspective allowed her to see more clearly the oppression under which she and women around her lived. Chopin married, had six children, lost her husband, and then began a writing career; except for the writing, she seemed to be a typical aristocratic Southern woman. But her 1899 novel The Awakening was so revolutionary that later twentieth-century feminists have rediscovered it and used it as a touchstone; for in the novel, Edna Pontellier rejects her role as wife and mother, a role she finds restrictive and unsuited to her. Her final act of rebellion is suicide, but her death by drowning possibly symbolizes rebirth.

Early in this century, Ellen Glasgow picked up the torch of rebellion. In her 1916 novel Life and Gabriella, the heroine rejects the restrictions of the role of Southern woman by becoming a Northern woman; she moves to New York

to become a fashion designer. Six years later, in Barren Ground, Glasgow created Dorinda Oakley, who, "[l]ike Glasgow herself, . . . stood above any male, father or lover or paternal deity, who would rob her of her self-realization" (MacDonald 268). The Sheltered Life, written in 1932, is about a woman who is destroyed by her attempt to be the perfect Southern woman. Her only means of escape from an oppressive marriage, she believes, is to kill her husband, for, as Edgar E. MacDonald writes, "In Richmond no romance could end with divorce, only with death" (269). MacDonald also says that the typical Southern father in Glasgow's works thinks that "the less a girl knew about life the better prepared she was to cope with it" (268). But he points out that Glasgow herself was divided between love of the aristocratic South and anger at some Southerners' blind worship of the past (267). The past can be freeing, however: The Civil War, by killing so many men and rendering so many others helpless, gave women some power, along with responsibility. MacDonald writes that Glasgow's 1902 novel about the War, The Battle-ground, shows that "[n]o war was totally lost if it liberated the female from a passive role" (267).

Glasgow herself was from a traditional Richmond family with a mother MacDonald describes as "the ideal of Southern womanhood" (266), a mother with several children and a love for the Episcopal Church. But Glasgow rejected the

church, marriage, and motherhood, instead finding fulfillment in her writing.

Katherine Anne Porter did not reject marriage, but she did not feel compelled to reject divorce, either. She did reject motherhood. Unlike almost all other Southern writers, Porter was only two when she lost her mother. Gail Mortimer says that Porter was "brought up in poverty by her severely puritanical grandmother" (893).

Porter created a semi-autobiographical character, Miranda, whose mother is dead and who is reared by her father and grandmother. Two of the best works about Miranda are the short novel Old Mortality and the short story "The Grave," both about Miranda when she was a child, and both about family and the past.

Old Mortality is set at the turn of the century. The child, Miranda, is told the family legends by her father and her grandmother. Two of the legends concern two aunts, the beautiful Amy who died tragically six weeks after she finally married her beau, and the unattractive, chinless Eva, a suffragette. Amy's widower, Gabriel, is also painted as a cavalier, an image that is belied by his besotted presence when Miranda meets him. By the end of the novel, seventeen-year-old Miranda has married to escape her family. Martha E. Cook says that Miranda "must reject the legacy of the belle with her destructive sexuality before she can live as an independent woman" (869). She is not quite

to that point at the end of Old Mortality. On a train to her uncle Gabriel's funeral, Miranda meets her chinless aunt Eva, who dispels many of the family's myths, explaining that the much-adored Amy probably committed suicide. Miranda has learned that the family's past would constrict her if she let it, just as she would be stifled if she stayed in her marriage. Porter writes at the end of Old Mortality,

Her mind closed stubbornly against remembering, not the past but the legend of the past, other people's memory of the past. . . . At least I can know the truth about what happens to me, she assured herself silently, making a promise to herself, in her hopefulness, her ignorance. (221)

Like the past her mother represented, the past the rest of her family tried to feed on was stifling to Miranda and had to be overcome. Aunt Eva has broken away to find her own life; Miranda must now understand that she cannot let her family's legends mold her life, either. She need not follow dead Amy any more than she must follow her dead mother.

"The Grave" is another story that shows that the dead can come back to haunt us. Again Miranda is a child. With no mother to dress her, she is able to get by with overalls; her grandmother, who had objected, is dead--"It was said the motherless family was running down, with the Grandmother no longer there to hold it together" (364-65).

Miranda goes hunting with her brother, and the two play in the former family cemetery, now full of holes instead of bodies because the graves had been moved so the land could be sold. In fact, this was the third time their grandfather's body had been moved, as his widow had first moved it to Louisiana and then to Texas. In one of the graves the children find a coffin screw; in another, a ring that takes Miranda's mind off hunting, until Paul kills a mother rabbit and slits open her abdomen. Both children are fascinated by the fetal bunnies, and they promise never to tell what they have seen. Of course "The Grave" is a maturation story, a story of a young girl's learning about birth and death and becoming a woman. But when Paul buries the dead fetuses inside the dead mother rabbit, the title assumes another meaning. Is part of Miranda, too, buried in her dead mother? Can the grave be exhumed to allow Miranda to find a separate identity, as the young rabbits cannot? Because of the cycles of birth and death, and because of the myths of the past, even death is not the end for a member of a Southern family.

Katherine Anne Porter's dead mother resurfaced as Miranda's dead mother. Both mothers' deaths freed their daughters to become their own persons rather than typical Southern women.

One of Porter's most famous protégées soon eclipsed her mentor in fame. At a reading in South Carolina, Eudora

Welty told of a young person who asked her why she always writes about the old days; Welty replied, "Why, when I was writing about them, they weren't the old days." Welty's longevity has allowed her to see changes in the South that most of us can only read about.

Critics often write about Welty and time. Lewis P. Simpson says that she is creating a "drama of resistance to history" in her major novels and that she sees family and community as refuges against change (173). Robert F. Kiernan says that she portrays people and families who are resistant to "the pressures of historical change" (23). He writes that in Welty's fiction, time is doom, but "memory is . . . survival" (24). Kiernan also asserts that the South is collapsing around Welty's characters.

Motherless children in Welty's fiction are not autobiographical. Welty's mother figures favorably in the writer's autobiographical pieces, and Welty writes about the closeness of her extended family, although they lived hours apart. In One Writer's Beginnings, we learn that Welty's mother and maternal grandmother wrote each other every day they were apart, from the mother's marriage until the grandmother's death (55). And like other children, Eudora feared her mother's death, partly because she connected it with her own. She learned that her parents' first child had died in infancy and that her mother had almost died. The child Eudora pondered these facts and

thought, "[N]ow I was her child. She hadn't died. And when I came, I hadn't died either. Would she ever? Would I ever? I couldn't face ever" (One 17-18). But the paradox raises its head on the next page. Welty also admits that she sometimes wanted independence but felt guilty for her desire because she loved her parents (One 19-20). The thought of being an orphan terrified her. She learned that her grandmother Allie, after whom she got her middle name, Alice, was really Almira. Welty thinks that this misremembering seemed to make her grandmother "an orphan." Welty writes, "That was worse to me than if I had been able to imagine dying" (One 65). So Welty connects identity with name, memory, and family--and its loss with death.

Welty's motherless children are usually girls in short stories; most important females in her novels are adults, except motherless Laura McRaven in Delta Wedding, who is welcomed into her dead mother's family, the Fairchilds. Only one of Welty's orphans, Easter in The Golden Apples story "Moon Lake," is remarkably free.

Easter in "Moon Lake" is a ward of the community, but with much freedom, not just from her father who deserted her and her mother who "took [her] by the hand and turned [her] in" when she could walk (358), but also from the opinions of her playmates, Jinny Love and Nina. Her disregard for them is so total that Jinny Love says of her, "Sometimes orphans act like deaf-and-dumbs" (349).

Trying to understand Easter, Nina thinks, "The reason orphans were the way they were lay first in nobody's watching them" (352). Easter sits in a boat on Moon Lake, but Jinny Love, rooted by family, chooses "the land" (354) and misses the adventure. The girls also argue over Easter's name, which she spells "Esther" and insists she gave herself; Jinny brags about being named after family, but she envies Easter's independently chosen identity. Nina wants the freedom and excitement of having been an orphan, having lived another life. She tries to make her hand catch a moonbeam as Easter's does. But her hand catches only numbness; she cannot be reborn as an orphan, a person in charge of herself. In the end, the two girls who have envied Easter's freedom vow to "always be old maids" (374), but they immediately rejoin the group, and we know that they cannot escape their fate as Southern women, destined to marry and be part of the patriarchy. By giving Easter up, her mother freed her to be her own person, to choose her own identity.

Laura McRaven is also motherless, but she is immediately enveloped into the sprawling Fairchild family by the matriarch, Ellen, her dead mother's sister-in-law. Laura thinks that when she arrives they will all say, "Poor Laura, little motherless girl" (3), but they are too intent on swarming over her until she is in a mass of Fairchilds. They all look alike and love each other; Laura is the Raven

among the Fair Children. She tries to find some love for herself in the midst of them--from their mother:

Even some unused love seemed to Laura to be in Aunt Ellen's eyes when she gazed, after supper, at her own family. Could she get it? Laura's heart pounded. But the baby had dreams and soon she would cry out on the upper floor, and Aunt Ellen listening would run straight to her, calling to her on the way, and forgetting everything in this room. (21)

So Laura must live without maternal love in the midst of a family where it abounds, the kind of love that bride Dabney knows will always exist between her and her mother "until they [are] dead" (33). Women and girls in this world need protection, as we see when beloved Uncle George has sex with a girl he meets in the wild, a girl Ellen had felt concern for (79); when Ellen learns of George's action, her first thought is of Dabney's happiness in her marriage, a precarious happiness, Southern men being what they are (80). Even children with mothers are vulnerable; when Ellen was nine, her mother ran away with a man and was gone three years (157). How much harder must it be for a motherless child?

Most critics who write about Delta Wedding focus on the Fairchild family and Laura's outsider's look at it, or they discuss how she is welcomed into it. But Laura's outsider status and her welcome into the family both cause her pain. She thinks of a doll her mother gave her because she wished for it and realizes, "Never more would she have

this, the instant answer to a wish, for her mother was dead" (233). But she also asks herself, "Why couldn't she think of the death of her mother?" (133). Laura is like Quentin Compson in The Sound and the Fury, afraid his love for Caddy will lessen with time; when she receives a letter from her father, Laura suffers "from the homesickness of having almost forgotten home" (133). Her freedom is not welcome to her, even though it allows her to participate in the wild joy of the Fairchild family.

While Ellen Fairchild is responsible for keeping her huge family together, caring for children of all ages, keeping peace, managing the household and servants, and generally running things smoothly, two of her sisters-in-law have separated themselves from the burdens of Southern womanhood and live a sort of sterile existence as old maid aunts. Aunt Jim Allen and Aunt Primrose live on the periphery of the family, participating in family rituals but already acting like old women, even though they are of George and Ellen's generation. And Ellen's oldest daughter has decided to become a nun, while Dabney is marrying beneath her social class, as George has done. The choices of Southern women are few: to marry and sacrifice one's life for one's family, or to remain single and not pass on the family genes, not really be part of history. Laura sees the choices but is not old enough to choose.

If Delta Wedding can be read, in part, as representing the South, it is a celebration of the family run by women. Margaret Jones Bolsterli says, "The universe of Delta Wedding . . . is the universe of Southern women" (149). In fact, the generation of Fairchilds that included Laura's mother and her siblings was reared by Aunts Mac and Shannon after the children's father was killed in a duel and their mother died of a broken heart. But there is also concern that the men have become somewhat worthless. We see the lapsing of the planter class, as Dabney marries an overseer. And we see a dying of the Old South, represented by the maiden aunts. Where does Laura fit in this scheme? Motherless, she, too, has lost her roots, and her grafting onto the Fairchild tree ends when her father comes to retrieve her. Laura represents the Southerner looking backward to the Old South and forward to the New, seeing neither as perfect and not being able to prevent the change.

Peggy Whitman Prenshaw writes that in Delta Wedding,

. . . Welty explores the relation between . . . the individual's need for loving connections and a private selfhood. [In the Fairchild family], the women are steady managers of people. . . . The agents of memory and tradition, the women codify and pass on the values of the family to succeeding generations. . . . [U]ltimately it is the Fairchild women who inherit the land and decree the rituals that sustain the family. ("Eudora" 473-74)

But two of the Fairchild women are spinsters; they will not pass on the rituals. Laura's mother is dead. Ellen

is a Fairchild by marriage, not birth. It is up to the next generation to carry on the traditions, and no Fairchild girl is being reared by a Fairchild woman. Bolsterli writes that in Welty's fiction, women enter into a contract with men: Women will be men's symbol of honor and let men possess them if the men protect the women and do not make them grow up (150-51). Bolsterli's argument is questionable when one sees the little protection these women actually get and the responsibilities they have. But if Bolsterli is correct, perhaps by losing the Southern mother who would have molded her in this tradition, Laura can escape it without having to become a spinster or a nun, marrying beneath her, or even dying, as other Fairchild women have done.

Welty, then, shows the absent mother as both freeing and frightening. The motherless child is at the mercy of a world plunging forward in time, and the child needs roots to anchor her. On the other hand, the motherless child is freed from being mired in a past just as harmful, especially to women, as the future is threatening.

Carson McCullers wrote about adolescents, especially adolescent girls, more often than almost any other Southern writer, and none of them have effective mothers; in fact, few have mothers at all. Harry Joseph Wallace writes of McCullers that

Her characters' family life serves as their introduction into loneliness and separation. This isolation is usually intensified by her characters' being raised as orphans or by one of their parents. Communication between parents and children, between siblings, is almost nonexistent. (3631A)

But McCullers's own mother, Marguerite Waters Smith (Bebe), was as important in her life as any mother ever is. She predicted her daughter's genius long before there was evidence of it, and she nursed her during illness after illness throughout McCullers's life. Family friend Jordan Massee wrote, "Second only to being born Carson, her greatest gift was having Bebe [Marguerite] for a mother. Without that particular mother she would never have survived" (qtd. in Virginia Spencer Carr 293). Yet her brother, Lamar, Jr., said that his sister never wrote about a satisfactory mother-daughter relationship because "she did not want to strip herself that bare and show the utter dependency that she felt for her mother" (Virginia Spencer Carr 316).

Kiernan says that "no one has written with more compassion about adolescent loneliness and desperation" (25) than McCullers. Four of her most memorable lonely adolescents are Mick Kelly in The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter, Frankie Addams in The Member of the Wedding, and Sherman Pew and Jester Clane in Clock without Hands.

Because McCullers was little more than an adolescent herself when The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter was written

(she was twenty-three when it was published), undoubtedly Mick Kelly's feeling like a misfit, her love for music, and her feeling of belonging to no group reflect some of the author's experiences as a girl. But McCullers never suffered from two of Mick's problems: a mother who did not have time for her, and knowing before she was twenty that her dreams would never be fulfilled.

At one point Mick's mother asks, "What's the matter with you? What have you been into now?" (39). But Mick knows she can evade the questions because, "As usual [her Mama] had a lot on her mind and didn't have time to ask her any more questions" (39). Mick thinks about "how lonesome a person could be in a crowded house" (45). By the end of the novel, Mick is working in a dime store to help support her family. The only people who have ever seemed close to her are gone: Her deaf friend John Singer has committed suicide, and her brother Bubber has become George and pushed her away ever since he accidentally shot a little girl. Her mother runs a boarding house and has no time for her; her father is wrapped in self-pity because he is partially disabled and cannot support his family; one of her older sisters is sick; the other is such a typical adolescent, the kind who reads movie magazines and worries about her hair, that Mick has nothing in common with her; her big brother, Bill, has decided she is too young for him; and Mick's interests, especially in music,

are so different that she does not fit in with other children her age.

A few male critics have argued that Mick is a successful woman at the end of the novel: She has had sex and has a job--at a cosmetics counter. But Linda Huf refutes them, saying that instead of succeeding, Mick has failed to become an artist. Huf thinks that she fails because she loves her family and needs their approval so much that she loses her dream. Perhaps Huf has never lived in a poverty-stricken family; Mick goes to work out of necessity, to avoid being hungry. A fourteen-year-old is not expected to be a starving artist.

Frankie Addams in The Member of the Wedding is a younger version of Mick. Frankie's mother died in childbirth; her father works all day; and her brother is away in the Army. So twelve-year-old Frankie spends her time with the family's housekeeper, Berenice Sadie Brown, and a six-year-old cousin, John Henry West. But Frankie wants to belong to something grander, less stifling, than the threesome in the kitchen. She decides to join her brother and his bride and go away with them after the wedding. Of course part of what she is looking for is escape, but her desire to belong, to find the "we of me," also has overtones of the desire for a normal family. At the end of the novel, Frankie, like Mick, has given up her tomboyishness. She is now called Frances and has

conformed to the expectations of a teenaged girl; Westling believes that this conformity is negative (349-50).

Both Mick Kelly and Frankie Addams are different from other adolescent teenagers; we cannot picture them as homecoming queens or cheerleaders. Nor can we picture them happily married to successful young men and having children. They might marry, but probably not happily, just as Mick has sex, but not with a boy she thinks she loves. Mick and Frankie see themselves as misfits; Carson McCullers wants her readers to see them as special, as free from the commonness that surrounds them. They are isolated by what makes them special, just as McCullers herself felt isolated by her musical and literary talent. Louise Westling calls them McCullers's tomboys; she explains that their androgyny is necessary because they adopt masculine personae in order to be accepted as artists; they want to be free and successful--masculine traits--rather than submissive and maternal--feminine traits. Mick and Frankie must be free from mothers who would try to make them conform. But in order to maintain the pathos of their portrayals, McCullers cannot give them mothers like Bebe Smith. Part of their frustration must come from unrecognized talent, and a good mother, like the author's own, would have encouraged her daughter. With Carson McCullers, then, a typical mother does not suit an atypical daughter, and an extraordinary mother would defeat the

author's attempt to illustrate these children's loneliness and isolation.

McCullers shifts her attention to adolescent boys in her last novel, Clock without Hands, considered extremely flawed by most McCullers critics. However, as a study of the dead mother and the South, the work is valuable.

Sherman Pew is a child of mixed race who was found abandoned on a church pew. His assumption for years is that his mother was a black woman raped by a white man. His dislike for white men in the South is exacerbated by Judge Clane, for whom he works; the judge is a racist and a relic who wants the United States to pay reparations to the South for the destruction caused by the Civil War and revalue Confederate currency. He argues that slavery was beneficial, and he loses control when he tries to discuss integration. Pew's search for identity is complicated further when he learns that his father was black. Sherman, neither white nor black, really fits nowhere (Charlene Clark 17-18). While he thinks his mother is black, he believes he is black as well. But when he learns that she was white, he drinks from a water fountain for white people and moves to a white neighborhood. Although Sherman might not realize it, his behavior indicates that he ties his identity to his mother, not his father.

Though he knows his identity, the judge's grandson, Jester, also motherless, is almost as pitiful as Sherman;

in fact, he is an orphan whose mother died in childbirth and whose father committed suicide because of the judge's failure to defend an innocent black man, allowing the man to be killed. Like Pew, Jester is trying to find his identity, partly because he is confused about his sexuality, and partly because he cannot make his grandfather's rantings about the South fit with his code of honor. Charlene Clark calls Jester "a male variation of McCullers' tomboy protagonists, . . . [who share] their artistic impressions and their acute growing pains" (17).

In the end, Sherman Pew moves into a white neighborhood and is killed by a bomb thrown by a racist. He had no mother to teach him what Southern black children needed to know, according to Richard Wright in Black Boy: to stay in their places and avoid riling white people, for their own protection. Jester Clane decides to be a lawyer like his father, to try to right some of the wrongs of the South. Mary Alice Whitt sees this as McCullers's most optimistic novel because of Jester (896A). Ronald David Eckard says that Jester is able to move beyond the past and accept change. The question is whether Jester could have moved beyond his society's restrictions had they been represented by his mother instead of his grandfather.

In Clock without Hands, McCullers moves from feminist reasons for depriving adolescents of mothers--to free the young people from the patriarchy--to making adolescents

motherless in order to destroy the Old South. McCullers's husband, Reeves, once said of his wife, "I have to keep Carson tied by a leg to the bedpost to keep her from growing mad as she hates the South so" (qtd. in Richard Cook 9). Critic Richard Cook also says that her "portrait of Judge Clane suggests a fear that [the South] might pass from adolescence to senility without ever growing up" (112). The missing generation for both boys thrusts them into a New South that in many ways is as virulent as the Old with only the judge, a relic of the past, to guide them, and he misguides. Lewis P. Simpson says that McCullers has insight "into the self's loneliness in time" and that she is asking whether "the self has become a casualty of history" (186-87). The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter, The Member of the Wedding, and Clock without Hands might answer that the only way to find oneself is to separate oneself from the oppression of history; but that separation can also be lonely and frightening.

Like Carson McCullers, Flannery O'Connor was sick throughout much of her life and quite dependent on her mother, with whom she lived. Loxley F. Nichols writes that O'Connor's feelings about her mother were ambivalent. Her mother was O'Connor's tie to the outside world, but she also wanted her daughter to write fiction that was more accessible to the public (25-26). Nichols also says that O'Connor often uses her mother's voice, especially

when she writes comedy, although the author herself said that her mother inhibited her speech (20). Regina O'Connor served as the model for many of her daughter's farm widows and mothers; they were all "generally concerned with appearances, common sense, practicality, hard work, and being nice," writes Nichols (27). Also like O'Connor's mother, these women often used cliches and euphemisms and pointed out the obvious (Nichols 27). A quick glance through one's memory of O'Connor's works reinforces this stereotype: "A good man is hard to find"; "It takes all kinds to make the world go round"; "The lady asked you a question"; and "pig parlor" are all pronounced by well-meaning Southern women who are just a bit ridiculous. Flannery O'Connor also said of her mother that she treated black people, especially those who worked for her, with noblesse oblige: they were, O'Connor said, "the only colored people around here with a white secretary and chauffeur" (qtd. in Coles 48-49).

It is interesting and perhaps relevant that many of the women who so resemble O'Connor's mother die. In "Everything that Rises Must Converge," Julian's mother dies of a stroke. In "Greenleaf," Mrs. May is gored by a bull. In "The Comforts of Home," Thomas shoots his mother to death. And although she is probably not modeled after Regina O'Connor, Francis Marion Tarwater's mother dies in a wreck in The Violent Bear It Away. Flannery O'Connor

probably had no desire to see her mother die. But escaping her dependence on her mother might have been a blessing.

Most of O'Connor's works are about adults; when adolescents are involved, they usually have mothers, often mothers with whom they are in conflict, such as Julian in "Everything that Rises Must Converge," who wants to teach his mother a lesson by bringing home a distinguished black man; Joy in "Good Country People," who changes her name to Hulga in order to irritate her mother but who really shares her mother's stereotypical views; Mary Grace in "Revelation," who throws a book at Mrs. Turpin but probably wishes she could have done the same to her mother, who talks about her as though she were a small child; and Thomas in "The Comforts of Home," who cannot bear his mother's befriending a nymphomaniac and saying that if Thomas were like the girl, his mother would want someone to befriend him (at his dead father's urging, Thomas shoots his mother). The dependence of adolescents on their mothers is a common theme in O'Connor's work, as is the young people's resentment of that dependence.

In two of O'Connor's works, the mother is dead and the young boy is reared by male relatives. In "The Artificial Nigger," Nelson's grandfather, Mr. Head, has cared for the boy since his mother died when he was one. In The Violent Bear It Away, Francis Marion Tarwater's mother died in a wreck, living only long enough to give

birth to her illegitimate son. In the wreck Tarwater's grandparents were also killed, and the boy was reared by his great-uncle, Mason Tarwater, a religious fanatic who wants to make the boy a prophet; the boy's uncle wants to save him from the great-uncle and secularize him. Neither Nelson nor Tarwater has a parent to protect him from the old man who rears him, or to interfere with the wisdom the old man can impart.

In "The Artificial Nigger," Mr. Head takes Nelson to Atlanta, partly to show the boy the evils of the city and partly to convince the boy, who was born there, that he should not put on airs about the place of his birth, as "It'll be full of niggers" (252). While there, the two get lost in a black neighborhood, and later the boy literally runs into a woman on the street. When the woman threatens to call the police, Mr. Head denies his relationship to Nelson. Humiliated by his denial of the boy and his getting lost, the man redeems himself in the boy's eyes when they see a lawn jockey, which Mr. Head calls an "artificial nigger." Mr. Head has been a sort of "artificial mother" to the boy, inculcating him with Old South values, both negative--virulent racism--and positive--love for family and the country, hatred for the city. The mother who might have modified these teachings, who gave birth to her son in Atlanta, is dead, leaving Mr. Head to pass on the Old South to the boy. In this

case, it is not the Old South but the New that is represented by the dead mother; she is not strong enough to live to overthrow the old generation, the powerful Old South that only temporarily deserts its offspring, returning to claim the white ones by denying the black.

Mason Tarwater wants his great-nephew to kidnap the boy's retarded cousin, Bishop, and baptize him. After the old man's death, the memory of his great-uncle and his living schoolteacher uncle grapple for the boy's allegiance. The boy, Tarwater, tries to deny the old man's mission for him by drowning his cousin, Bishop, but fails in his repudiation by baptizing the child even as he drowns him. Despite the agony of his trip to the city, including being raped on the way back to the place where he was reared, it is a purple drink he asks for when he returns, a drink that symbolizes the wine of communion, and in the end he knows he will return to the city as a prophet. Tarwater very much fits Otto Rank's archetype of the hero, who must be orphaned or separated from his parents, then must overthrow his father, represented here by both his uncle and his great-uncle, to achieve a higher mission. Like Nelson, Tarwater overcomes the secular, urban world for a more traditional one. Again the mother represents the inadequate New South; as Tarwater says, he was born in a wreck. He is saved, Flannery O'Connor would have us believe, by a fundamentalism rooted in older values.

Carol Y. Wilson has written about the family in The Violent Bear It Away, pointing out that the emphasis is on male family members, including the search for the father, as Tarwater's father shot himself soon after the boy was born (80). Wilson says that family is at the center of the novel and that it represents responsibility, continuity, ritual, "promise . . . power, and affliction" (78-79). Wilson writes, "There are no fathers and mothers together here, no 'typical' family units, but only the strange masculine trinity which circles around the total and awful innocence which is Bishop" (80-81). And this masculine trinity, with no feminine moderators, destroys Bishop; Tarwater escapes it and is saved.

Simpson writes of Flannery O'Connor that she "has no basic regard for mundane place in history or for the pieties of memory and tradition" (180). Of course no study of O'Connor should ignore her emphasis on God, Christianity, and individual salvation. Blind following of tradition, even Christian tradition, untempered by other influences, can be stifling, as we see in many adolescents reared by traditional mothers in O'Connor's short stories, or even tragic, as we see in Bishop's death in The Violent Bear It Away. Generally, though, O'Connor emphasize a heavenly father rather than an earthly mother.

Although Tennessee author Lisa Alther is much less well known than many of her Southern predecessors in

literature, her novel Kinflicks illustrates both themes symbolized by the dead mother motif. Ginny Babcock, the protagonist of the novel, is a Southern girl from Hullsport, Tennessee (probably Kingsport), who has one identity crisis after another, primarily because she tries to adopt the identity of everyone who is significant in her life, never really finding one of her own. Scenes of her youth are interspersed throughout the book with scenes of her mother's dying. Ginny needs her mother's death to free her from the past, to free her to find her own identity instead of just reacting against her mother's; but the death is also a great loss, because, to quote Janis Joplin, "Freedom's just another word for nothin' left to lose."

Hullsport, Tennessee, is New South; its main employer is Ginny's father's munitions factory, now running at full throttle because of the war in Vietnam. But the veneer of Old South still sometimes makes itself evident: To protest the munitions factory, Ginny's grandfather is growing kudzu all over the family estate. And when Ginny is at a local roadhouse that sells moonshine and women's services, the police break in only to find the women singing gospel and the owner preaching.

Hullsport is New South in an American way, with emphasis on football and cheerleading. Ginny dates a stereotypical dumb jock football player, and she is on the flag team. When she is ready to rebel, especially

against her father, who is having typical fatherly jealousy about her trysts with the athlete, she dates a motorcycle-riding black-leather-jacket type. Her father sends her North to college, to a school Alther calls Worthley (probably Wellesley, which Alther attended), where she conforms again, this time by following in the footsteps of her philosophy professor, who has rebelled against the female stereotype by choosing a career over marriage and family. When such a sterile existence becomes too stifling, Ginny rebels again by having a lesbian affair with an earth mother type, with whom she moves to the country in Vermont. When the unorganized, drifting existence of the small commune becomes too meaningless, Ginny is freed by her lover's death to marry the ultra-organized Ira Bliss, with whom she has a child. When such a traditional marriage becomes stifling, Ginny has a spiritual affair with an Army deserter. And when her husband finds them together and thinks the affair is sexual, Ginny leaves, returning to Hullsport, where her mother is dying of a blood disease. After her mother dies, Ginny tries to decide whether to return to Vermont or to escape again. (A recent letter from Alther gave a Vermont return address, so if Kinflicks is autobiographical, one could assume that Ginny, too, returns to motherhood.)

Kinflicks, then, is a series of rebellions and counter-rebellions, movement away from tradition and back toward

it, symbolized, in part, by Ginny's mother's appearing to recover and then sinking more deeply into her illness, until she dies. In "A Wake for Mother: The Maternal Deathbed in Women's Fiction," Judith Kegan Gardiner describes Ginny's mother as a "martyr-mother" and says that "her death is both the symbol and the result of her maternal roles" (159). But Gardiner also says that unlike other heroines whose mothers die, Ginny does not return "to heterosexual attachments" after her mother's death; we cannot know this, as Ginny says at the end of the novel that she does not know where she is going; she does not rule out the possibility of returning to her husband and child, although Bonnie Hoover Braendlin asserts that Ginny sacrifices her daughter for the "god of selfhood" (168), we cannot know Ginny's future any more than we can know Huckleberry Finn's when he sets out for the West.

What we do know is that in many ways Ginny Babcock's mother represents the South. Alther has Ginny say on the first page of the novel, "Perhaps, like my southern mother, you have to be the heiress to a conquered civilization to take your own vulnerability seriously prior to actually experiencing it" (3). The family's obsession with death is evident in the mother's reply to her young daughter's "I hope you die!": "Don't worry, I will. And so will you" (6). Mrs. Babcock also says that she is "not really

all that interested in life" (11). This obsession with death she has passed on to her offspring: "[T]heir mother had always drummed into them the knowledge that each time they said farewell to someone, they might never see that person again, at least not alive and well" (495).

But Ginny "needed to think of her [mother] as strong and healthy and invulnerable--a shield between Ginny and mortality" (147). On the other hand, "Ginny knew that almost everything she had done to date had been either in emulation of, or in reaction against, her mother or, later, her husband (147). Part of the reason for this, she realizes, is Freudian. When she is helping her mother back to bed in the hospital, she thinks of her mother's body as "the Forbidden Flesh, the Taboo Torso":

All these bodies she wasn't permitted to lust after. First her mother's and [her father] the Major's, her brothers'. Then [her daughter] Wendy's. But there was no denying that the bond between Wendy and herself was intensely physical. The most severe pain she could remember had been during Wendy's birth. The most intense joy had been during her conception, or perhaps during breast feeding. Of the pain she couldn't remember, undoubtedly battering her way out of her mother's birth canal had been the most severe; and being suckled and bathed and cuddled and cooed at must have been the most intense joy. Both Wendy and her mother she thought of largely in association with certain sounds, smells, caresses. And yet her interest in them both was expected to be platonic. It would be so much simpler and cheaper than a lifetime of psychoanalysis if the entire family--her mother, the Major, Karl and Jim [her brothers], Ira and Wendy --had just gone to bed together in one writhing mass some night and acted out all their repressed desires. This technique, applied on a nationwide scale, would force one analyst after another into bankruptcy.

Western civilization would collapse once and for all, which would probably be an incredible relief. (95)

Ginny's need for physical merger with her mother frightens her, for as much as she needs a mother, she is terrified of becoming her mother. Mrs. Babcock would probably understand this. She realizes that she is a martyr-mother. In her "Why me?" speech to Ginny about her impending death, she says, "I've always done my duty. I waited on you and your father and your brothers hand and foot for years" (163). Now that her husband is dead and her children are gone, she is too sick to enjoy her freedom. She realizes, "She had pandered to the needs of those ingrates she called her family for so long that her chief need had come to be that of being needed by them" (163).

This need of parents to be needed Ginny's philosophy professor Helena Head explains to her:

All parents--the exceptions should be enshrined--view their offspring as reincarnations of themselves. . . . If those children veer too sharply in either direction from the path staked out by their parents, the parents feel rejected, become offended. But what is one to do? . . . What are they to do? . . . We're all trapped. However, one dies. (189)

But Miss Head herself commits the same blunder: Ginny says,

She identified with me. I was the daughter she'd never have. She wanted to mold me into her image

as much as her parents had wanted to mold her into theirs. I couldn't decide whether I felt flattered or threatened. (190)

Ginny models herself after aptly named Miss Head for a time, until a woman on her hall teaches Ginny that emotion is as important as mind. Ginny understands her own motives when she tells her professor that she is a lesbian: "[Miss Head] had served her purpose. . . . Did she understand what was taking place--that it was necessary to my development that I reject her by manipulating her into rejecting me?" (236). Ginny realizes, ". . . [I]f I didn't please myself, I might end up like my mother, sacrificed to others' whims for so long that I'd no longer know what I wanted" (209). Yet she cannot find what she wants, as she is either conforming or rebelling, both of which are ways of letting others manipulate her.

She sees the same pattern in the women in her family: Her great-grandmother, Dixie Lee Hull, was a great cook; Ginny's grandmother loathed the kitchen and went to club meetings; Ginny's mother had devoted herself to her family. Ginny sees herself as no housekeeper and a bad mother, and she believes that Wendy will swing in the opposite direction. Ginny sees no progress in this back-and-forth reactionary process (242-43). Each woman is finding her own identity, but it is really just the opposite of her mother's.

Ginny's army-deserter friend Hawk also tries to explain this child's need to rebel: He doesn't want children because, he says, ". . . [A]ny child of mine would be a ballsy young actor waiting to run me off stage altogether, watching and waiting to bury me, so that he could assume center stage" (424). This echoes Harold Bloom's theory of literary criticism, which in turn echoes Otto Rank's hero myth.

As Ginny's mother lies dying, Alther provides us with a metaphor for Ginny's life. Ginny finds abandoned baby chimney swifts and tries to save them. Her methods fail with all but one, which reaches maturity; but, as she explains to her mother, "the bird beat itself to death on a closed window. But the door next to it was wide open" (494). Ginny cannot find her open door, until her mother dies. Then she takes the family clock, a symbol of time and heritage, and goes through the door, but she cannot decide on her destination.

In "Lisa Alther: The Irony of Return?" Mary Anne Ferguson writes that "the Southern home of [Ginny's] childhood has vanished with her mother" (103). Ferguson describes the larger South in Kinflicks:

The South, once a wilderness whose Indian inhabitants yielded it to the rifle and plow of pioneers, is now an industrial area controlled by absentee landlords --an epitome of the entire United States and, indeed, of all the capitalistic West. ("Lisa" 104)

The South that Ginny has left is not the Old South, the one represented by her grandparents, but a New South, one that is already tarnished.

Ferguson also says that Ginny is trying to escape her roots because she does not want to replicate her mother's life. But the freedom Ginny finds with her mother's death is also loss ("Lisa" 105). The ties that bind may bind too tightly, but they also provide connection in a disconnected world.

Kinflicks is one of the most contemporary motherless novels; it follows a tradition that began with Kate Chopin's The Awakening, as both Edna Pontellier and Ginny Babcock Bliss try to escape the suffocating bonds of Southern womanhood. It takes on the tradition of Welty, McCullers, Porter, and O'Connor, in that the mother's death both frees the daughter to find her own identity and deprives her of the roots she needs to do just that. Finally, as does Faulkner, Alther uses the lost mother to represent a lost South, a South that is perhaps flawed and imperfect; possibly, as the munitions factory represents, even sinful; but still our home, still our history, still our South. We might want to escape it, as Ginny does literally by going to Vermont, but we do not want it to leave us; we want it to be there if we want to come back home.

Because these women are writers, perhaps they see themselves, and, by extension, their female characters,

as different from most Southern women. Most artists see themselves as different, as special. It is possible that the authors see a need for their characters to be freer than other girls and women because the creators see their creations as special, as well. With the exception of Kate Chopin, the Southern woman who both writes and fits most of the stereotypes of Southern womanhood is almost nonexistent. Therefore, to free their characters from the patriarchy and let them live lives less restrictive and less traditional than those of most Southern women, female Southern authors often liberate these girls and women by removing their traditional mothers from their lives, allowing them to pursue other choices.

CHAPTER V
THE ABSENT MOTHER AND THE OLD SOUTH

I wish I was in Dixie.

--from the Confederate Battle Hymn

Like female white Southern authors, Southern men who write about male adolescents often show those young people's search for freedom. But generally, the absent mother in Southern literature by white men is less a symbol of freedom than an emblem of loss, generally the loss of the Old South, the motherland.

Whereas women and black men were generally victimized by the slave-holding patriarchy that was the ante-bellum South, white men had a tremendous amount of power. Their wives and children were subservient to them by both law and custom, and the system of slavery gave men wealthy enough to own even a few slaves absolute power over other people's lives. White Southern men, therefore, had the most to lose in the Civil War.

Of course, these men, whether or not they knew it, were also victims of the Old South. We see this in Faulkner's Go Down, Moses, when children reared together must cease to live like brothers because one is white and the other is black--and it is the white boy who is isolated. Ernest J. Gaines in The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman

writes about a white boy whose half-black half-brother whom he loves must be sent away because of other people's racism; the white young man later commits suicide because he cannot marry the woman he loves, a schoolteacher of mixed race. And in Robert Penn Warren's All the King's Men, the Cass Mastern story indicates the impotence and moral turmoil that can result from living among people who are not one's relatives but who know every intimate detail of one's life.

Despite their problems under the system that gave them power, white Southern men still had more control over their own lives and those of other people than did women and black men. Therefore, the abolition of slavery and Reconstruction left the white men who survived the Civil War to question their place in a society that almost leveled the hierarchy they had dominated. They tried to retain their position, at least symbolically, by lynching black men and continuing to abuse black women sexually. And they tried to maintain a semblance of the ante-bellum South by leaving white women on pedestals and using this paradoxical woman-worship as an excuse for more lynchings. Jim Crow laws, the iconization of the Klan's version of the Rebel battle flag, even the Ku Klux Klan itself, were means by which many white Southern men tried to convince themselves and others that, despite contrary evidence, they were superior to Yankees, women, and black people.

Two or three generations after Lee's surrender at Appomattox Courthouse, two strains of thought about the South were evident among Southern intellectuals. The first was represented by a group of white men connected with Vanderbilt University in Nashville, the Fugitives and later the Agrarians, who held fondly to the idea that the ante-bellum South was the nearest thing to heaven that had ever existed, not because of slavery or white male supremacy, but because of the agrarian tradition. From this group came the treatise I'll Take My Stand. The other group, less organized and less given to writing treatises, but still generally white men, such as Thomas Wolfe of Asheville, North Carolina, and Georgian Erskine Caldwell, more or less adopted the H. L. Mencken attitude toward the South--that whatever it might have been in its heyday, by the early twentieth century, it had deteriorated to a bunch of hicks, rednecks, and crackers, interspersed with the colored folks who had not had the gumption to escape to the North. The intellectuals who held this view tried to divorce themselves from what they viewed as a tainted heritage.

The most important--and best--Southern author is hard to categorize. Innumerable scholars who study William Faulkner have argued about which of these two groups includes him. He never threw in his lot with the Agrarians, nor did he become an expatriate and cast stones at the

South from afar. After brief forays North and to Hollywood to write screenplays, he chose to stay in Mississippi and farm, leaving to lecture periodically at the University of Virginia because he needed money. Thus, the answer to questions about his attitude toward the South must be found in his fiction.

Two questions are often raised, with almost innumerable answers given, about Faulkner: How did he feel about the South, and how did he feel about women? The answers are probably interrelated, and both are probably related to the numerous motherless children in his works. Like many male white authors in the South, Faulkner is concerned with the absent mother as she symbolizes the Old South.

Faulkner's depriving characters of competent, loving mothers is not autobiographical. Richard H. King writes that Faulkner's mother, Maud, was far more dominant in his life than his father and that though Faulkner "later denied the great influence of his mother," even after he was married he had coffee with her daily (Southern 80). His daughter, Jill, said,

. . . Pappy's idea of women--ladies--always revolved a great deal around Granny. She was just a very determined, tiny old lady that Pappy adored. Pappy admired that so much in Granny and he didn't find it in my mother and I don't think he ever found it in anybody. (qtd. in Blotner, "William" 7)

So again we have a Southern novelist with a mother who

reared him effectively and lived to see him grown but who deprives many, if not most, of his characters of the same benefit.

Many critics blame this phenomenon--as well as the promiscuous and "bovine" women in his work--on Faulkner's misogyny. King writes that, like Freud, Faulkner resented the power women had over him (Southern 142). Faulkner's step-granddaughter, Victoria Fielden Black, said,

The older women in the family--and that would include my mother--were thought of as fragile but indomitable types and they were on a pedestal in a way and yet they were not considered to think very much or do very much except in the home and they were not really given credit for having much of a brain. (Wagner, Black, and Harrington 150)

Leslie Fiedler, Maxwell Geismar, and other critics, male and female, call Faulkner a misogynist. Albert J. Guerard writes, "Faulkner's notorious and by no means unconscious misogyny . . . generally extended to all but eccentric or benignant old ladies, black women, and young girls before the age of puberty" (215). King says that many of "Faulkner's women are mindless, mysterious, or often destructively sexual" (Southern 80).

Some critics see the absent mother as evidence of Faulkner's negative attitude toward women. King points out that "Faulkner's great fiction of the 1930s offers no white women who are central to the action; and indeed the mother is often literally or psychologically absent"

(Southern 80). Donald Petesch also points out that women in Faulkner's work are almost never relevant as mothers (14). In an article about paternity in Faulkner's writing, André Bleikasten writes,

Les figures maternelles n'y manquent pas, bien sûr, mais ce sont justement des figures de la maternité plutôt que des mères: idoles fascinantes et muettes, parées de tous les attributs archaïques de la genitrix primordiale, tantôt nocturnes, comme Addie Bundren, la mère morte et sur-vivante de As I Lay Dying, tantôt lumineuses, telle Lena Grove, l'agreste madone de Light in August. ("Les Maîtres" 159)

Bleikasten also points out,

La liturgie conjuratoire de ce discours mythique ne parvient cependant pas à masquer la fonction réellement dévolue aux femmes-mères dans la société patriarcale du Sud que Faulkner met en scène dans ses récits. Quels rôles, quels devoirs pour les mères? Elles sont là pour donner vie et veiller sur les vivants ou, à défaut, pour pleurer les morts et garder leurs tombeaux. Fonction traditionnellement "sacrée", mais toujours servile, toujours seconde en droits par rapport à la fonction paternelle. La mère est toujours déjà soumise au discours du père, à sa mesure et à sa loi, toujours déjà assujettie à ses calculs et ses desseins. Car ce qui s'engendre de la femme-matrice n'est que matière informe tant que le père ne l'a pas marqué de son empreinte, tant qu'il ne l'a pas ré-engendré, ré-généré, rapatrié sous l'autorité de son nom. La mère a charge de vie, elle la porte, la produit, l'entretient, mais le père seul a charge d'âmes et le pouvoir de les former. A son image, bien entendu. ("Les Maîtres" 159).

The reason that "la femme . . . doit se tenir en retrait, en réserve, comme il sied aux suivantes et aux servantes"? "Le théâtre faulknerien est essentiellement un théâtre d'hommes" ("Les Maîtres" 160).

Faulkner himself said, "If a writer has to rob his mother, he will not hesitate; the 'Ode on a Grecian Urn' is worth any number of little old ladies" (qtd. in King, Southern 143). Could "kill" be substituted, symbolically of course, for "rob"?

In "'The Dungeon Was Mother Herself': William Faulkner: 1927-1931," the title of which comes from Quentin Compson's memory of a book he and Caddy read when they were children, Noel Polk cites several middle-aged, graying schoolmarm types, both characters and fantasies, in Faulkner's writing. The archetype is found when a character punishes, is punished, wants to be punished, or wants to punish. While these characters are rarely actual mothers, such as Temple Drake's fantasy in Sanctuary when she wants to take a switch to rapist Popeye (Polk 64), they are often mother figures, such as Joanna Burden becomes to Joe Christmas in Light in August, just before he kills her (Polk 90-91), or, occasionally, actual mothers, such as Addie Bundren in As I Lay Dying, who whips schoolchildren (Polk 63). Polk writes

In Faulkner's work of this period, mothers are, almost invariably, horrible people: it is difficult to think of a single one who measures up to even minimal standards of human decency, much less to the ideal of mother love as the epitome of selfless, unwavering care and concern. The roll of mothers in this period . . . is a long list of women who reject their children outright, or who use and manipulate them to their own purposes. . . . Childhood in Faulkner is almost invariably a terrifying experience. (66-67)

Faulkner's defenders on this point are fewer than his attackers, but they argue vehemently. Linda W. Wagner believes that Faulkner had admiration and sympathy for women and was quite "perceptive about most of his female characters" (128). She points out that boys must often attain the wisdom of women in order to mature (141), and that they are often aided by women; Bayard Sartoris is guided by Rosa Millard; Chick Mallison by Miss Habersham; and Lucius Priest by Miss Reba (139-41). But these women are not the boys' mothers. Cleanth Brooks writes that Faulkner's women are closer to nature and more practical than men, that they are more related to children, family, and community, even when they themselves are childless (Introduction to Page xii-xiii). Brooks also says that Fiedler and Geismar are wrong to call Faulkner sexist because creating some sexist characters does not make the author himself a misogynist (Introduction to Page xi). Mimi R. Gladstein sees Faulkner's treatment of many women characters as positive; she points out his use of the Persephone/Demeter myth in such novels as As I Lay Dying and The Sound and the Fury as a way to emphasize fertility and continuity. And many critics have pointed to the positive characteristics of Lena Grove in Light in August, as well as to Caddy Compson's goodness to her brothers in The Sound and the Fury. Petesch admits that Faulkner sees men and women differently, that women, because they

are attuned to nature, have less maturing to do and "possess a knowledge by virtue of being women that men do not possess" (16). He offers several excuses for any sexism the author might display:

From a contemporary perspective Faulkner seems "sexist," "male chauvinist," and in an absolute sense he is. He does not hate women, as Maxwell Geismar so inaccurately reported. He does not see them as the source of evil, as some of his characters do. He does see them growing into a world where their roles and statuses are largely fixed, a world in which they take on the further qualities of their femaleness in ways that seem almost instinctive, so total is the process of role learning. But, in partial vindication, it should be remembered that Faulkner's women exhibit variations on the role patterns observed by other, particularly male, writers of the period. It should be remembered, too, that Faulkner, raised in a family of brothers, underwent patterns of initiation and fostering similar to those of his male characters. (16)

Faulkner said,

It's much more fun to try to write about women because I think women are marvelous, they're wonderful, and I know very little about them, and so I just--it's much more fun to try to write about women than about men--more difficult, yes. (qtd. in Wittenberg 103)

Faulkner's attitude toward the South is perhaps as ambivalent as his view of women. Like Quentin Compson, he would certainly protest that he doesn't hate it. But neither is he blind toward the South's history, especially slavery and racial inequity that victimized both black and white Southerners. Absalom, Absalom! and Go Down, Moses both show this victimization, which is characterized by

miscegenation and rape and symbolized by Uncle Buck and Uncle Buddy's locking their slaves in the big house while they sleep in an outbuilding; they have symbolically become slaves to slavery. Yet "The Bear" shows Faulkner's attachment to a mythic, almost primitive South. Eudora Welty says of his struggle with the South:

The work of William Faulkner--who was destined himself to live in the thick of his background and who had his own abiding sense of place and time and history--is packed most densely of all at the middle distance. The generations clustered just behind where the present-day characters are in action are in fact the tallest--and the most heavily burdened with the past. Faulkner's ancient peoples, his Indians, whose land was taken away by unjust treaty, who were expelled from their own, their race dispersed and brought to nothing, have made the land inimical to the white man. The slave has cursed him again. History for Faulkner is directly inherited; it has come down to the present with the taint of blood and the shame of wrongdoing a part of it. Along with the qualities of nobility and courage and endurance, there were for him corresponding qualities of guilt; there is torment in history and in Faulkner's wrestling with it, in his interpretation of it. ("House" 45)

Some critics do not see Faulkner's attitude as ambivalent, however. W. J. Cash writes that Faulkner concentrates on the "decadence and social horrors" of the South (386). F. Garvin Davenport, Jr., argues that "[w]hat appears to be Gothic and romantic in Absalom, Absalom! is not the rhetoric of sentimental escape but rather the inescapable burden of an imperfect and guilt-ridden past" (93). Perry D. Westbrook writes,

To Faulkner the original sin in Yoknapatawpha County --and in the whole South--was the white man's exploitation of the black man as his chattel and the black woman not only as a slave but as a concubine whose children by him he disowned and condemned to bondage. One way of explaining the misdirected will of the Compsons and others is that they are reaping the evil sown by their fathers. (179)

There is also textual evidence of Faulkner's rejection of the South. In Go Down, Moses, Isaac McCaslin repudiates his land because it is stained because his grandfather, Carothers McCaslin, had bedded not only his slave, Eunice, but also their daughter, Thomasina (Tomey). In Absalom, Absalom! Thomas Sutpen leaves his West Indian wife and child because they do not fit into his plan to be a plantation owner. He also has a daughter by one of his slaves. In The Unvanquished, Bayard Sartoris's father and stepmother fight to keep black people from voting after the War.

But many people believe Faulkner glorified the Old South. John B. Cullen, who lived in Lafayette County, Mississippi, when Faulkner was a boy there, says Faulkner loved the Old South and thought modernization represented a great loss, primarily because people "have lost the character that is in Faulkner's writings" (131). Peter Crow argues that ". . . Faulkner's fiction is antithetical to the sense of despair over lost values and over deflated human stature associated by many writers with the modern era" (Abstract) and that Faulkner fights despair with vitality.

But Faulkner's attitude toward the South is, in fact, ambivalent--not ambiguous, but ambivalent. Davenport writes that Faulkner's fiction relates the South's problems "to national ideas and to universal history" (84), that he wrote "creative cultural myth," using the myth of the South "tempered by defeat and frustration into the recognition that man's history is tragic and ambiguous rather than progressive and harmonious" (83). Walter Taylor says that Faulkner learned to love the South "without feeling responsible for its faults" (182).

The absent mother in Faulkner's fiction can be seen as representing the South for which Faulkner's feelings are ambivalent. Thus, the question is whether the mother's loss is to be mourned, celebrated, or both. One asks whether the Southerner wishes to have the Old South return or to be totally removed from it.

Absent or worthless mothers abound in literature by Faulkner. In "Faulkner's 'Motherless' Children," published in 1985, Faulknerian scholar Cleanth Brooks expresses surprise that he had not noticed the breadth of this phenomenon before. He lists two dozen or so motherless characters in almost a dozen works, briefly examines a few of these characters, but his thesis is primarily descriptive, not analytical. He rejects both psychoanalytic and autobiographical explanations. But in the end, although Brooks identifies the nail, he never hits it on the head.

In fact, he says that only Quentin Compson, whose mother is "a disaster" who "poisons the whole household," (9) complains of his motherlessness; "None of the rest of Faulkner's characters," Brooks observes, "seems to reflect upon their [sic] orphaned state at all. They never refer to it" (5).

For the most part, Brooks is content to list motherless characters, including, among others, Emily Grierson in "A Rose for Emily"; Joe Christmas, Lena Grove, and Gail Hightower in Light in August; Bayard Sartoris in The Unvanquished; Sartoris's grandsons Bayard and John in Flags in the Dust; Horace and Narcissa Benbow, also in Flags; Temple Drake in Sanctuary; Charles Etienne Saint Valery Bon in Absalom, Absalom! and Donald Mahon, Emmy, and Januarius Jones in Soldier's Pay. Brooks focuses his discussion on three works: The Sound and the Fury, with worthless Caroline Compson failing as a mother; Absalom, Absalom! in which Judith Sutpen mothers her dead fiance's son; and Light in August, in which all the major characters are motherless. He rejects As I Lay Dying for consideration, as most of Addie Bundren's children are almost grown by the time their mother dies.

While The Sound and the Fury and Light in August are certainly among the most obvious choices for a discussion of motherless characters in Faulkner's works, Absalom, Absalom! is far less relevant. And the symbolism of the

mother's death in As I Lay Dying seems too obvious to ignore. Therefore, these three novels will serve as the focus of my discussion of this motif in Faulkner. In the first, the mother is useless, or worse; in the second, several characters are motherless; and in the third, the mother's dead body plays a major role.

"In Defense of Caroline Compson," an article by Joan Williams about The Sound and the Fury, argues that Caroline Compson is not the ogre that most Faulkner critics find her. But other critics generally agree that Caroline Compson is worse than no mother at all, destroying her children's lives by lack of love and selfishness. Crow says that she "reflects the spirit of deterioration and death that prevails in The Sound and the Fury" (232). Sally R. Page says, "Mrs. Compson is the ghastly embodiment of the destructiveness that results from the perversion of the mother's role" (180). Even Faulkner says of Quentin that "his mother wasn't much good" ("Discussions" 19).

Cleanth Brooks does not read The Sound and the Fury as the fall of the Old South, but he does see it as the fall of the Compson family caused by

the cold and self-centered mother who is sensitive about the social status of her family . . . and who withholds any real love and affection from her . . . children [except Jason] and her husband. Caroline Compson is not so much an actively wicked and evil person as a cold weight of negativity which paralyzes the normal family relationships. She is certainly at the root of Quentin's lack of confidence in himself

and his inverted pride. She is at least the immediate cause of her husband's breakdown into alcoholic cynicism, and doubtless she is ultimately responsible for Caddy's promiscuity. ("Man" 66)

Perhaps Brooks gives Caroline Compson more power than any woman really has. But that she abdicates her role as mother is undeniable. Her abdication leaves her sons to look for a mother elsewhere. One possibility is Dilsey, the black servant. But Dilsey's responsibilities for the house and Mrs. Compson, as well as her own family, leave her little time to mother four young children, especially when one of them is severely mentally handicapped. Therefore, to Caddy, the only daughter, though not the oldest child, falls the "mother" role.

The fallout from this arrangement forms the plot of the novel. Benjy loves Caddy and is devastated when she grows and becomes interested in boys. After she marries, he is never happy, although comforts that order his world pacify him briefly.

The effect on Quentin is even worse. Several critics comment on his almost incestuous love for his sister. In fact, when Caddy loses her virginity to Dalton Ames, Quentin not only tries to fight Ames and plans suicide with Caddy; he tells his father (or imagines he does; critics and Faulkner himself cannot agree) that he and Caddy have had sex. John T. Irwin uses Otto Rank's discussion of sibling incest to explain Quentin's behavior;

Rank asserts that incestuous thoughts or relations between brother and sister represent the brother's search for his mother (Irwin 43). M. D. Faber calls Quentin's attachment to Caddy childish and says that her loss makes him feel betrayed because she is his mother substitute (31). Two months after Caddy's marriage, Quentin kills himself. Peavy points to Quentin's lament, "[I]f I'd just had a mother so I could say Mother Mother" (Sound 213). He argues that Quentin's neuroses and even his suicide result from "the deleterious conditions of the Compson household . . ." (114).

Jason, who is most like his mother, is the only child she claims. He seems to feel no love for anyone, steals money designated for his niece's care, and threatens to send his brother Benjy to an institution. He is destroyed by being claimed by an unloving mother. Peavy writes, "Jason's alienation from his siblings has been kindled by his mother, and as a consequence he never experiences love, affection, or the normal ties of filial and fraternal devotion" (114).

Caddy cannot continue to play the mother role forever. Eventually she is attracted to men, has sex, gets pregnant, is forced by her mother into marriage, is divorced when her husband learns of her pregnancy, and leaves her child in the household where she grew up. There her daughter, Quentin, also grows up motherless and unloved, as Jason

will not let Caddy see her. Finally Quentin takes the money Jason has saved from Caddy's child-support payments and leaves. David L. Mintner writes, "Deserted by her mother, Miss Quentin is left no one with whom to learn love, and so repeats her mother's dishonor and flight without knowing her tenderness" (35). Faulkner says that The Sound and the Fury is "the tragedy of two lost women: Caddy and her daughter" (Interview with Grenier 16). (One could add that Caroline Compson is tragic as well.) He also says that when he conceived of the novel, he thought of a girl with muddy pants--Caddy--climbing a tree to look in a window at her grandmother's funeral. Later, the "image was . . . one of the fatherless and motherless girl [--Quentin--]climbing down the rainpipe to escape from the only home she had, where she had never been offered love or affection or understanding" (Interview with Stein 16).

Unlike Brooks, Irving Howe believes, "The Sound and the Fury records the fall of a house and the death of a society" ("Passing" 33). Harriette Cuttino Buchanan argues convincingly for Caddy as the 1920s South. Benjy's reaction to Caddy represents the primitive South, and her sexual relations symbolize white men's despoiling nature (10). Quentin is the Southerner who believes in the myth of the South's innocence and cannot live when Caddy's lost innocence destroys the myth (11). Jason is outraged at a chang-

ing South with no place for him (12). Caddy's and young Quentin's leaving represent the end of the Old South (12).

Mimi Gladstein asserts that the Caddy-Quentin story replays the Demeter-Persephone myth. Quentin is left with Jason in the underworld of darkness and decay. But she takes money, her birthright, and escapes. Gladstein says that Quentin is the only hope of the Compsons' continuance, and her association with a fertility myth makes that continuance possible (103-5).

The Sound and the Fury does not cause one to ask whether the loss of the mother has positive, freeing effects. As Brooks writes, "It may be better to have no mother at all than a mother who is thoroughly negative" ("Faulkner's" 9-10). The emotional absence of Caroline Compson from her children's lives and the physical absence of Caddy from her daughter's destroy a family. Caroline, too, can be seen as the Old South, clinging to false pride and giving its children to a new generation not ready to be a mother. The results are suffering, decay, and loneliness, the fall of the house of Compson. The fall is symbolized by the estate's literally becoming a housing development, which represents the New South.

Faulkner said that he felt tender toward The Sound and the Fury, "just as the mother might feel for the child . . ." ("Remarks in Japan" 14). But not if that mother were Caroline Compson.

In Light in August, almost no one has a mother. Lena Grove's parents die when she is twelve. Joe Christmas's mother dies when he is born. Gail Hightower's mother is an invalid who dies when he is young. And Joanna Burden is named after her father's first wife, not her mother, who is never mentioned by name. R. G. Collins writes, "Certainly the anonymous actual mother has no influence whatsoever on Joanna Burden" (54). Despite Faulkner's statement that Light in August was written "out of [his] admiration for women, for the courage and endurance of women" (qtd. in Burroughs 190), Frank G. Burroughs, Jr., points out that "the women in Light in August are ignorant, weak, or depraved" (190). While Burroughs's statement is an exaggeration, with few exceptions women do not positively influence the action of the novel. The result of these absent or weak women, especially mothers and mother figures, is a society that is coming apart.

Lena Grove has lived with her brother and his family since her parents died. Perhaps her unhappiness there made her vulnerable to Lucas Burch, who has gotten her pregnant. When her brother learns of her pregnancy, he calls her a whore; she leaves to find Lucas. She has no home or family, really, so she has nothing to lose. However, Lena had a mother long enough to learn how to be mothered and how to love. She inspires maternal love among the women she meets on her journey. Although her

search for Lucas Burch ends with his running away again, she has found someone else, Byron Bunch, to care for her.

Joe Christmas is the son of a dark-skinned circus performer and white Milly Hines, whose father lets her die in childbirth by not sending for a doctor and kills his grandson's father, who he thinks is black. Joe spends five years in an orphanage, but after discovering the dietitian in a tryst, he is sent to live with the McEacherns. By this time, Joe cannot let a woman mother him. His first surrogate, a girl of twelve, leaves the orphanage when he is three, and he never lets himself be vulnerable again. So when the brutal McEachern, warped by religion, beats Joe, the boy cannot accept solace--or even food--from his surrogate mother.

Absence of maternal love has made Joe unable to love other women. At seventeen he overestimates a prostitute's affection for him and knocks out McEachern, steals money from Mrs. McEachern, and tries to get the woman to marry him. But by this time he has told her he might have Negro blood, and she refuses. After her rejection, he spends nights with both white women and black trying to reconcile what he thinks are the two parts of his identity. Because his mother is dead, he cannot know his true identity. He carries neither her name nor his father's, but the name of the day he was taken to the orphanage. Bleikasten writes, "La maternité se voit et s'aveugle de son évidence

même--mystère en plein jour" because the child comes from the mother but does not carry her name ("Les Maîtres" 158). But Joe Christmas is denied even the consolation of knowing who his mother is.

Joe Christmas's motherlessness is at least one cause of his tragic behavior. Because he does not know his background, he fits nowhere. Because he has never had a good mother-child relationship, except for the brief one with Alice in the orphanage, he cannot relate to women as either son or lover. Consequently, when Joanna Burden tries to mother him, feeding him, telling him to pray, wanting him to go to school, he rebels, as when Mrs. McEachern tried to help him. He takes what he wants or needs, such as money or food, instead of having it given to him, because he does not want to owe anyone, especially a woman, even gratitude. He also cannot relate to Joanna Burden as a lover, partly because some of her attraction to him is that she thinks he is part Negro and partly because having no mother or mother figure has left him unable to love a woman.

Howe writes, ". . . Joe Christmas feels that he has no home, that he always has been and must always remain homeless" ("Faulkner" 211). He has no mother to create a home for him. Judith Bryant Wittenberg writes that Christmas's mother, Milly Hines, is the victim of every Southern stereotype: She has premarital sex with a man

who is not Anglo, so she is not a "good woman"; she is a victim of patriarchy when her father lets her die in childbirth and takes her child; and her son never seems to think about who his mother was (114-15). But her son has no clues; he cannot begin to think about a woman who was never even mentioned to him.

Bleikasten and Doreen Fowler both blame society's attitudes toward women and black people for Joe Christmas's tragedy. Bleikasten says the South's three joined ideas, "Puritanism, sexism, racism," victimize Christmas. In this system, there are oppositions: "ideal versus real, male versus female, white versus black" ("Light" 96). Bleikasten asserts, "Whereas ideality, masculinity, and whiteness are exalted, their opposites are abased" ("Light" 96). Fowler makes a similar point: Christmas sees Jefferson as divided into the strong--men, adults, and white people--and the weak--women, children, and black people ("Joe" 148). Christmas's confusion is related to his desire to belong to the strong group but fear that he has black blood, putting him in the weak group ("Joe" 151). Christmas's refusal to allow women to mother him keeps him from the weak child group; in fact, any vulnerability to women would make him feel weak. Fowler also says that Christmas hates women because his society looks down on them; his attitude toward women is mixed up with his attitude toward black people; and he fears being sexually

confused ("Joe" 147). Christmas accepts society's stereotypes about women because he does not have a mother to counteract them.

Alwyn Berland finds a connection between Christmas's and Gail Hightower's attitudes toward women: Both "have failed to form any vital human relationship; both have consistently rejected love from women" (50-51). Berland also points out that Hightower's dead grandfather, stories about whom he heard from his black nanny, is more real to him than his parents. He is obsessed with the violent glory of the past (47). Like Christmas, Hightower sees women as weak, partly because his mother was an invalid and died during his childhood; he remembers her in bed "as without legs, feet; as being only that thin face and the two eyes which seemed daily to grow bigger and bigger . . ." (Faulkner, Light 449). Decades after her death, Hightower remembers a time when he was eight years old and found his father's Civil War coat; he was "almost overpowered by the evocation of his dead mother's hands which lingered among the folds" (Faulkner, Light 443). Volpe points out that Hightower's "parents are phantoms" (156), even when he is a boy and they are alive. Hightower carries his problem with women into his marriage. R. G. Collins says that Hightower treats his wife the way the South treats women: He tries to make her live up to the Old South myth of womanhood (66-67). So she becomes

promiscuous and eventually commits suicide. But Hightower does not learn; Collins asserts that his telling Byron Bunch not to marry Lena Grove is an attack on motherhood itself (67). Hightower's mother's illness and death make him think of the present and women as weak, especially in contrast to the masculine glory of the Old South, represented by his legendary grandfather.

Burroughs sees a connection between Hightower's and Joanna Burden's weak mothers. He writes,

In the Burden family, the mother plays no part in the curious love-hate relation of successive fathers and sons. In the Hightower family, Gail's grandmother is never mentioned at all, and his mother, who died when he was young, and who was bedridden long before she died, exists only as a biological necessity. Gail was actually delivered by his father, and Joanna's mother, sent for like an item out of a mail order catalogue, provides her with no protection from the obsessions of her father, or the memory of her brother and grandfather.

That wives and mothers figure so minimally in the Burden and Hightower chronicles simply emphasizes the heroic character of the early civilization. In both genealogies, there is something of the pervasively masculine atmosphere of the sagas or Homeric epic, or . . . of much of the Old Testament. (195)

Light in August gives us three motherless children, perhaps four. Lena Grove, because she did not lose her mother until the age of twelve, has learned enough of love to give it and inspire it, yet she is a wanderer, without a home, in part because she is motherless. Joe Christmas lacks mother, home, and identity; his life ends in violence and tragedy. Gail Hightower's mother dies after a lengthy

illness when he is young; he is left not knowing how to interact with women. Joanna Burden's mother was not significant enough to overcome the power of Joanna's father's passion or teach her daughter love. Only Lena Grove, by the end of the novel a mother herself, lends hope; she will, perhaps, rear a son who can love, despite his father's desertion. As Burroughs points out, when Lena's baby is born, Christmas's grandmother holds him triumphantly; thus, "[t]he new life begins under the auspices of the woman, who loves without judgment, rather than the man, who judges without love" (200-1).

Burroughs says of Joe Christmas and Lena Grove, "In a sense, . . . they are not strangers at all, but only stepchildren who are not recognized by their foster parents" (192). Lena's child has a real mother, a foster grandmother, and a foster father; this child's future, at least, seems more promising.

As in The Sound and the Fury, the absent mother in Light in August is not positive. There is no sense of freedom in her departure, only loss. If we read the absent mother in this novel as the loss of the Old South, we find a New South filled with warped values, loss of identity, alienation, and loneliness. The Old South might not have been perfect--Milly Hines was promiscuous; Gail Hightower's mother was sick--but she could have given her offspring identity and possibly a sense of worth.

As I Lay Dying shows the effects on a family of the mother's death. The dead Addie Bundren's son Darl says, "It takes two people to make you, and one people to die. That's how the world is going to end" (38). He refers to one's parents who give life and the death of the individual. But the passage can also be read another way: the mother and the child as the two it takes "to make you," and the solitary death of the self, or even the death of the mother that causes that child's world to end.

John B. Cullen writes that the Bundrens might have been loosely based on a Lafayette County family Cullen calls the Hellrods, a shiftless bunch of white people. Mag Hellrod had an illegitimate son, Ab, who died in the summer. By the time his wife got word to Mag, who sent men to bury the body, it reeked. Faulkner makes not the husband but the mother the corpse; a dead husband is less significant than the mother of five children.

Crow says of the dead Addie that she is as "uninvolved in [the novel's action] as are the planks in her coffin" (37) and that "once she is dead all are interested in removing her from the scene of the living" (38). But Brooks mentions Addie as one of Faulkner's "strong and powerful mothers ("Faulkner's" 7); and Dixie M. Turner sees Addie, even dead, as the Jungian archetype of the Self, the part that integrates. Turner asserts that Addie's death pulls the family together, giving them a unified mission (5-11).

The Bundrens do work together to fulfill Anse's promise to his wife to bury her in Jefferson, forty miles away, but they have various, generally selfish, motives for making the trip. Darl imagines Anse's saying when Addie dies, "God's will be done. . . . Now I can get them teeth" (Faulkner, As 51). And "get them teeth" he does, once he gets his wife's body buried, and he gets himself a new wife as well. Dewey Dell wants to get an abortifacient. A pharmacist's assistant has sex with her but gives her a placebo instead of a substance to induce abortion.

The end of the novel could be seen as comic--a wedding and an impending birth--if so many tragedies did not intervene. By the end of the book, Cash has a broken leg and probably will not walk for a year. Darl has been institutionalized because he has tried to burn a barn with his mother's rotting corpse in it; Crow asserts that Darl is isolated "from the mores of society . . . by the death of his mother . . ." (39). Anse has traded Jewel's beloved horse for mules to pull the wagon to Jefferson. Dewey Dell is about to become a single mother. And young Vardaman is a motherless child.

Like Caroline Compson, Addie Bundren has not been a perfect mother, perhaps because she herself was motherless. She was unhappy as a schoolteacher, so she married Anse, who gave her no happiness because she saw him as a man of words rather than action (and perhaps

because Anse is a dense, selfish man with no teeth). She had an affair with a minister, Jewel's father, and Jewel is clearly her favorite child; however, he loves his horse probably better than his mother, to the point that his brother Darl says, "Jewel's mother is a horse" (Faulkner, As 95). Although almost all the Bundrens make some sacrifice to take their mother's body to Jefferson--Jewel's horse, Cash's leg, Darl's freedom--only Vardaman seems truly distressed by her death. Confusing his dead mother with the fish he has caught and killed, he bores holes in the coffin to try to let his mother breathe. But he also disfigures her face, taking from her her identity. Anse says to his children, "You never pure loved her, none of you" (Faulkner, As 218), and it is only Jewel's response that concerns Darl; Jewel sets his jaw and does not reply.

Dixie Turner refers to Vardaman as a Jungian child archetype. She explains that the child in mythology rarely has a mother but in the end overcomes the loss and triumphs, symbolizing rebirth (61-67). In As I Lay Dying, however, the idea of rebirth seems hollow. It is true that Vardaman's new stepmother, a "duck-shaped woman" (249), might represent the surrogate-mother archetype, but there is no reason to assume the boy is reborn. In fact, his name is that of James K. Vardaman, a Mississippi politician whose racism combined the ugliness of the New South with the bigotry of the Old.

If there is a symbolic interpretation of As I Lay Dying, it is probably related to the body itself. The rotting corpse is put in the coffin upside-down in order to accommodate the dress. Holes are bored in it and the face must be covered with a veil. Then the coffin falls off the wagon in a flooded stream, and Darl later tries to burn it by setting fire to a barn to get rid of the odor. Certainly several mythical interpretations might be given to the journey, but one possible reading is to see the corpse as the myth of the Old South, as critics often see Homer Barron's corpse in Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily."

The novel should not be read as allegory, of course. But like the South, the Bundrens try to hold on to a past that was not perfect and now is rotting. Freedom is gained by burying the dead body, just as some people try to bury the past, but freedom is not necessarily an improvement, as the family is no longer together and several sacrifices have been made. This is no morality tale, no "If we could just rid ourselves of the past" lesson. The Old South may be dead, but the New does not hold all the answers, either.

William Faulkner is certainly not the only Southern white man who has written novels about motherless characters. However, his prominence in Southern literature, his ambivalence toward both women and the South, and the

proliferation of motherless children in his fiction all cause him to deserve special consideration.

As a Kentuckian, Robert Penn Warren is not a child of the Confederate South. However, his years in Tennessee, both as a boy and, later, as a scholar, and his great interest in the South grant him status as an honorary Southerner. He contributed to I'll Take My Stand, and many of his poems have Southern themes. Much of his fiction is set in the South, as well.

In Warren's All the King's Men, Adam and Anne Stanton are motherless, leaving them more vulnerable to the New South represented by Populist Willie Stark. Of course there was dishonor in the Old South, as well, as Jack Burden's research into his own ancestry reveals. But the abandonment of even the pretense of honor, as we see in Anne's affair with Willie Stark, is revolting both to her former lover, Jack, who did not want to have sex with her because he did not want to "spoil the innocence of their relationship" (Davenport 146), and to her brother, Adam Stanton, who shoots Willie. Davenport writes that in All the King's Men, "the stereotypes of Southern womanhood, Southern chivalry, and Southern hospitality are without meaning" (145). Davenport asserts that the book "is an American novel which happens to take place in the South" (144). But that does not keep it from being a Southern novel, as what the Agrarians feared was that the South

would lose its values and end up like the rest of America. Davenport asserts that Jack Burden is "a Southerner by birth and an American of the Lost Generation by commitment--or rather lack of commitment--who is suddenly forced to live in a world in which romantic disenchantment and indifference lead only to destruction" (144); this argument explains what Warren is saying about the South as well as about America: Honor and tradition and values are things of the past, or at least in our memories of the past.

We learn of Anne and Adam Stanton's motherlessness not by the mention of their dead mother but because they live with "their widowed father" (Warren, All 39). Adam has apparently never learned to love women, as he asserts that, with his surgical practice, he does not have time for them. In his thirties, he has neither wife nor girlfriend (101). Narrator Jack Burden, a former boyfriend of Adam's sister, says of her, ". . . Anne was an old maid" (40) of thirty-five; Anne, Jack says, "was always fooling around with orphans and half-wits and blind niggers, and not even getting paid for it. And looking at her you could know it was all a waste of something" (103). Of course some of Jack's criticism of the Stanton siblings comes from his own lack of dedication to anything, especially to doing good. And they might be unmarried, but so is he; his marriage has failed.

If Jack Burden cannot maintain a successful relationship any more than the motherless Stantons can, perhaps motherlessness is not the problem. But John L. Stewart believes that Jack Burden does not think his mother loves him, either (505). She is in her third marriage, and Jack's father, the narrator learns in the end, is not one of the husbands. Her obsession has been filling her house with museum pieces. For decades Jack has rejected her by refusing to take her money.

But Jack also tries, symbolically, to return to the womb. When he cannot cope with his life, he escapes into what he calls the Great Sleep. He sleeps when he cannot bring himself to finish his dissertation, when his marriage dissolves, and after he learns that Judge Irwin, whom he helped destroy, was his father.

Politician Willie Stark, too, is motherless. We do not know when his mother died, but he goes back to Mason City to visit only his father, "whose wife had been dead a long time" (24). And Willie Stark, based on Populist Louisiana Governor Huey Long, is New South. Like Jack Burden, Stark had been an idealist, a man who tries to do right. But like Burden, Stark learns that there is evil in the world, and one can try to fight the bad and be defeated by it, or one can use it to his own advantage.

At the end of All the King's Men, we have another motherless child. Willie's son, Tom, has died after being

paralyzed in an accident. He leaves behind a child that might or might not be his. The widowed Lucy Stark, Tom's mother, in essence buys the child from his mother and names him Willie.

The mothers in All the King's Men abandon their children to the New South. Anne and Adam Stanton try to hold on to a system of values. But Willie Stark, the New South politician, also motherless, finds both of them gullible. He hires Adam to run his medical center and has an affair with Anne. Adam is told that his job is a result of his sister's affair, so he kills Stark.

Jack Burden is not literally motherless. But he sees his mother and the past as tainted. As a doctoral student, he has edited some of the journals and letters of a man he believes to be an ancestor, and he has found corruption: Cass Mastern had an affair with the wife of a friend, who killed himself; a slave had found out about the affair, and the woman had sold the slave South. Burden sees the Old South as tainted by slavery and his mother as spoiled by selfishness and bad marriages. He finds himself afloat in a valueless system, a "clammy, sad little foetus . . . way down in the dark . . . [with a] sad little face and . . . eyes [that] are blind" (Warren, All 9) searching for truth, knowledge. But the knowledge he finds destroys his faith even more; the man he loves like a father is, in fact, his father, but he is also imperfect, and when

Jack finds this out, the man, Judge Irwin, commits suicide.

The past that is the Old South, represented by the corrupt old fathers and the dead or worthless mothers, has abandoned its children to a present that has even fewer values, a present in which mothers still abandon their children.

But the deaths of Willie Stark and his worthless son leave the new South free to pursue other possibilities. Jack Burden is finally using his knowledge for good, threatening to expose politician Tiny Duffy's betrayal of Stark if Duffy misuses his power. He and Anne Stanton have married, showing that the effects of motherlessness can be overcome and its victims happily involved in relationships. Jack has awakened again from his Great Sleep, an awakening that Katherine Snipes calls a rebirth (68-69). And Tom's (?) abandoned baby is in the arms and home of Lucy Stark, who said when she first learned that the child's mother was pregnant, "[I]t's a little baby and nothing's its fault. . . . I would love it" (Warren, All 336). And love it she does. The taint of the Old South has been cut away, as Adam Stark has lobotomized the catatonic patient. The operation has been horrible, as losing one's mother is horrible, and there have been side effects. But the future shows some promise.

Robert Penn Warren's Band of Angels is a "tragic octoroon" novel in which the recently orphaned Amantha

Starr living in the ante-bellum South learns that her long-dead mother was a slave and, consequently, she is chattel to be sold after her father's death. Like Joe Christmas, Amantha asks, "Oh, Who am I? For so long that was, you might say, the cry of my heart" (3) because "I cannot remember the face of my mother" (4). Band of Angels fits oddly into the discussion of dead mother novels in the South, for the death of Amantha's mother, the slave, frees Amantha to be reared as her father's white daughter, to be sent to school in the North, where she learns to fear for her slave-owning father's soul. It is the death of her white father, who had stood between her and slavery, that dooms her. As James H. Justus points out, Amantha's freedom comes in childhood, not adulthood--the reverse of the norm (Achievement 239).

Lewis P. Simpson writes that Amantha Starr is "more an idea than a genuinely realized person" (170). If that is true, what is the idea Warren is trying to impress on the reader? The Old South is certainly not glorified, as the man who buys Amantha rapes her, and she is saved by a black man from another rape. She marries a Union officer. And her slave-holding father did not even write papers of manumission for her because he could not let himself think of her as a slave, but he doomed her nonetheless. It is not until after the Civil War that Amantha can forgive him.

Justus writes, ". . . [T]he Civil War looms for Warren as the concrete manifestation of an abstract dichotomy: history is both the blind force sweeping guilty and innocent alike in its wake, and the salvation of those persistent seekers of self-identity" ("Robert" 452). Perhaps for Amantha that Civil War is completely freeing; if no black people can be slaves, no one with a drop of black blood can ever again be a slave in America, even in the South. So the black blood becomes irrelevant. Oddly, this interpretation of Band of Angels, a book written over two decades after Warren's participation in the Agrarian tract I'll Take My Stand, is almost Northern in its theme, though not in its setting. In this novel, the death of the mother and the death of the Old South free both the black part of Amantha from slavery and the white part from the guilt of being a slave-owner.

In an interview, Warren discussed the true case on which Band of Angels is based. In reality, there were two daughters of a slave and her owner. The girls did not know that they had a black, or partly black, parent. Like Amantha, they were sold down river after their father left several debts upon his death. Warren does not know what happened to them (252). Their story becomes Amantha Starr's story, the tale of the slaveholder's daughter sold as a slave. It would seem more ironic if the same had not happened daily throughout slavery, as white men denied

their offspring born of black women, leaving their own children to work and be owned like cattle.

The reason for this, and the reason Amantha can be sold, is that the slave-holding South gave people identities in two ways, based on race. White children were identified with their fathers and took their names. Black children were identified with their mothers. And children of slaves, no matter what their color, were considered black. As Justus explains, Amantha sees her identity in her name, but legally her identity is bound to her slave mother, not to her white father (Achievement 244).

Justus sees Band of Angels as a merger of two themes: the searches for both individual and national identities (Achievement 236). After Amantha is sold South and becomes the mistress of her owner, she escapes slavery during the Civil War and marries a Union officer. Her husband has an affair, but she later forgives him. It is at this point that she can finally forgive her father. The Southern woman marries the Northern man; the former slave forgives the former slave-owner, who was also her father; the part-black woman marries the white man; the Southerner forgives the Northerner; and the slave trader and rapist is hanged. By destroying slavery, symbolized by the slave trader, the country is free to find its identity and to effect forgiveness and reconciliation. As Amantha reconciles the various aspects of her life and elements

of her identity, so the United States can pull its disparate elements together and begin again. Amantha and her husband move to Kansas, a sort of neutral territory. The United States must also eliminate the polarization that surrounded the Civil War.

For Robert Penn Warren, then, the death of the mother and the death of the South had two almost opposite effects. In All the King's Men, the cracked mother/Old South that cannot be put together again leaves the child/New South vulnerable to corruption and a valueless society. But in Band of Angels, the mother/Old South is itself a slave to slavery, and its death frees the child/New South to find an identity in which black and white, slave and free, even Southern and Northern are no longer the most important criteria. Warren's chauvinistic attitude toward the Old South evident in his participation in I'll Take My Stand had mellowed somewhat by 1946, when All the King's Men was published, and considerably by 1955, the publication date of Band of Angels.

A much more recent book by a white Southern male also features a female protagonist who is motherless. Reynolds Price's 1986 novel Kate Vaiden is about a girl whose parents die violently when she is eleven; she is reared by an aunt and uncle in a loving environment. However, when she has an illegitimate child at the age of seventeen, she does not mother him; she turns him over to the people who had

reared her. The obvious point is that a girl without a mother does not learn to be one. But Price seems to feel sympathy for his protagonist's decision, in sort of a feminist way. (In fact, in an interview with Constance Rooke several years before Kate Vaiden's publication, Price called himself a feminist.) His attitude seems to be that she needed freedom (to be a librarian) and the boy needed a better home than she could provide. So Price would probably want us to read the novel as a book about the symbolic freeing effect of motherlessness, which does not bind a girl to follow in her mother's restricted footsteps.

Price explains that he writes "about human freedom--the limits thereof, the possibilities thereof, the impossibilities thereof" and that his "books are an elaborate dialogue with the whole notion of free will and freedom, free will and compulsion" (Interview 708). Frank K. Shelton writes that Price is especially concerned with the limitations of family on freedom because it pressures one to conform and shapes one's personality (84).

Price says that he has a special interest in the freedom of women, who for centuries stayed home all day and dealt "entirely in emotions--emotions and food" (Interview 712) and often died in childbirth. In his novel The Surface of the Earth, there are three or four childbed deaths, which Price says are realistic for the turn of the century (Interview 710). In fact, he offers as an

explanation for men's antifeminism their guilt at causing women pain, both by being born and by making women pregnant. Their guilt, Price argues, gives women power over them, and they repress the guilt by disliking women (Interview 711). Therefore, Price says, antifeminism comes from the fact that "[t]he one thing that can be said about every man who ever drew breath on the globe is this, he was born out of a woman's body" (Interview 711). He also says that, having been reared by women, men know more about women than women know about men (Interview 714).

Perhaps part of Price's own knowledge of women comes from his father's family. He says, "My father's family were a family of women who wrested solitude out of familiarity in an extraordinary way--in ways which I think were both rewarding and maiming for them" (Interview 710). Certainly Kate Vaiden is both rewarded and maimed--rewarded by freedom and maimed by isolation. Shelton writes that Price's novels explore contingency versus freedom and love and connection versus individuality (84). Kate definitely chooses freedom and individuality over connection.

Kate Vaiden's book is her attempt to explain her life, all fifty-seven years of it, to the son she has abandoned, creating the third generation of motherless Vaidens. Kate herself is named after her grandmother, her father's mother. She says of her father and grandmother, "He'd loved her so much, and she had died on him before he was grown" (3).

Years later he deprives his own child of her mother by killing his wife in a murder-suicide.

Price's attempt to justify Kate Vaiden's actions is difficult to accept, partly because her motherless father turned out so badly, and she has been unable to form meaningful, lasting relationships. Her argument that she has made a good life for herself pales in comparison to the real reason she left her son. As she explains, "I didn't think I'd be a worse mother than many. . . . I didn't think his presence . . . would scare men off or cost too much. All I could think then, and all I understood, was I did not want him" (264). Unfortunately, it is hard to know what she did want--a few affairs with men, a couple of whom she loved, a job as a librarian, travel, books. But in the end perhaps her boy was better off with the unselfish love his great-aunt and -uncle could give him. As his birth mother says of herself, "When they made me, they left out the mothering part" (Price, Kate 346). But was it absent from birth, or did she lose it with her lost mother? Shelton asserts that her parents' deaths and that of her lover, Gaston, make her feel betrayed and, thus, unable to commit fully to other people, especially men (85). One could add children, as well. Shelton further states that she learns from these losses that attachment means exposure to death, and that frightens her (86). Therefore, she chooses to remain unattached.

But if Kate is trying to escape pain and loss, one questions how much free will she really has. If her choices are based on horrible events in her life, her avoidance of commitment and connection is really a reaction against the past, not a choice for the future.

Shelton argues that Kate Vaiden illustrates the double standard applied to men and women. He says that men who abandon their children are criticized much less, even seen as natural (88). The recent Dan Quayle/Murphy Brown flap would indicate that this is true in our society, especially among Conservatives. Quayle criticized the television character for being a single mother but did not chastise the baby's father for leaving the woman and child to fend for themselves. However, feminist criticism and Price himself seem to argue against Shelton. Since Nora Helmer walked out on Torvald and her children in Henrik Ibsen's A Doll's House, women who escape the confines of a patriarchal society are seen as strong, independent individuals who must find themselves before they are fit to mother children. Men who leave wives and children are generally seen as selfish, as using the freedom afforded men in a patriarchy to pursue their own interests while women are left to home, hearth, and child-rearing.

In many ways, Kate Vaiden reads like a feminist tract. But Price does not give Kate enough oppression to justify her need to rebel. Therefore, the novel is more valid

when read as a psychological examination of effects of the absence of the mother on a girl child. Kate has the illusion of freedom, of making her own choices. But her choices were made for her when her father killed her mother and himself. In fact, a fatalist might go back even further and say that her choices were determined when her father's mother died in his childhood, causing his inability to cope with relationships in a healthy way.

If absent mothers represent freedom, Kate Vaiden has much of it, which she never relinquishes. If they represent a link with the past, Kate Vaiden is almost rootless. If they represent the lost South, it continues to be lost, generation after generation. Instead of being free to escape the patriarchy of the Old South, like daughters in feminist novels, even in Gone With the Wind, Kate is cut off from anything positive represented by the mother/Old South, just as her father has been abandoned by the continuity his mother/Old South represented. The New South is not free to choose a better life; it is cut off and valueless, unable to form connections either with other people/regions or with past and future generations. The cutting of the link with the past, with history, has left the South, like Kate, unable to write its own history, abandoning it to someone else, as Kate abandons her son to her relatives for forty years. Perhaps her book is an attempt to begin to make connections; the forty years

in her own isolated wilderness, which she convinces herself she has chosen, have come to an end.

Another novel which features several motherless characters is The Winter People, by North Carolinian John Ehle. After Wayland Jackson, a clock maker from Pennsylvania, loses his wife, Ruth--she drowns herself because she is terminally ill--he brings his motherless thirteen-year-old daughter, Paula, to the mountains of North Carolina, where their truck gets stuck on the way to Tennessee. The Jacksons find shelter with Collie Wright, who has an illegitimate baby, Jonathan. When he meets Collie, he says, "My wife died in the spring. . . . Paula and me had a world of cares all the sudden, being reminded of her, so we decided to try a new place" (Ehle 4). Jackson and Collie become involved in a relationship, and the baby's father comes back to claim Collie. After a fight, Jackson sends the wounded Cole Campbell back down the creek on his horse, but Cole falls into the water and dies. To prevent the primitive Campbells from killing Jackson or one of Collie's brothers, Collie gives her son to his paternal grandfather, trading a life for a life rather than a death for a death. Jonathan will be reared with neither mother nor grandmother, as Cole's mother died when he was five. Thus Jonathan Wright becomes Jonathan Campbell--J. C.--who is sacrificed by his mother on the altar of patriarchy to save his family.

But Jonathan and Paula are not the only motherless children in The Winter People. Collie and her three brothers have been ruled by their father, a kindly man but one who holds all the power in the family. His wife is sickly, and Collie says, "I raised Young [the youngest brother], and Mama'll admit it. She never did pay enough attention to Young" (Ehle 77). The intensity of the problems caused by Young's mother's inability to care for him come out in a conversation after Young asks Collie to help serve lunch:

Their mother barked angrily at him, "You're not to decide such matters as service in this house."

"Well, we all know you're crippled, Mama," Young said.

"When did you care about that?"

"All right, all right, Mama," Young said. "For years I've cared--"

"You have problems enough without setting my table, Mister," she told him. (222)

But if Young feels antagonism toward his mother, he feels great love for his sister Collie. After Cole Campbell dies, Young says that he will take the blame for Collie's part in the death. He explains, "She's my sister. God knows, she's my mother" (230). It is also significant that Young is involved with a widow several years his senior. Collie says to him, "You've always needed somebody to mother you, Young, and I expect you've found her" (261). Collie's surrogate mothering of Young makes up, in part, for his lack of attention from his mother; however, Young

rambles; he has trouble settling down. Except for his love for Collie, most of his relationships seem tenuous.

Collie, too, receives inadequate mothering. She has to mother her brother instead of being a child. The result is that she takes up with the first man who shows an interest in her, and she has an illegitimate child.

Young's friend Cole Campbell, Collie's lover, was his mother's youngest and favorite child. She wanted him to become a preacher (152). His father, Drury, says of his son's dead mother, "Cole and his mother breathed the same air for a year or so, same breath. . . . She would show him to me, but he was hers. . ." (243). Drury explains his son's problems to Collie: "His mother died and that freed him from her care, so at an early age he was free to kick up his heels" (243). But freedom from his mother's care is not what a five-year-old child needs, and Cole Campbell, like Young Wright, is unable to involve himself in meaningful relationships. He tries to possess Collie, but he wants her to have no strings on him. He wants to come and go at her cabin as he pleases, and he wants no one else there but him, her, and their child. Like a boy who does not get his way, when Cole does not have complete control, he responds with a violent temper tantrum. This attitude gets him killed.

In The Winter People, John Ehle has four mothers abandon their children, three by their own choice. Cole

Campbell's mother dies, but Paula Jackson's mother drowns herself; Young and Collie Wright's mother uses her sickness as an excuse not to mother them; and Collie Wright gives up her child to save her lover and brothers. The women are operating under the restrictions of illness and patriarchy, but they still leave their children motherless.

Paula will be all right, as her father marries Collie, who will be a good mother substitute. Cole is dead. Young might settle down, as he has a mother/lover in the widow Benie Frazier to love him. Collie will grieve, as she has given up her child. But her marriage to Wayland Jackson will offer her love and security. Jonathan? Jonathan will be loved by his grandfathers, who agree to share custody, but not with the boy's mother. Sacrificed to the patriarchy, he will bring the Campbells and the Wrights together, but he will be denied the stability of a mother and will, probably, be as worthless as his father.

Dead or absent mothers in The Winter People are always negative. Unless the children can find a good substitute, as Paula finds Collie, they are doomed to rootlessness and immaturity, especially the inability to have meaningful relationships with other people, primarily members of the opposite sex.

As a novel about the South, Ehle's book illustrates the sacrificial role of the mother in a patriarchy. The motherland is destroyed by her own sons because they are

so involved in being men that they cannot allow their homeland to nurture them. Ehle's theme of reconciliation is bought at too high a price; mother and child are sacrificed for vengeance and power. Drury Campbell promises that Jonathan can return to his mother when the grandfather dies. In these mountains, any positive values represented by the Old South are nonexistent, just as the mothers are basically nonexistent. It is the fathers, whose roots are in the land of the Scots-Irish, the violent Celts, not in the Old South, who must be destroyed before a new, gentler South represented by Collie can save its sons.

The Fathers by Allen Tate is a memory, a fifty-year-old memory of Lacy Gore Buchan's youth. On the first page, in the first paragraph, he tells us, "My mother was dead" (3). On the next page he tells us why that memory is so important:

The death of my mother is a suitable beginning for my story. There, for the last time, I saw our whole family assembled from that region, down to the fifth and sixth degree of kin, besides three or four of the Poseys, the family of my remarkable brother-in-law, George Posey from Georgetown, who had the year before married my lovely sister Susan. A year later came the war; we were up-rooted from Pleasant Hill, and were never together again. (4)

Lacy Buchan wants to tell his story because he is "an unmarried old man, having nothing else to do . . ." (5) (unmarried, perhaps, because a woman once said to him, "A motherless boy becomes an unsatisfactory husband" 86).

He asks,

Is it not something to tell, when a score of people whom I knew and loved, people beyond whose lives I could imagine no other life, either out of violence in themselves or the times, or out of some misery or shame, scattered into the new life of the modern age where they cannot even find themselves? (5)

Allen Tate is telling the story of the death of a woman, the end of a family, and the destruction of a society. It is certainly no coincidence that Lacy's mother's death occurred almost on the eve of the Civil War; her death pulled apart a family; the war pulled apart a nation. The story is set in Fairfax County, Virginia, about as close to the Union capital as one could get and still be in the South.

Lacy Buchan is at first confused by his mother's death.

He says,

I was suspended nowhere, in a world without time. Ahead of me downstairs where I could not expect it, was death, and if I went back in any direction I arrived at birth, my own birth, a shameful and terrible thing that I could not reconcile with the perfection of my father's character, nor could I forgive my mother her sorrowful inconvenience before I was born. . . . That alone compelled me to face her dread possession of the physical body that I had concealed from realization, and now that body was dead. What was being dead? . . . The little boy's fiction, that grown women were only neck and head set above a mysterious region that did not exist, was a fiction of death, and in the conviction of guilt that harasses children I saw myself responsible for my mother's death. (43)

However, he says, ". . . life went on, we had to go on

as we had lived, without mother" (15), and later, "For me my mother had merely ceased to exist . . ." (92).

But before she ceased to exist, his mother had represented for him civilization, the whole world. He says that she had washed the good china by hand herself every evening and that had she been questioned about it, she would have felt that "the civilization of Greece and Rome" through "the State of Virginia" had been called into question (183-84). He also says that "her small world held life in its entirety, and . . . through that knowledge, she knew all that was necessary of the world at large" (184). But that world changes, although she is not alive to see it.

Richard H. King writes that ". . . the Buchan family's torments mirror the nation's larger division. With the father (and the fathers) destroyed, the siblings engage in fratricidal war" (Southern 108). He also asserts, "The disruption of the family, most importantly the loss of the father, signals the destruction of an ordered world" (Southern 110). It is true that the father of the Buchan clan also dies near the beginning of the war and that the title of the novel is The Fathers. But the death of the mother, not the father, triggers Lacy Buchan's memory. It was the Southern mother who held families together. After her death and the beginning of the Civil War, in which he and his sons take opposite sides, what is there

for her husband to do but die? His world--both personal and public--has fallen apart.

Thomas Daniel Young asserts "that The Fathers will support the suggestion that the antebellum society had within it the elements that would have destroyed it even if the Civil War had never occurred" (520). Certainly George Posey's actions and Major Lewis Buchan's ineffectuality lend credence to this theory. But it is the death of the mother that symbolizes the self-destruction. She dies before the Civil War; she is not killed by the Yankees.

Tate uses the Old South symbolically (King, Southern 54), creating an idealized version of the South (Cash 392). His reason is the Agrarian reason: to show the contrast between the old agricultural South and the new industrialized one. William Pratt writes that Tate felt that "traditional society, where people were bound into community by ties of family, locale, and religion, had been replaced by industrial society" ("Tate" 897). Therefore, the Southern writer, who still lived in an agrarian society, had the best vantage-point from which to critique the problem (Pratt, "Tate" 897). R. J. Gray writes that Tate's traditional society passes on a code of conduct from generation to generation, but it must be agricultural to do this; industrialization destroys the moral structure (37). Gray also believes that Tate knows the actual

ante-bellum South was flawed but uses it as a contrast to post-War America to show the decay of moral standards (38-39). Therefore, Lacy Buchan's myth shows the disintegration of ante-bellum society during the Civil War (Gray 41), and that disintegration begins with Lacy Buchan's mother's death. But John Pilkington argues that The Fathers illustrates that "the traditional order has proved inadequate to function in the new antitraditional society" (359) rather than that the new society is flawed.

Although he glorified the Old South to argue for the agrarian tradition, Tate was not blind to its horrors. He said,

The South, afflicted with the curse of slavery--a curse, like that of Original Sin, for which no single person is responsible--had to be destroyed, the good along with the evil. The old order had a great deal of good, one of the "goods" being a result of the evil; for slavery itself entailed a certain moral responsibility The old order, in which the good could not be salvaged from the bad, was replaced by a new order which was in many ways worse than the old. (qtd. in Thomas Daniel Young 518)

The War is, of course, the novel's greatest tragedy. But another one occurs on a more individual level. It involves Lacy's sister's sister-in-law, Jane Posey. Jane's brother, George, whom Lacy loves more than any other man (Tate, Fathers 306), is from Georgetown, from the city, not the country. In many ways he represents the New South; for example, he does not have the manners to deal with

death when his mother-in-law dies, riding away from the funeral rather than behaving as he should. Gray points out that he is an outsider who married into the Buchan family and so does not have the plantation tradition (43). He sets off the tragedy when he sells his half-brother, a slave called "Yellow Jim," to buy a horse to win a jousting tournament. King says that the sale dooms the family because George has chosen financial concerns over familial ones (Southern 108). The slave returns and rapes Jane, who is sent to a convent. It is interesting that Jane's mother has been ill, and when Jane is raped, she repeats many times, "Mama wouldn't listen to me. . . . Where's mama?" (243). Her "mama," the South, is no longer strong enough to protect her, especially from the greed of the new, represented by her selfish brother. Tate says that blaming Jane's mother for anything "would be like blaming a what-not or a piece of bric-a-brac" (217).

Jane's fiance, Lacy's brother Semmes, kills Jim, and George kills Semmes. Lacy's father dies of grief, and Lacy becomes a Confederate soldier. The Buchan civil war and the American Civil War both end in tragedy. Mr. and Mrs. Buchan are both dead, and the Old South is dead.

Tate's novel might have been suggested by a morality tale by John Donald Wade in I'll Take My Stand, "The Life and Death of Cousin Lucius." The story begins with young Lucius sitting in the carriage "next the person who ruled

the world"--his mother (265). When Lucius is fifteen, at the end of the Civil War, his mother dies giving birth to another child;

He thought that he would burst with rage and sorrow. Wherever he turned, she seemed to speak to him, and he cursed himself for his neglect of her. . . . Well, she was dead now, and it seemed to Lucius that the world would always be dark to him, and that things more rigid, more ponderous, would drag his hands downward to earth all his life. (270-71)

After Lucius's mother's death, he learned not to take things or people for granted (271).

Both The Fathers and "The Life and Death of Cousin Lucius" contrast the Old South with the New, and the New is a fallen world. In both novels, the boys' loss, their mothers, parallels the loss of the Old South. The short story is an allegory, with Lucius representing Every-Southerner. The novel is, of course, more complex and more meaningful on a literal level. But there can be little doubt of the symbolism of the dead mother in either case.

Richard H. King writes,

One can only speculate that the cultural denial of sexuality or nurturing warmth to the white woman must have something to do with the lack of the strongly sexed women in much of the literature of the Southern Renaissance. One thinks here of Tate's The Fathers, which opens with the funeral of Lacy Buchan's mother, of Faulkner's series of neurasthenic women, castrating bitches, spiky but asexual older aunts and grandmothers, and the absence of the mother in "The Bear" of her shadowy role in Absalom, Absalom!; of Will Percy's neglect of his mother in his autobiography; of Carson McCullers's A [sic] Member of the Wedding,

and indeed all her other stories in which a mother scarcely appears; and of Lillian Smith's Strange Fruit and Killers of the Dream. In the case of Faulkner, it was not . . . that his mother played a minor role--far from it. But Southern women remained neglected figures in the cultural articulations and literary renderings of the family romance. (Southern 35-36)

By making mothers ineffectual or asexual or dead, Southern writers, especially white male ones, prevent the continuation of their lines. Without this continuity, the Old South dies.

The Old South is dead in twentieth-century Southern literature. Perhaps its passing is to be celebrated, as it was the place of our country's greatest disgrace, slavery. Or perhaps it should be mourned, as it represented a genteel way of life that has been replaced by one that is less romantic, less concerned with honor and tradition. But probably the ambiguous reaction of most Southern writers is appropriate. The Civil War killed an ancestor, beloved but flawed. We cannot deny its influence, nor can we deny its ugliness, any more than a motherless child can deny his or her mother. For white Southern male writers, the Old South seems to look much better in retrospect than it might have looked at the time or than it does to either black writers or white women who write in the South. But white men were not the victims in that South. With its passing went their power. We should not wonder that they mourn.

Haley and Margaret Walker write their historical novels about family members they first learned of through female relatives from their mothers' side of their families. Ernest J. Gaines was reared by an aunt, who also influenced his feeling for the oral tradition (Rickels 209).

With almost no exceptions, characters in the black literature discussed in this chapter are based on characters in the authors' families. Most literally, Maya Angelou and Richard Wright are writing about their own lives. Alex Haley's Roots is a genealogical novel; Margaret Walker's Jubilee is the story of her great-grandmother; and the heroine of The Color Purple is based loosely on Alice Walker's great-grandmother. Like Jody Starks in Their Eyes Were Watching God, Zora Neale Hurston's father was mayor of an all-black town in Florida. And Ernest J. Gaines learned some of the truths in Jane Pittman's "autobiography" from his grandmother and aunt, to whom he dedicated the novel.

As some of these works are hardly fiction at all, the question of whether absent mothers can be read symbolically arises. But the facts are sifted through the minds of the authors, and their interpretations of these facts provide the relevance. Richard Wright explains in Black Boy his reaction to his mother's paralysis:

My mother's suffering grew into a symbol in my mind, gathering to itself all the poverty, the ignorance,

the helplessness; the painful, baffling, hunger-ridden days and hours; the restless moving, the futile seeking, the uncertainty, the fear, the dread; the meaningless pain and the endless suffering. Her life set the emotional tone of my life, colored the men and women I was to meet in the future, conditioned my relation to events that had not yet happened, determined my attitude to situations and circumstances I had yet to face. A somberness of spirit that I was never to lose settled over me during the slow years of my mother's unrelieved suffering, a somberness that was to make me stand apart and look upon excessive joy with suspicion, that was to make me self-conscious, that was to make me keep forever on the move, as though to escape a nameless fate seeking to overtake me.

At the age of twelve, before I had had one full year of formal schooling, I had a conception of life that no experience would ever erase. . . . (111-12)

The dead, absent, or incapacitated mother, even when based on fact, becomes significant for the black Southern writer, as she does for the white.

Networks of women caring for black children other than their own can be traced to Africa. In Roots, Alex Haley writes of Gambian children being cared for by grandmothers and other older women while their mothers worked in the fields (8). Slavery necessitated this practice; women were used as field hands if they did not die in childbirth, and occasionally mothers and children were sold away from each other, making other women's rearing the children essential. Rosalyn Terborg-Penn writes that in some slave systems, female labor was so valuable that women were often not allowed to rear their own children; Frederick Douglass was one such slave child reared by an older woman so that his mother could work (1557-58).

Matriarchy in relation to child-rearing was also a tradition in both cultures. Although Gambian society in Roots is strongly patriarchal, women are in charge of the children until they have learned customs and manners sufficient for them to function in the society--girls by getting married, boys by learning to hunt and fight like the men. Some African societies, the Ashanti, for example, had matrilineal descent, and a few others were true matriarchies (Terborg-Penn 1557). Slave families could not be patriarchal, as husbands and fathers had no authority (Berkin 1520). However, the authority of black men over black women was accepted, just as white men were seen as dominant over white women. Women had the responsibility; men had the power. But it was the community or extended families and not nuclear units that provided stability.

Thomas C. Holt, Orville Vernon Burton, and Tony L. Whitehead have written about Southern black families since the time of slavery. Holt asserts that black families are "essential units" in the South, but they are extended and multi-generational, not just nuclear (137). Burton argues that the concept of the black matriarchy is a myth. He says that black families see the nuclear two-parent family as ideal; however, he also provides statistics indicating that such a family unit is not as common among black people as among white (1113). Whitehead explains that the black family in the South extended from necessity.

He writes,

[E]arly in their history, the concept of family for southern blacks began to extend beyond the residential unit to include not only parents, siblings, and children, but also biologically related kinsmen . . . , as well as people who are not related at all. Such extension has facilitated survival for blacks in the South by increasing the size and range of the "family." (153)

Therefore, kinship terms in black families are often not biological; for example, a person might be called "brother" because he acts like one, not because he is blood kin (Whitehead 154).

But Whitehead also reminds us that black children reared by persons other than their parents rarely lose touch with their biological parents (153). We see this in the lives of Richard Wright, Maya Angelou, and even Alice Walker, all of whom spent at least part of their childhoods in the homes of other relatives, but all of whom also spent much of their youth in their mothers' or parents' homes. So we see that Southern black children may grow up in a number of households within the family grouping, or even in a household totally separate from their parents'. Whitehead says that ". . . southern blacks have utilized shifting residences, fosterage, and informal adoptions" to share child-care responsibilities among extended family members (153). In addition, although land ownership has been uncommon among black Southerners, if

land is owned, it is usually managed by the oldest family members and lived on by the extended families (Whitehead 154).

None of these arrangements, however, prevents the child from seeing the mother as extremely important. We see this in Richard Wright's taking his mother's suffering as the focal point of his life; in Alice Walker's writing that her mother--sharecropper's wife, mother of eight, toiler in the fields--is the artist, like Vita Sackville-West, a creator of magnificent flower gardens, who inspired her ("In Search" 24041); and in Zora Neale Hurston's account of her mother's death: "Mama died at sundown and changed a world. That is, the world which had been built out of her body and her heart" (Dust Tracks 45). That many black children of live with people other than their parents does not prevent the pain it causes each individual black child to be separated from his or her mother.

Marianne Hirsch proposes the idea that black women are more connected to their mothers than are white women or black men. She asserts that black women find identity through their mothers, not despite them, as other writers do. Black women, she says, find connections and strength in matrilineal heritage, not through identification or connection with the male. Part of the reason, she argues, is that men in black societies do not deprive women of

their selfhood and strength (177). Alice Walker might disagree, or at least modify Hirsch's statement to one that gives women credit for preventing men from depriving them of their self-worth. But Walker would almost certainly agree with Hirsch's catalog of the influences on the female black writer: Hirsch says that black women who write do so from

three maternal traditions, the black oral invisible lineage in which their own mothers were artistic storytellers and gardeners, the black written tradition of Phyllis Wheatley, Harriet Jacobs and Zora Neale Hurston, among others, and the white written tradition of Virginia Woolf's A Room of One's Own, which does describe the contradictions of the woman writer, but must be revised to include as well the different story of the black writer. (178)

Alex Haley and Ernest J. Gaines also give credit to the oral tradition passed down to them by black women. Of important black Southern writers, only Richard Wright seems to be influenced primarily by male writers rather than female relatives, female writers, or both.

In addition to their connections to their families, especially their mothers, black writers' ties to Africa and to the South are related to their heritage. Patrick Gerster writes that black Southerners look at their past in religious terms, seeing Africa as paradise, the Old South and slavery as their time on the cross, as paradise lost, and civil rights as paradise regained. Martin Luther King's statement "I have seen the Promised Land" makes

use of this extended metaphor (1123). Loren Schweninger reports that, unlike American slaves, who usually ran away alone, African-born slaves usually ran away in groups and tried to establish communities in free territories in the West (193). Rachel D. Robertson describes a game played by black children who sing,

Rise Sally Rise,
Wipe out your eyes
Fly to the east, Sally . . . (1534)

It is important that even in the American South, where the North was the place of freedom, it is east, the direction of Africa, toward which the children wish to fly. The North is not home.

Thomas C. Holt asserts that black Southerners' relationship with the South is much more ambivalent than their attitude toward Africa. He describes it as "a love-hate relationship with the South" (137). He explains that to black people, the South represents "racism, poverty, and oppression" but also

the roots of black culture, history, and "home." It is "down home" to blacks not born there; a "homeplace" for people whose fathers and mothers left decades ago. In community lore and joking it is a place to be escaped from; and yet a place that cannot be escaped. And finally, after the civil rights movement, it became a place to embrace: embraced less in optimism than in pride, because yet another generation had staked a blood-drenched claim to its equivocal legacy; embraced both for a sense of the possibilities it offered and in historical vindication for the many thousands gone. (137-38)

Black Southerners who had been displaced by the slave trade, as we see in Roots, were again displaced by emancipation, as we see in Jubilee and The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman. James Grossman explains that black migration occurred from economic necessity but also as rebellion; for centuries slaves and even free black people had their movements restricted, so when emancipation freed them to move, many of them did (177). In fact, between 1910 and 1960 around one million black Southerners moved to the North, and in the decade after that one and a half million left. But between 1975 and 1980, fewer than a quarter of a million left, and almost twice that many black people moved to, or back to, the South (Darling 170).

The effect of this migration on black literature, especially poetry, according to J. Lee Greene, was that Southern black literature merged with American black literature, and "[t]he focus shifted from the rural South to the urban North with southern settings, themes, and female personae being replaced by northern settings, themes, and male personae" (172). But some black writers stayed Southern, even if they did not always remain in the South. All the works discussed in this chapter have Southern settings, most of which are either rural or small town, and only Roots and Black Boy do not have female protagonists. All the works except Wright's stress family and community rather than the individual; in most, religion

is a major factor, either for good or bad; and most have a strong sense of place. And almost all examine the present in relation to the past. Greene writes,

The southern white novel has generally dealt with the effects of a real or an imagined past on a present generation, with characters grappling to come to terms with that past. Typically, the southern black novel made the physical and psychological landscapes of the past a living part of the novel; it recreated, repopulated, and critically examined the past as physical setting. (173)

Just as black people's attitudes toward the South are ambivalent, so are their attitudes toward the mother. Like white Southerners, black Southerners love their mothers but also desire independence from them, the girls to avoid following in their submissive footsteps and the boys to be free from their control. Simon J. Bronner describes how lower-class black male adolescents insult each other by "playing the dozens," rhymed attacks on each other's mother's sexual promiscuity. Roger D. Abrahams, a folklorist, explains that this is the boys' way to "try symbolically to cast off the woman's world, indeed the black world they see as run by the mother of the family, in favor of the gang existence of the black man's world" (qtd. in Bronner, "Toasts" 522). Lynn Z. Bloom says that the daughter who writes autobiography, as both Zora Neale Hurston and Maya Angelou have done, recreates herself, in essence becoming "her own mother" (292).

These attitudes toward mother, Africa, and the South are illustrated in the autobiographies of Richard Wright, Black Boy, and Maya Angelou, I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings; in the fact-based historical novels Jubilee by Margaret Walker and Roots by Alex Haley; in the fictional historical novel The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman by Ernest J. Gaines; and in the novels Their Eyes Were Watching God by Zora Neale Hurston, and The Color Purple by Alice Walker.

Richard Wright was born and reared in the South; however, his work does not seem Southern. His literary influences are white, male, and European or Northern. His sympathy lies always with himself; when he concerns himself with the oppression of the black race, he does so because he feels himself to be a victim, not because of the suffering of the group. In "Bitches, Whores, and Woman Haters: Archetypes and Typologies in the Art of Richard Wright," Maria K. Mootry argues that Wright is narcissistic, that he often depicts himself as superior to those around him, that he sees himself as a questing hero, and women are among the traps he must avoid along the way (119). Wright's quest took him North, where he said he hoped, "I might learn who I was, what I might be" (qtd. in Grossman 177). Ruth A. Banes disagrees; she says that Wright left the South to gain a perspective on it and that he writes of Mississippi nostalgically (848).

That might be true in some of his work, but not in either Black Boy or Native Son, both of which portray the South (and the North, in Native Son) as ignorant and viciously racist. Neither contains any nostalgia about either the South or the family.

If we are to believe Wright, he had no reason to be nostalgic. Black Boy is filled with examples of his victimization by his father, his mother, his aunt, his uncle, his grandmother, his mother's church, people in bars, various employers, poverty, and the South in general. If he ever loves anyone, we do not see it in his autobiography. When he and his brother and mother go to Chicago at the end of Black Boy, he realizes that he will take part of the South with him (284); however, the part he takes seems to be a life's worth of bad memories.

His victimization at the hands of his mother is rarely capricious but almost always excessive. When he is a very young child, he sets the curtains on fire because he is bored; his mother beats his back with a tree limb until he passes out, and he subsequently develops a high fever and delirium. He writes, "[F]or a long time I was chastened whenever I remembered that my mother had come close to killing me" (Wright 13). Also when he is very young, he hangs a kitten because his father, angry because of the kitten's crying while the man was trying to sleep, had told him to kill it. Richard's mother makes him go out

in the dark and bury the kitten; she refuses to come with him until he is finished; then she has him pray that God will spare his life, even though the boy had not spared the kitten's (Wright 19-21). Of course the child is terrified. In both cases, punishment was deserved, but certainly excessive.

Wright's mother also tries to teach him to stand up for himself. She sends him to the store, but bullies beat him and take his money. So she sends him back with a list, money, and a stick and locks him out until he comes back with the groceries. He fights the bullies and wins (Wright 23-25). But she wants him to know whom to fight; when he gets hurt in a fight with white boys, she takes him to get his head sewn up, then beats him, as she fears he could be killed (Wright 93-94).

His mother's religion also makes him feel victimized. When young Richard writes vulgar words on neighborhood windows with soap, his mother makes him wash all of them off (Wright 32-33). Another time he says something vulgar to his grandmother, for which he is beaten (Wright 53). Later his mother tries to get him to join her church. As the congregation and minister plead with him and other boys to be saved, she says, "Don't you love your old crippled mother, Richard?" Wright says that she was afraid of public humiliation if he refused to join the congregation (170).

Despite her efforts to teach Richard to stay out of the way of white people, his mother fails to help him understand race. He asks his mother why his grandmother, who looks white, lives with them, but his mother refuses to explain (55-58). And when his uncle is killed by white people who are jealous of his successful liquor store business, Richard asks his mother why the family does not fight back; out of her own fear, she slaps her son (64).

Richard's mother also refuses to take up for her son when other members of the family mistreat him. For example, when his aunt, a teacher, tries to beat him for something another boy did, his mother sides with the aunt (120-21). Only once, when the hungry boy defies his grandmother's edict that he will not work on the Sabbath (Saturday), the only day he can get a job, does the mother praise him (159).

Richard's mother is not supportive of his writing, either. When he gets a story published in a black Jackson newspaper, she is afraid people will think he is "weak-minded" and refuse to hire him (185).

Young Richard is also victimized by his father, who deserts the family when the boy is four. Although his mother is employed as a cook, she is often too ill to work, and the children are hungry. When Mrs. Wright takes her former husband to court, he says he is doing the best he can, and the judge does not order him to support his two

sons. So the mother tries to send Richard to get money from his father, but the boy would rather starve than beg (Wright 35). Oddly, Wright expresses little anger toward his father, seeming more upset that his mother allows herself to be humiliated in court than that his father would let them starve. He appears to dismiss his father as part of his life.

The family's poverty and Richard's mother's ill health cause Mrs. Wright at one point to put her children in an orphanage temporarily. For a while his mother visits, but Richard worries when she does not come for a long time that she has deserted the boys. By the time she comes and explains her absence--the director had told her she was spoiling her sons and should not visit so often--Richard "was rapidly learning to distrust everything and everybody" (37).

Besides his father's desertion, the worst calamity to befall the Wright family is Ella Wright's series of strokes, which leave her paralyzed much of her adult life. After her first stroke, Wright says that he no longer felt like a child (96-97). He writes,

I was more conscious of my mother now than I had ever been and I was already able to feel what being completely without her would mean. A slowly rising dread stole into me and I would look at my mother for long moments, but when she would look at me I would look away. (95)

For a time, Wright shows evidence of some love for his mother. He goes to live with his uncle Clark and his aunt Jody because his grandparents cannot afford to keep him, but he feels no warmth there. Wright says, "I had always felt a certain warmth with my mother, even when we had lived in squalor . . ." (100). When he goes back to Jackson to live with her, he says, "I was glad to see my mother" (109).

But then his mother has another stroke and tells Richard that she wants to die. Wright writes, "I held her hand and begged her to be quiet. That night I ceased to react to my mother; my feelings were frozen" (111). After still another stroke, he wonders why she had "been singled out for so much . . . meaningless suffering" (172). And when he goes North, he promises to come back for her (226). But his frozen feelings never really seem to thaw.

Banes says, "Family history and racial struggle provide the foundation for Wright's rebellious spirit, his distrust of authority, tradition and the white world" (848). Robert Felgar believes that Black Boy represents Wright's attempt to answer Job's question, "Why do the righteous suffer?" Felgar says that part of Richard's problem is that his suffering comes not just from white people but also from black: "Maternal lashings and adjurations to passivity (to break a too-pert spirit in order to camouflage it from white notice)" made him resentful (44).

Mootry argues that Wright's problem is women. She says that all of Wright's heroes quest for manhood, and their primary obstacle is "that ubiquitous, irritating presence, the black woman" (117). Therefore, she writes, "All of Wright's women . . . are Mothers or Whores. As mothers, the women are equated with the Christian-Feudal-Folk element of the black experience" (123). Miriam DeCosta-Willis writes about two of Wright's archetypal characters: "the Mother-Sufferer" and "the Mother-Avenger," "asexual, incorruptible, unfeminine" women. She says, "None of the mothers in Wright's fiction or non-fiction nurture their young, hold, caress or shelter them from a hostile world; instead, the mothers are distant, alienated, and rejecting" (544). Wright wants to break free of all of this. Therefore, he escapes, first to the North and then to Europe. But he never truly escapes, because he is trying to run from the past.

If the South represents the mother Wright wants to escape, perhaps Africa is the mother he is seeking. Blyden Jackson quotes him as saying that "black Americans were right to cherish Africa" (448). But Wright always runs from, not to. He never finds an adequate surrogate--even the kind woman in Memphis frightens him by trying to get him to marry her daughter--so he never escapes his anger.

Lillian Smith believes that Wright must have had some "early experiences of warmth and tenderness and human worth

. . . that convinced him of his dignity . . . and kept him from totally rejecting the good with the bad . . .," but "[h]is childhood is still, in large part, a closed door to him" ("Richard" 136). DeCosta-Willis writes about women mentioned in Black Boy who cared for Wright and his brother or to whom he read his stories; the critic argues that Wright has chosen to forget that he "grew up in a community where women cared for little children . . . and encouraged creativity" (546). Perhaps Smith and DeCosta-Willis are right, but in Black Boy, Richard Wright mentions almost no warmth or love; instead, he describes his mother and other women, like the South, as people who victimized him, people to escape. DeCosta-Willis writes,

The Black Southern women in his fiction are not real people. Phantoms of Wright's childhood nightmare, these avenging women, shadow figures, and mute mothers represent the dark side of a Southern womanhood that has been violated and distorted in the crucible of racism and sexism (548).

Robert Philipson asserts that in a colonized society, as the American South is for black people, childhood is another "instrument of oppression" because the innocence and powerlessness of children allow them to be doubly victimized (80). He also argues that if a child's community remains oppressed, as Wright's does, in order to become a man, especially an artist, one must leave the community (79). Richard Wright does just that, also leaving behind

family, choosing freedom over love, self-worth over oppression.

Like Richard Wright, Maya Angelou has written several autobiographical works. Also like Wright, she spent many years of her childhood living with relatives other than her parents, or with her mother and other relatives. However, perhaps because Angelou is a black woman, or perhaps because she was not beaten by her family, or perhaps because she did not grow up in poverty, she has almost none of the bitterness that Wright has about his childhood. Even though her parents deserted her, she was raped when she was eight, and she had an illegitimate child when she was seventeen, even though she was discriminated against by a white dentist when she was a child and by an employer when she was a teenager, she tells of this as a life she got past to become a healthy woman, rather than portraying it, as Wright does, as a past that cannot be gotten beyond.

Lynn Z. Bloom asserts that in many ways Angelou never faces all the horrors of her childhood, especially her mother's careless mothering. Bloom believes that Angelou loved the image of her mother, even though--or, perhaps, because--the reality was rarely present. Maya believed that her mother's bad parenting was due to the child's unworthiness; Bloom argues that the author does not correct this assumption even in I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings (296-97).

Angelou explains that she and her four-year-old brother Bailey were sent when she was three to live with their grandmother in Arkansas after their parents' marriage broke up (3-4). On the train from California, people called them "poor little motherless darlings" (4), and when they got to Stamps, Arkansas, she says, "The town . . . closed around us, as a real mother embraces a stranger's child. Warmly, but not too familiarly" (4). Soon she and Bailey are calling their grandmother "Momma" (4) and adjusting to her firm, strict mothering style.

But one Christmas they get gifts from their parents, who, as Angelou describes it,

lived separately in a heaven called California, where we were told they could have all the oranges they could eat. And the sun shone all the time. I was sure that wasn't so. I couldn't believe that our mother would laugh and eat oranges in the sunshine without her children. Until that Christmas when we received the gifts I had been confident that they were both dead. I could cry anytime I wanted by picturing my mother (I didn't quite know what she looked like) lying in her coffin. Her hair . . . was spread out on a tiny little white pillow and her body was covered with a sheet. The face was brown, like a big O, and since I couldn't fill in the features I printed M O T H E R across the O, and the tears would fall down my cheeks like warm milk" (42-43).

The gifts make the children wonder, "Why did they send us away? and What did we do so wrong?" (43). Then the children think that their parents might have forgiven them and plan to come for them. But they still tear the stuffing out of the white doll Marguerite (Maya) had been sent (44).

The two children are eventually taken to live with their mother and her family. When Marguerite sees her mother, Angelou says, "I knew immediately why she had sent me away. She was too beautiful to have children" (50). The child thinks of her mother as looking like the Virgin Mary (coincidentally, Scarlett O'Hara's fantasy about her mother)--wonderful, but not real (57). Even after Bailey and Marguerite go to St. Louis, they stay with their maternal grandparents for six months before moving in with their mother (57).

It is indirectly through their mother that Marguerite becomes a victim of violence; she is raped by her mother's live-in boyfriend, who is then killed by her mother's brothers. This violence literally renders her speechless; she talks to no one except Bailey. The children are sent back to Stamps, where a woman named Mrs. Flowers befriends Marguerite by giving her books, and the child eventually talks again; hence the title of the book.

Later Marguerite stays for a while with her father and his girlfriend, who calls Marguerite's mother a whore. The child attacks the woman and returns to her mother's house; she thinks, "I was at a home, again. And my mother was a fine lady" (217). This echoes the sentiment she and Bailey shared years earlier: "She was our mother and belonged to us. She was never mentioned to anyone because we simply didn't have enough of her to share" (99).

Young Marguerite is shuffled from relative to relative, brutalized, and emotionally tormented. While a teenager, she gets pregnant by a boy she does not love, because he pays attention to her, and has a son. Angelou articulates some awareness of her victimization, partly because of her separation from her mother: "[W]hat mother and daughter understand each other, or even have the sympathy for each other's lack of understanding?" (57). She also realizes that being a black female in the South is difficult. She writes, "If growing up is painful for the Southern Black girl, being aware of her displacement is the rust on the razor that threatens the throat. It is an unnecessary insult" (3). But she also knows her strength:

The Black female is assaulted in her tender years by all those common forces of nature at the same time that she is caught in the tripartite crossfire of masculine prejudice, white illogical hate and Black lack of power.

The fact that the adult American Negro female emerges a formidable character is often met with amazement, distaste, and even belligerence. It is seldom accepted as an inevitable outcome of the struggle won by survivors and deserves respect if not enthusiastic acceptance. (231)

Angelou does emerge "a formidable character." And through some stroke of luck or love, she seems to be a good mother to her son, as her mother has convinced her she will be. According to Michael Craig Hillmann, Angelou is with her son until he is grown, except for a year when she tours with a dance company (216).

Richard Wright sees his mother, and, consequently, all women, as people to be escaped. Maya Angelou sees them as people to reach toward. Wright mentions Africa as a place black Americans should care about, but he escapes the South, moves to the North, and eventually goes to Paris. Angelou spends years in Africa (Hillman 216) and now lives in the South, in North Carolina. Wright is bitter; Angelou is conciliatory. Although both spent years without their mothers, Angelou's mother and grandmother obviously were more at peace in their own worlds than Wright's family members were. Consequently, although both authors have ambivalent feelings about their mothers, Angelou is able to turn her feelings in a more positive direction, making peace with her mother, the South, Africa, and herself.

Fact-based historical novels Jubilee by Margaret Walker (Alexander), and Roots by Alex Haley, and the fictional historical novel The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman by Ernest J. Gaines, all go back in time to slavery and its aftermath. The motherlessness is as realistic as in the autobiographies, and the symbolism is even stronger, as some of the characters in these works have direct ties to Africa, and many are displaced in the Emancipation.

Jubilee is the fictionalized story of Walker's maternal great-grandmother, Vyry, a slave, told to the author by her grandmother. Vyry is the daughter of Georgia plantation owner John Dutton and his slave, Hetta, who dies in

childbirth when Vyry is two. The child is moved into her father's house, where his wife, Salina, treats her cruelly. She is reared by Mammy Sukey, who also dies. The Duttons' cook, Aunt Sally, takes over the care of the child and teaches her to cook. Again Vyry forms an attachment:

Vyry had grown so accustomed to Aunt Sally she could not imagine what her life would be without her. She prayed fervently that Aunt Sally would not die like her own mother, Hetta, and Mammy Sukey had done. That would leave her all alone in the world. (72)

This practice of taking in other women's children was fairly common during slavery, when mothers and their little ones were often separated by death, sale, or field labor. Again Vyry is rendered motherless by the sale of Aunt Sally.

This time she transfers her affection to a man, Randall Ware, who tries unsuccessfully to buy her freedom; she then tries unsuccessfully to run away. The couple have two children before Ware has to leave to avoid becoming a slave. Years after she is told Ware is dead, Vyry marries Innis Brown, who is also motherless: Brown tells her, "I ain't never figgered I would have a chance in the world to be anything. I never knowed my mother, nor father, sister, nor brother, and I was sold three times before I was grown" (486). Vyry and Brown have a son, giving Vyry three children.

In addition to her children, Vyry mothers Lillian, her half-sister, whose husband is wounded in the Civil

War and comes home and dies, as does her brother. Lillian and Vyry's father has died of an accident earlier, and Lillian's mother dies of a stroke after losing her son. When Yankee soldiers ransack the plantation and probably rape Lillian, she becomes insane. Her aunt eventually takes her to Alabama, but in the meantime Vyry takes care of Lillian and Lillian's children as well as her own.

After Lillian leaves, Vyry and her husband and children begin the after-Emancipation migration, trying to find a place to make a home. Once they are burned out by the Klan, but white people build them another house out of gratitude for Vyry's serving as midwife for them. Ware returns and takes his son to live with him and attend school.

Although there is a lot of mothering in Jubilee, little of it is of women's own biological children. Hortense J. Spillers says that Vyry Ware "exists for the race, in its behalf, and in maternal relationship to its profoundest needs and wishes," that Vyry is "woman-for-the-other" (27). Minrose C. Gwin writes that Jubilee "is about freedom of self through the acknowledgment of a self-imposed bondage to the human duty of nurturance of others" (152). This paradox is at the thematic center not only of this novel but of several others, almost all by women; it is the opposite of Wright's attitude that freedom of self requires the breaking of all other bonds.

Gwin also points out that at the end of the book, Vyry can forgive the person who treated her worst, Salina Dutton, "Big Missy." Gwin sees this forgiveness as the reconciliation of the races (154). The critic explains this reconciliation in terms of humanism and motherhood. She writes,

Just as the female principle is linked to creative humanism in Jubilee, so is the ideal of motherhood. The book begins and ends with the bearing of children. Sis Hetta dies in her attempt to bear a child, but Vyry at the end of Jubilee is expecting her fourth and has reconciled white and black interests through her willingness to aid in the delivery of other women's children. It is this maternal framework and emphasis which, by contrast, mark Salina . . . as an evil force. By all natural laws, the white woman, as the wife of Vyry's father, has certain maternal obligations to the mulatto orphan. In the southern context, it is understandable that she refuses to fulfill any natural obligations. But, instead of casting Vyry to the care of others and forgetting her, Salina tortures and torments her as if she, by being her mother's child, were innately guilty of some unforgivable sin. . . . Big Missy becomes Jung's Dark Mother--a perversion of the generative principle, the primal threat to life and growth. (158-59)

That Vyry can care for Salina when she is ill, then care for the white woman's daughter and grandchildren, and even forgive her tormentor makes Vyry Salina's moral superior. It also gives her the power to heal. By the end of the novel, the Old South is dead, just as the Dutton family is dead. The slave South is dead for black people as well. The ending is optimistic, perhaps unrealistically so, but it is through interracial healing, allowed because of Vyry's

indiscriminate mothering, that the new South supercedes the Old.

Alex Haley's Roots also ends on an optimistic note, but not because of racial interaction. In this seven-generation genealogical novel, the reader hardly ever knows white women, and white men are almost always either brutes or fools, selling slaves, cutting Kunta Kinte's foot off because he runs away, selling a child away from her parents, raping Kizzy, and losing Chicken George in a cock fight. White women are often childless or die in childbirth; Bell tells Kunta that the mistress of the Waller plantation "died birthin' dey first baby. Was a little gal; it died, too" (273-74). It is black people who are important, especially black men and black families. And the motherland this time is Africa.

The Africa, The Gambia, of Kunta Kinte is a patriarchy. Men eat first, then children, then women (2). Men's huts are separate from those housing their wives and children, and women try to wean babies early to prevent men from taking second wives (6-7). Kunta shows the typical adolescent attitude toward Binta, his mother. He looks forward to the time he no longer sleeps in her hut like a child. He thinks "angrily that when he [gets] to be a man, he certainly [intends] to put Binta in her place as a woman--although he [does] intend to show her kindness and forgiveness, since after all, she [is] his mother"

(49). Kunta's love and loyalty are almost all for his father; his mother treats him more with violence than with love--perhaps, like Ella Wright, trying to make a man of her son. And part of manhood training for Mandinka boys is to steal food from their mothers' huts to prove that they are "smarter than all women" (107). When he returns from manhood training, not yet fifteen, he knows he cannot tell his mother he is glad to see her (110-11). Manhood makes Kunta lonely, as he is too young for his father's notice and too old for his mother's. He rationalizes that "his mother and he had little to say to one another anyway" (118).

After Kunta is captured and dragged literally from his mother and his motherland, he becomes deathly ill on the slave ship. When he is nursed by a girl about his age, seventeen, his response is "Mother! Mother!" (188). But Kunta carries his society's sexist attitudes with him to America; when he learns that his wife is pregnant, he thinks about his responsibilities as a father:

[H]e was going to teach this manchild to be a true man. . . . For it was the job of a father to be as a giant tree to his manchild. For where girlchildren simply ate food until they grew big enough to marry and go away--and girlchildren were their mothers' concerns, in any case--it was the manchild who carried on his family's name and reputation. . . . (337)

But the child is a girl, and Bell, his wife, who had been sold away from her first two children (339), resents her

African husband's naming their child without consulting her (343). Although Kunta Kinte tries to maintain the male dominance he learned as a boy, a plantation's slave quarters are less patriarchal than Africa.

In addition to the change from black men's being in control to black men's being subject to white men and not even being dominant in their own houses, Kunta has to handle black-white relationships that offend him. He sees a black woman nursing her baby and a white one at the same time. The gardener tells him, "Ain't hardly a massa in Virginia ain't sucked a black mammy, or leas' was raised up by one" (289). Kunta is also offended by his wife's attention to "Massa's" niece "Missy Anne" and by white children playing with the black children who will one day be their slaves (338). Bell tells him about a white woman who died in childbirth, leaving her daughter to be nursed by a black woman, who also had a daughter. Years later, the white girl's stepmother has the black child sold, and the white girl almost dies of grief until her father buys her friend back. Bell says that the two girls are now grown women who live together, unmarried.

The idea of being sold apart from one's family haunts slaves. When she is sixteen, Kunta and Bell's daughter, Kizzy, forges a pass for a male friend and is caught and sold. Her new master rapes and impregnates her. Kizzy wishes she could have her mother with her (434-35). Her

son, George, is taken away from her, too; when he is twelve, his master takes him to live with the chicken trainer and learn to train fighting cocks (458-9).

Kunta cannot know about his daughter's loss of her son, but he does ponder the plight of slave women whose children are taken from them. He talks about a Mandinka woman, Nyo Boto, who lost her two children in a tribal fight; he realizes that her situation parallels that of his wife. He connects this idea to the slave trade: "But hadn't he--hadn't all those who had been chained beside him on the slave ship been torn away from their own mothers? Hadn't all the countless other thousands who had come before--and since?" (384-85). Kunta never forgets his homeland. He speaks of it to Fiddler, who replies, "How you 'spec we gon' know 'bout Africa? We ain't never been dere, an ain't goin' neither!" (271).

Harold Courlander asserts that Kunta Kinte is not a believable African; he is too ignorant of facts Mandinka people would have known; his heightened sense of smell makes him seem like an animal; and he is so filled with rage as to be insensible. But Courlander says, "Haley's basic theme is that despite the pressures of two New World cultures--the white master society and the black slave society--Kunta forever remains an unreconstructed African" (299). Ronald W. Davis also catalogs examples of Haley's sloppy scholarship. But both critics recognize Roots for

what it is, what Haley called "faction," a cross between fact and fiction (Davis 490).

What is important is that Alex Haley provides African-Americans a link with their motherland. For Haley, the lost mother is Africa, and the way to reclaim one's identity is to assert one's African-ness, not belligerently but in an educated, logical manner. To Kunta Kinte, fantasized separation from his mother represented freedom and manhood. But the actual separation took his freedom and reduced him to a person with less autonomy than a child. Seven generations later, his descendant restores to him his name, his heritage, and his motherland--and thereby finds his own.

For The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman, Ernest J. Gaines also reaches into the past. He uses the history of black people in post-Civil War Louisiana to create an archetypal mother for them all. At the beginning of the fictitious autobiography, Jane is the eleven-year-old slave girl Ticey who is renamed by a Yankee corporal after his own daughter, Jane Brown. After the slaves learn of the Emancipation, Jane tries to make her own migration to Ohio to find Corporal Brown. She says, "My mama was killed when I was young and I had never knowed my daddy" (14); therefore, when she plans to head North, she explains, "I didn't have a mama or a daddy to cry and hold me back" (14).

Later Jane explains her mother's death:

My mama been dead. . . . The overseer we had said he was go'n whip my mama because the driver said she wasn't hoing right. My mama told the overseer, "You might try and whip me, but nobody say you go'n succeed." The overseer 'lowed, "I ain't go'n just try, I'm go'n do it. Pull up that dress." My mama said, "You the big man, you pull it up." And he hit her with the stick. She went on him to choke him, and he hit her again. She fell on the ground and he hit her and hit her and hit her. And they didn't get rid of him till he had killed two more people. They brought me to the house to see after the children because I didn't have nobody to stay with. But they used to beat me all the time for nothing. (28)

Jane travels a short way with a group of other freed slaves until almost all of them are killed by Klan-like patrollers. Jane is left with a little boy, Ned, when his mother, who had befriended her, and baby sister are killed.

Jane never gets out of Louisiana. What eleven-year-old with a toddler in tow could, on foot? But she makes a home for Ned and mothers him; he even calls her "Mama," although Jane believes he thinks of his own mother all the time (73). When the boy grows up and goes North to school, Jane moves in with Joe Pittman, who has two motherless daughters (77).

When Jane and Joe move to another plantation, Jane returns to her original job of mothering white children. But this time she has a rival, the sixty-year-old Molly, who has been with the family for decades. Molly quits

in a jealous rage because she will not admit that she needs help. Jane says that the mistress of the house cries daily for her nurse and that the two women visit back and forth weekly (87). Four or five years later, when Molly dies, she is buried in the family plot (88).

This connection between black and white Southerners is even stronger on the last plantation where Jane lives. The plantation owner has two sons, one by a slave and one by his white wife (138-39). The slave's child eventually has to leave because he is not subservient enough to avoid the wrath of local low-class white people, and the legitimate son kills himself because he is in love with a schoolteacher who has black blood and his society will not allow him to marry her. The discussion of the victimization of both black people and white by the South's racism, as well as other characteristics, has prompted Robert F. Kiernan to call Gaines a "latter-day Faulkner" (47).

Jane's surrogate son, Ned, is also killed by a white man, a Cajun. She knows the man plans to kill Ned for teaching school and telling black children about men such as Frederick Douglass and Booker T. Washington, but she cannot stop the murder. At the end of the novel, another young black man has been murdered, this time for participating in the Civil Rights movement. Again, Jane cannot stop the murder of a boy she loves, but she can

fight back; she and her community are going into town to protest the jailing of a black girl for drinking from a whites-only water fountain, the protest the murdered Jimmy had organized.

Martha E. Cook calls Jane Pittman a "strong, brave, loving, free black woman" (869). She also discusses Jane's inability to have her own biological children. Jane's barrenness frees her, in a sense, to mother several children not her own. But it also prevents her from passing on her own genes, continuing her mother's line. Thus, her family saga is not literally her own, but a symbolic saga of the family of former slaves in the South. The motherless child grows up to mother an entire community.

Jane's own journey from a dead black mother to a household of white people, then a move within the South, the loss of a surrogate son first to the North and later to death by a white hand, and participation in the attempt to create a new, equal-opportunity South is the journey of Southern black people for a century. Like Jane, slaves had been deprived of their mother, Africa. Like Jane, they had been unwillingly taken to a place where white people abused them, the slave-holding South. Like her, they were displaced by Emancipation, and often displaced again. They too lost children to the North and to the white man's evil. And they also fought for equality during the Civil Rights movement. So the motherless, childless

Jane Pittman becomes the black South. The promise in The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman lies not in going back to Africa, as in Roots, but in going forward to a new South in which the courage of the young merges with the experience of the old to create freedom.

Zora Neale Hurston's mother died when the author was nine. Before her death, she gave Zora instructions to defy the traditions of their people; Zora was not to allow the townswomen to remove her mother's pillow or cover the clock and mirror. But the women did all those things, and Zora's father would not let the child stop them. For the rest of her life she felt guilty for failing her mother at the end (Hurston, Dust Tracks 42-45). Hurston writes of the time after her mother's death:

But life picked me up from the foot of Mama's bed, grief, self-despisement and all, and set my feet in strange ways. That moment was the end of a phase in my life. I was old before my time with grief of loss, of failure, and of remorse. No matter what the others did, my mother had put her trust in me. She had felt that I could and would carry out her wishes, and I had not. And then in that sunset time, I failed her. It seemed as she died that the sun went down on purpose to flee away from me.

That hour began my wanderings. Not so much in geography, but in time. Then not so much in time as in spirit. (Dust Tracks 45)

The rest of Hurston's life was a series of wanderings; she spent time in Harlem during the Harlem Renaissance and studied folklore at Barnard College and collected it in the South, especially in Eatonton, Florida, her home

town, then in Jamaica, Haiti, and Bermuda; she wrote for Paramount Studios in Hollywood. But she came to rest in Florida, in a grave unmarked until Alice Walker put a stone on or near it more than a decade after Hurston's death.

The challenge Lucy Anne Potts Hurston gave her daughter was impossible: A nine-year-old girl could not go against tradition, the town, and her father with only her dead mother's help. But Zora spent the rest of her life going against all those and more. Her mother challenged her to "jump at the sun" (qtd. in Hemenway 14), while her father wanted her to be submissive and docile. Hurston's life was a defiance of her father, a fulfillment of her mother's dreams.

After her mother's death, Hurston's father remarried. His wife was not exactly the wicked stepmother, but she certainly lacked a maternal instinct. She sent the four oldest children away to school, and she did almost nothing for the four youngest (Howard 16). Consequently, Zora left home at fourteen to sew for a traveling Gilbert and Sullivan troupe.

Just as Hurston's life was determined by her mother's life and death, so is Janie Crawford's in Hurston's most important novel, Their Eyes Were Watching God. As Janie herself says, "Ah ain't never seen mah papa. . . . Mah mama neither. She was gone from round dere long before Ah was big enough to know. Mah grandma raised me. Mah

grandmah and de white folks she worked wid" (20). Janie's lack of parents leads to her confused identity; she is called so many names that she is nicknamed "Alphabet," and she thinks she is white because she plays with the four white grandchildren of the family her grandmother works for. When she is six, she sees a picture of herself with the white children and realizes that she is black (20).

Janie's grandmother later tells her of her heritage. Her mother was the child of her grandmother and the white master of the plantation where her grandmother was a slave (33-34). Her mother was raped by a schoolteacher when she was seventeen (36); therefore, Janie is the daughter and granddaughter of rapists. She knows neither of her parents, as her mother left, probably partly to avoid shaming her own mother any more.

Thus Janie is reared by her grandmother, who says, "[U]s colored folks is branches without roots . . ." (31) and admonishes her to find a man to help her root herself. Janie wants the horizon and pear trees; her grandmother wants for her a better life than other women in their family had. She says, "Ah didn't want to be used for a work-ox and a brood-sow and Ah didn't want mah daughter used dat way neither" (31). She explains the scheme of things to Janie: She tells her that white men rule black men and black men rule black women; therefore, "De nigger woman

is de mule uh de world so fur as Ah can see" (29). Fearing that her granddaughter will get involved with the wrong boy, she says to her, "You wants to make me suck the same sorrow yo' mama did, eh?" (28) and promptly proceeds to marry Janie off to a man the girl cannot love.

Nanny dies, freeing Janie to take off for the horizon with Jody (Joe) Starks, who wants to make her a lady, and does. He becomes the mayor of an all-black town, and his successful career as both politician and store owner give her the class and money to be a lady. However, Joe says, "Somebody got to think for women and chillun and chickens and cows" (110). He may not have actually called her "the mule of the world," but he has treated her like the town's pet mule, both putting her on a pedestal and treating her like a stupid servant or child. Anne Goodwyn Jones explains that being a lady is related to class, not race, and it is a form of confinement because it restricts a woman's behavior ("Belles" 1529). Janie despises her confinement and no longer loves Joe. When he dies, she is more relieved than saddened. She is also forty, free, and wealthy.

Janie meets and marries the love of her life, Vergible (Tea Cake) Woods, a man who treats her like an equal, and a man for whom she feels passion. Unfortunately, after they have been married only a year and a half, he is bitten by a rabid dog, and his sickness causes him to attack his wife, who shoots him in self-defense. She is tried and

acquitted of murder and returns to town in overalls to tell her friend Phoeby her story.

Nellie McKay sees Their Eyes Were Watching God as autobiography, not factual but emotional. She writes,

Unlike many other protagonists in black women's autobiographical narratives, Janie has no female models, no mother or female relatives from whose examples she learns to pattern her acts of rebellion against the peculiar oppressions that confront all black women. (62)

But Janie does have a female relative, her grandmother. Unfortunately, the grandmother tries to teach her submission to the black male as protection against the rest of the world. So Janie follows the example set by her mother and leaves when her life stifles her. As Sandra Pouchet Paquet explains, Janie "repudiate[s] the values of [her] surrogate [parent] in [her] conscious quest for selfhood" (501).

McKay does assert the feminism of the book, as do many other critics. McKay sees the bonding of Janie and Phoeby as central to the novel's theme (62). Molly Hite writes that in the end of the novel, Janie is very much alone, having given "birth to herself" by writing her own story (272). But by sharing her story, Janie Crawford Killicks Starks Woods becomes the midwife to help birth other women to themselves as well.

Cheryl A. Wall says that Hurston is interested in black people, not white, and not in interracial

relationships (372). Lillie P. Howard writes that Hurston "was a black nationalist" who "affirm[ed] blackness (while not denying whiteness) in a black-denying society" (174-75). But Paquet argues that Janie is separated from her African-American roots by being reared with white children (500). It is true that Their Eyes Were Watching God is not the attack on racism that Black Boy is, nor is it the search for African roots that Roots is. A white male jury acquits Janie, and she plays with white children when she is a child. The enemies of her selfhood are her half-white, half-black grandmother and her two black husbands. But race and gender are not as important in this novel as self, the freedom of the individual to love and be loved and to leave when there is no happiness.

Zora Neale Hurston had white friends and benefactors. She also had black friends and grew up in a black town in Florida. She loved the South, saying that educated black Southerners like herself came home because in the North there were "segregation and discrimination . . . , too, with none of the human touches of the South" (qtd. in Elvin Holt 212).

In Their Eyes Were Watching God, Nanny represents the traditional beliefs that oppress women; Nanny must die to free Janie. Her absent mother represents the lack of guidance that many black girls feel, causing them to have to "give birth to themselves." Zora Neale Hurston's

mother, both by her living example and through her death, left Hurston a legacy of rebellion, for which readers are grateful, allowing her to give birth not only to herself but also to such characters as Janie Crawford.

In her Foreword to the 1978 edition of Their Eyes Were Watching God, Sherley Anne Williams writes,

Black women had been portrayed as characters in numerous novels by blacks and non-blacks. But these portraits were limited by the stereotypical images of, on the one hand, the ham-fisted matriarch, strong and loyal in the defense of the white family she serves (but unable to control or protect her own family without the guidance of some white person), and, on the other, the amoral, instinctual slut. Between these two stereotypes stood the tragic mulatto: too refined and sensitive to live under the repressive conditions endured by ordinary blacks and too colored to enter the white world. (vii)

Zora Neale Hurston's Janie Crawford is not a stereotype but a fully realized character. That she is a black woman is important, but far less important than that she is a human being. The men and women who would restrict her are either dead or gone.

Alice Walker says of Hurston's novel, "There is no book more important to me than this one" (qtd. in Hurston, Their Eyes back cover). Her novel The Color Purple shows the influence of her predecessor's work, especially in the absence of stereotyping and in the affirmation of self that the black, female protagonist reaches, primarily through the power of love and courage.

The Color Purple is populated primarily with motherless children. When the protagonist, Celie, is a young teenager, her mother dies, leaving Celie and her little sister, Nettie, motherless. Celie's Pa takes her children by him and gives them to a minister in town; the minister and his wife take Celie's sister, Nettie, with them to Africa, where the wife dies, leaving Celie's children with their second surrogate mother. Celie's Pa marries her off to a man whose first name is Albert but whom Celie calls Mr. _____. Her husband is really interested in her more attractive sister, but he needs a woman to look after his motherless children and settles for Celie when he is not allowed Nettie. Albert's son, Harpo, marries a woman, Sofia, who is arrested for attacking the mayor; she serves several years first in jail and then as the mayor's wife's maid, leaving her children motherless. Harpo takes up with a woman named Mary Agnes, who leaves her child to pursue a singing career. Albert's lover, Shug Avery, has left her children with her mother so that she can tour with her band. In fact, Sofia and her siblings are among the very few children in the novel who are reared by their own biological mother.

The result of all this motherlessness is a mess of unconnected people who have no idea how to love or be loved. The men beat the women, and occasionally the women fight back. Fidelity is unheard of, as is stability. As the

Southern saying goes, the children are not so much raised as jerked up, often by people who feel no love for them, or at least have no idea how to show it.

Celie's mother dies angry with Celie for the daughter's pregnancies, probably partly because she suspects that her own husband is the father of Celie's children. Celie writes, "My mama dead. She die screaming and cussing" (4). When Celie marries Albert, she writes, "I spend my wedding day running from the oldest boy. He twelve. His mama died in his arms and he don't want to hear nothing bout no new one" (13). Harpo's mother was shot, and he has nightmares about her and calls out, "Mama, Mama." The other children hear him and "cry like they mama just die" (28). This cry for the mother becomes the symbolic cry of the entire novel.

When Shug Avery gets sick, Albert brings her to his house. Celie falls in love with her and takes care of her. Shug says that her care feels "like mama used to do. Or maybe not mama. Maybe grandma" (48). After she gets well and leaves, when she returns, she says to Celie, "I missed you more than I missed my own mama" (240). When the two women make love, Celie is reminded of her lost babies (97). Sofia's white charge, Eleanor Jane, returns again and again to Sofia's house so that Sofia can mother her. And at the end of the novel she returns to help mother Sofia's sick child.

But it is not until these women are happy with themselves that they can become decent mothers. Celie cannot mother Albert's children because they are not hers, she is a child herself, and Albert is cruel to her. Shug cannot mother her children because Albert's father will not let his light son marry a dark woman. Sofia cannot mother her children because she is in jail and her husband beats her when she is not. In Africa, Corinne cannot mother her adopted children because she believes that they are the products of an affair between her husband and Nettie.

By the end of the book, Corinne is dead, and Nettie has married the children's father; she loves him and is a good mother to the children, partly because they are her beloved sister's babies. Sofia and Harpo have quit fighting, and Harpo helps mother his children; he has always preferred housework and childcare to field work. Celie has gotten the letters from Nettie that Albert has hidden for decades, so she is happy and can mother her children when they arrive from Africa.

The end of The Color Purple is almost too idyllic. Celie has inherited a house and land from her mother; her stepfather has squatted on it for years. She has a business making unisex pants, and she and Albert have made their peace, although they will never be lovers. Shug has left her teenage lover and come back to be with Celie and Albert. And Nettie and her family, including Celie's daughter,

son, and daughter-in-law, have come from Africa. Celie, who has been childless throughout most of the novel, is now the matriarch of an enormous international family.

All these connections call the reader's mind to Shug Avery's discussion of God. Shug says to Celie,

. . . My first step from the old white man was trees. Then air. Then birds. Then other people. But one day when I was sitting quiet and feeling like a motherless child, which I was, it come to me: that feeling of being part of everything, not separate at all. (167, emphasis mine)

Molly Hite says of the novel that it redefines mothering, making it more inclusive. She points out that Corrine, then Nettie, mothers Celie's children; Mary Agnes mothers Sofia's, and then Sofia mothers Mary Agnes's daughter; Sofia mothers Eleanor Jane; and even Shug and Celie mother each other (271). Marjorie Pryse writes that "Celie discovers her own authority through her love for women--Shug and her sister Nettie" (19). Hite says that even the traditional heterosexual couple in The Color Purple is "supplanted" by same-sex couples: mothers and daughters, sisters, lovers (271). The novel breaks out of stereotypes, but more than that, it sets people free. Certainly some of that is coming of age--what Celie and Albert and Harpo would do when they were young would seem much more foolish when they were older. Shug Avery has been in other parts of the country; it is she who tells Albert not to beat

his wife. With awareness and maturity come harmony and a refusal to victimize or be victimized.

This is not to say that the society at the end of the novel is perfect. The oppressive patriarchy still exists, both in America and in Africa (Winchell 94). Celie's son's wife, Tashi, has been mutilated sexually as part of the ritual of her African tribe, just as Celie had been raped by her stepfather decades before.

But the reunion brings together the two worlds of black Americans: Africa and the American South. The attitude toward both is complex. When Nettie, Samuel, and Corrine arrive in Africa, they kneel and thank God for letting them "see the land for which our mothers and fathers cried--and lived and died--to see again" (120-21). But Nettie is also aware that Africans had captured and sold each other into slavery. She feels some anger at the Africans who remain in Africa, as she feels betrayed by them.

Alice Walker's own attitude toward the South expresses a similar ambivalence. In "The Black Writer and the Southern Experience," she says that she generally hated the South--the hard work, "the evil greedy men who worked my father to death and almost broke the courage of that strong woman, my mother" (21). But she adds,

No one could wish for a more advantageous heritage than that bequeathed to the black writer in the South:

a compassion for the earth, a trust in humanity beyond our knowledge of evil, and an abiding love of justice. We inherit a great responsibility as well, for we must give voice to centuries not only of silent bitterness and hate but also of neighborly kindness and sustaining love. (21)

Elizabeth Gaffney writes,

. . . The Color Purple is saturated with the atmosphere of the South, the rural Georgia farmland of her childhood. Walker . . . finds strength and inspiration in the land and the people: "You look at old photographs of Southern blacks and you see it--a fearlessness, a real determination and a proof of a moral center that is absolutely bedrock to the land. I think there's hope in the South, not in the North," she says.

Walker has such strong feelings for the South because she connects it with her parents, especially her mother. She writes,

. . . [B]lack Southern writers owe their clarity of vision to parents who refused to diminish themselves as human beings by succumbing to racism. Our parents seemed to know that an extreme negative emotion held against other human beings for reasons they do not control can be blinding. Blindness about other human beings, especially for a writer, is equivalent to death. ("Black" 19)

Walker also ties her heritage to Africa. She writes in "In Search of Our Mothers' Gardens," "Guided by my heritage of a love of beauty and a respect for strength--in search of my mother's garden, I found my own." The connection comes in the next passage: "And perhaps in Africa over two hundred years ago, there was just such

a mother . . ." who sang, painted the walls of her hut, wove, or told stories (243).

All these connections show us the inspiration for the end of The Color Purple, the uniting of cultures and lands. But the inspiration for Celie's mother's death most certainly comes, at least in part, from one of Walker's memories:

. . . [M]y mother is ill. My mother is lying in bed in the middle of the day, something I have never seen. She is in too much pain to speak. She has an abscess in her ear. I stand looking down on her, knowing that if she dies I cannot live. Finally a doctor comes. But I must go back to my grandparents' house. The weeks pass but I am hardly aware of it. All I know is that my mother might die, my father is not so jolly, . . . and I am the one sent away from home. ("Beauty" 389)

The Color Purple has almost all the themes of twentieth-century novels by black Southerners. Like Black Boy, it shows that violence done to black people by each other, even by their own family members, is as damaging as that perpetrated on them by white people. Like I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings, it shows the power of individual courage to overcome tragedy. Like Jubilee, it demonstrates the love, especially of women, for people other than their own family members and the reconciling nature of that love. The ties with Africa are reminiscent of Roots; like Alex Haley, Nettie and her family go to Africa and find themselves. The clannish atmosphere of the end of the

novel is like that at the end of The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman, when Jane has become the matriarch of the black community. And the redemptive power of romantic love and the feminist message of refusing to submit to male bullying resemble Their Eyes Were Watching God.

In all of these works, the absence of the mother is destructive. Although her absence frees characters to find their own identities, her loss generally represents a breakdown in the family that is almost impossible to overcome. Her absence abandons her children to violence, poverty, hunger, and lovelessness, and it deprives them of a home. They are like the Israelites trying to sing the songs of Zion in a foreign land. Yet they do not forget their mothers, as the Israelites clung to the memory of Jerusalem. Some return to Africa, and some try to recreate their home in a new land. But none are happy until they find a home and a mother, even if they make the home and become the mother. Therefore, Wright's Black Boy is the most painful of these works, as the protagonist never finds happiness because he is running from a foreign land but not to a home or a mother. All the other works are female-oriented, except for Roots, and by the end, it, too, emphasizes the maternal line.

All the works but Wright's, then, show characters who succeed in finding or creating home, family, maternity, love, happiness, and community. Only Wright's mother is

still paralyzed; only Wright is still searching; only Wright is still alone at the end of the work. In black Southern literature, the aim is to have the individual courage to defeat the patriarchy, including, if one is a black woman, the black patriarchy, while still having the sense of family and community necessary to bond. Too much individuality isolates one, as Wright is isolated. Too little individual courage leaves one beaten, as Celie is. Women seem to be able to find the compromise without men, but men can never have the courage and the love without the women, even in works by men. The mother or mother figure is an absolute necessity for a successful life in Southern black literature.

CHAPTER VII

THE SURROGATE MOTHER AND THE NEW SOUTH

Suddenly she wanted Mammy desperately, as she had wanted her when she was a little girl, wanted the broad bosom on which to lay her head, the gnarled black hand on her hair. Mammy, the last link with the old days.

--Margaret Mitchell, Gone With the Wind

In a review of an Indian book, The Theme of Initiation in Modern American Fiction by Isaac Sequeira, V. N. Arora writes,

American preoccupation with the theme of initiation is certainly abnormal, if not neurotic. Like a voyeur, the American writer seems to derive vicarious pleasure by delineating the problems of the adolescent--problems of adapting oneself to the needs of sex, occupation, society. (110)

Western literature is more concerned with initiation than is Eastern; literature in English seems to involve more adolescents than does other Western literature, and Americans write more maturation literature than do other English-speaking people. Perhaps Southerners write more novels with young protagonists than do other Americans.

Isaac Sequeira says, "The quest for identity . . . has been the single great American theme from the beginning" (qtd. in Arora 110). The reason is that America is so close to its beginning that Americans are still trying

to figure out who we are. The South is beginning again to figure out what it is, having been told its old identity was unacceptable. Black Southerners have been stripped of their identity several times, first when taken from Africa, then when freed, then when trying to adapt to an unrooted and uprooted black society during the Northern migrations.

The result of all this uncertainty about the identity of the country, region, or culture is that Southern literature abounds with adolescents trying to find out who they are in an environment that has not yet established its own identity. To force these adolescents to concern themselves with their maturation and their identities, authors often use the absent mother--the mother who is dead (Miranda in Katherine Anne Porter's stories and novels), dying (Ginny Babcock Bliss's mother in Lisa Alther's Kinflicks), ill (Wright's mother in Black Boy), away (Maya Angelou's mother in I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings), or incompetent and ineffectual (Faulkner's Caroline Compson in The Sound and the Fury).

These absent mothers can also be read as symbols of lost identities, lost cultures. The loss is frightening and painful, but it is also freeing, partly because the identities themselves--symbolized by the mothers or the cultures--were neither clearly positive nor totally negative. Reactions to the absence, therefore, are ambivalent.

Mothers are the most important people in almost all children's lives. They provide love, clear identity (unlike fathers), ties to ancestors, training in how to live in the community, and role models. They show girls how to be wives and mothers; they show boys how to interact with women, one of whom they will probably marry.

Therefore, an absent mother leaves the child with no clear tie to the past and with no role model. Girls must learn, if they can, without their mothers' help, how to become wives and mothers in a patriarchal society. Boys must learn how to love women in order to perpetuate their families. The dead or absent mother makes human relationships more difficult and makes functioning in society harder.

But mothers also represent restrictions. They often try to impose their own wills on their children. And if the mother herself has an identity that is disturbing to her child--if she is insane, cruel, promiscuous, alcoholic, or even submissive to a dominant and patriarchal society, as Wright's mother and Ginny Babcock Bliss's mother are--the child might desire freedom both from the restrictions she imposes and the identity she represents. The child might also reject the mother as a role model and yet feel guilty about the rejection.

Therefore, the mother's absence can also be welcomed, as it represents freedom, especially from a repressive

society or an ugly past. On the other hand, the freedom might not come without the pain of loss, the fear of abandonment, and the guilt of feeling relieved.

When one sees the absent mother as representative of the lost South or the lost (to American black people) continent of Africa, one sees the ambivalent reactions in Southern writers, both white and black, to the loss. White Southerners are ambivalent about the Old South, and black Southerners are ambivalent about both Africa and the South.

The Old South represents to white Southerners ancestry, roots, identity, glory, even values and religion. But it also represents defeat and shame. White Southerners often long for the glory and grandeur that is the myth of the Old South, but they also are loathe to remember the darker side of their heritage, the sexist, racist, slave-holding part. A legend is easier to believe when the person about whom the legend has been created is dead; so it is with the Old South. The dead mother can be pure, innocent, beautiful, angelic; the living one might be loving, but she might also be domineering to the child and submissive to society. Thus, a lost mother is sometimes easier to love than a present one. The Old South is easier to love in retrospect than it might have been in reality.

Black Southerners often see Africa as the motherland. They see it as the bosom from which they were torn, like

Kunta Kinte in Alex Haley's Roots, just as slave babies were sometimes sold away from their mothers. But many black Americans realize that, like the Old South, Africa is not pure. Africans themselves captured and sold one another into slavery, as Alice Walker, Haley, and Gaines point out. Again, the motherland is roots, past, identity, but it is a mixed heritage. Africa may be easier to love from a distance of thousands of miles and hundreds of years than it would be to love as a resident.

But black Southerners have a surrogate motherland, one that was not chosen for them: the South. This motherland has abused and mistreated them; they have been its Cinderella, and the North to which many of them fled has been no fairy godmother, as Southerner Richard Wright shows us in Native Son, set in Chicago. Thus, the absent mother in literature by black Southerners is an even more complex image than she is in works by white Southern authors.

Donald R. Noble writes, in "The Future of Southern Writing," an essay in The History of Southern Literature,

We can surely look for more frank and even angry writing from Southern women who see themselves as having been denied access in the past to educational opportunities, jobs, full freedom, by having been assigned narrow roles or by having been put up on a pedestal too high to jump off. (588)

Noble's prediction has already been realized, but more subtly: Southern women who write often free their adolescent

protagonists by giving them no mothers to mold them into Southern women like themselves, submissive to the patriarchy and perpetuators of this submission.

Black Southern writers, both men and women, have also been "denied access . . . to educational opportunities, jobs, full freedom, by having been assigned narrow roles" or by blatant racism. They, too, are often angry and, consequently, remove the mothers who they see as trying to keep them submissive. Wright's anger at his mother in Black Boy is obvious; had the mother not been removed from much of his life by her paralysis, he would have had to find another way to escape her, even though separation from her tormented him.

White male Southerners seem to be more pained than angry, more likely to mourn the lost mother than to see her loss as freeing, although occasionally, especially when they write about female protagonists, such as Kate Vaiden in Reynolds Price's novel, the motif illustrates themes similar to those in novels by white women. But after the Agrarians in the 1920s and 1930s, few white Southern male writers have tried to construct an apologia for the Old South; Thomas Nelson Page's 1884 story "Marse Chan" would almost certainly not have been written a hundred years later. The Old South's passing may frighten male Southerner writers and make them feel lost, but they no longer see her as a goddess.

The pain of the lost mother is often somewhat assuaged by mother surrogates. In writing by black authors, these foster mothers are almost always other relatives, usually grandmothers, as we see in Maya Angelou's I Know Why the Caged Bird Sings, although in some cases black children are put in orphanages, as Richard Wright and his brother are in Black Boy, and occasionally they are reared by strangers, as Ned is in The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman. Oddly enough, surrogates who are strangers are usually as effective as those within the family, perhaps because slavery so often forced black women to rear children, both black and white, other than their own, and perhaps because slavery caused black Americans to have stronger racial bonds--witness the use of the word "brother" to indicate a relationship among black men who are not in the same family.

In writing by white authors, surrogates are also sometimes family members, as Ellen Fairchild is for her niece Laura McRaven in Eudora Welty's Delta Wedding, and occasionally a child is institutionalized, as Joe Christmas is in Faulkner's Light in August. But more often than not, white children in this literature are reared by black women who are not related to them by blood or marriage; Scout and Jem Finch in Harper Lee's To Kill a Mockingbird are reared by Calpurnia, and Frankie Addams in Carson McCullers's The Member of the Wedding is reared by Berenice

Sadie Brown, for example. This arrangement results in a sort of socially accepted interracial familial situation and a bonding between black people and white people that is often quite strong. In The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman, a black woman, Molly, leaves the employ of the white woman, Miss Clare, whom she has reared, and the two visit weekly; meanwhile, Miss Clare cries for months over her lost surrogate mother.

Though this relationship has echoes of times of slavery, when black women were forced to care for white children, in Southern literature, even by black writers, the black surrogate is almost never treated by the author as though she were either beneath the white characters (although, of course, in the South she was almost always of lower social and economic class) or compromising her identity as a black person. Lee's Calpurnia can talk like her friends when she is with them and like white people at the Finches'; neither dialect degrades her. And Berenice Sadie Brown in McCullers's novel has more sense and imagination and love than the white people around her, children or adults.

The use of black women to take care of children was common even in homes with mothers, both before and after the Civil War. The mammy immortalized by Hattie McDaniel in the screen version of Gone With the Wind is a stereotype, but that stereotype was based on fact. Therefore, the

use of a black surrogate mother is not merely a device but a reflection of reality.

However, the frequent use of this character in literature by white Southerners leads the student of Southern literature to examine its significance. One possibility is that the motif lowers the mother or mother figure to the level of a servant, facilitating the child's movement to freedom. Another is that it replicates the archetype of the surrogate described by Otto Rank, an animal or person of lower birth who rears the hero until he is ready to return to his real mother, a high-born woman. A third is that, as Lillian Smith has suggested, the white Southern woman was so high on a pedestal that she had no warmth for her children, and black women did. The fourth is that the black woman represents a more positive new South; by living in the midst of a white family, she is part of a mingling of the races in an intimate but socially acceptable way.

In The Unnatural History of the Nanny, Jonathan Gathorne-Hardy set out to understand how mothers could give up childrearing to strangers (19). He found that the kibbutz system and the use of nannies belied the idea that only children's natural mothers or permanent adopted ones could rear children successfully (323-26). He found that children formed strong attachments to their nannies: Little boys often wanted to marry them (158-59); separations

from them when children were young could be excruciating (216); and even teenagers were often pained when their nannies left (218). He says that nannies were sometimes better than biological mothers because, unlike mothers, they chose their jobs (148). And he found that children reared by nannies idealized their mothers.

The relevance of these findings to the Southern mammy system is obvious, especially the ideas that children can love their caretakers, even those not related to them, very much, and that absent mothers are idealized. Perhaps some of the idealization of Southern womanhood came from children's being distanced from their mothers. But the mammy, too, became idealized, almost mythologized. Nancy M. Tischler writes that in the literature of the South,

The "mammy" achieved mythic status both as the residual image of loving ties within slavery and as a reflection of continuing historical realities. Over the years, southern whites continued to engage black women to serve as nurses and cooks in white homes. (170)

Victoria O'Donnell says that the mammy "is the southern archetype of the earth mother"--middle-aged, large, strong, dark, asexual, Christian, wise, and loving. And Nancy Chodorow asserts that even slaves coerced into mothering usually did an excellent job of it (33).

Richard H. King says the role of the black woman in the South was related to archetypes:

. . . [Otto] Rank observed that the foster "mothering agent" of the mythological hero was usually someone of low or peasant origin or even, as in the Romulus and Remus legend, an animal. With this in mind, the ambiguities inherent in the role of the black "mammy" became clearer. Because of her skin color, she was an illegitimate sibling, childlike though not without force of will. Yet the romance, and sometimes reality, contradicted this image by presenting her as the loving foster mother to whom the Southern hero owed all. In this role . . . she was a rebuke to the stereotypically cold and distant white mother. In Lillian Smith's work she becomes the "real" mother; that is, the one who nurtures and truly mothers. And yet the black woman was also regarded as sexually ardent and animal-like in passion. Thus she was a sultry temptress and nurturing mammy, inferior sibling and true parent, incestuous object and idealized mother. What linked these rather contradictory roles was the fact that to the black woman were attributed the emotional impulses denied to the white woman. (Southern 37)

The feminist view of the black surrogate is mixed. Because the black woman was self-reliant, she could be a better role model for white girls than their own Southern mothers could be. However, white girls reared by black women could also be confused about their own identities. They could not identify with the primary woman in their lives because she was a servant and, consequently, considered inferior.

White boys had similar confusion. The woman who taught them love was of a race forbidden to them. They could not imagine marrying their mummies as English boys fantasized about their nannies. But many Southern historians explain that white Southern males often had sexual experiences with black women.

Nevertheless, black mother surrogates taught white children love. Tischler writes, "Such moderns as Truman Capote and Carson McCullers show comforting black servants as the mainstays of white children. In their wisdom, they have archetypal qualities . . ." (170).

Carson McCullers uses a black surrogate in both The Heart Is a Lonely Hunter and The Member of the Wedding. In the earlier novel, Portia Copeland works at the Kelly house. Her availability to Mick is limited, however, because of the amount of work to do in the household. But Portia tells stories to the children and tries to help Mick. She tells Mick that her problem is that she is "hard and tough as cowhide" and that she has "never loved God nor even nair person," so she "can't never have nair peace at all" (43). Portia is only partly right: Mick does not have peace, but she loves people to the point of aching. Portia is also the only person in the novel who belongs to anyone else. She, her husband Highboy, and her brother Willie live, play, and worship together, sharing everything, including expenses, equally. Portia explains, "Us haves our own plan. . . . Us has always been like three-piece twinses" (117). Portia's belonging emphasizes Mick's loneliness, which Portia attempts, unsuccessfully, to allay.

Portia also foreshadows Berenice Sadie Brown of The Member of the Wedding. Clifton Snider writes that Berenice symbolizes the Jungian Mother and Wise Old Woman and that

as a foster mother she fits the dual-mother motif of the hero myth (38). Berenice is a marvelous character in her own right, as well as an excellent surrogate mother. She counters Frankie Addams's childish flights of fancy, such as the notion that she can join her brother's marriage, with good common sense. Yet she also participates in Frankie's imaginative games, such as criticizing the Lord God Almighty and deciding what they would do if they were God. She and Frankie talk about love, death, and Frankie's dreams; and Frankie rebels against her as she would have done against her own mother, had the woman lived. After Frankie tries to go on the wedding trip with her brother and his bride, Berenice tries to comfort her, as a mother would, with promises of parties and surprises; she says to Frankie, "Tell me what you would like and I'll try to do it if it's in my power" (140). And when Frankie says that what she wants is never to be spoken to again, Berenice's reply is a frustrated "Well. Then bawl, then, Misery" (140). At the end of the novel, Frankie has become Frances and is moving to a new house; her best friend, Mary Littlejohn, has replaced everyone else in her affections, and Berenice will no longer be with the Addamses. But as any adolescent might do with her mother, thirteen-year-old Frances spends their last minutes together showing how little she needs the woman who has reared her. Snider says that the Addams kitchen is the womb from which

Frankie must emerge to find herself (36-37). But the womb is represented by Berenice, not by Frankie's dead mother.

Harper Lee's To Kill a Mockingbird, though not discussed in detail earlier, is notable for its use of the surrogate. Atticus Finch's children, Jem and Scout, lost their mother when Scout was two, and Calpurnia has reared them. She teaches them manners, takes them to church with her, and serves as the liaison between the white community and the black. Atticus once says to his sister, "Anything fit to say at the table's fit to say in front of Calpurnia. She knows what she means to this family" (159). What she means to the Finches is the closest person to a mother they will have, probably, as odds are slim that Atticus will marry again, or that he could find a wife who would mother his children as well as Calpurnia does.

In Band of Angels, Robert Penn Warren gives Amantha Starr a mammy; he himself had one whom he immortalized in poetry, in the same volume as the poems about his dead mother. Amantha says that it is not true "that I, a motherless child, was unloved . . ." because "Aunt Sukie, who was my black mammy, spoiled me because she loved me" (4). But Warren, like Lillian Smith, knows that the love for the mammy rarely lasts. He writes,

[W]omen like Aunt Sukie can live only by loving some small creature that they, in the accepted and sad

irony of their lot and nature, know will soon grow up and withdraw, indifferent or contemptuous, even in affection. (Band 4)

Certainly the best-known mammy is Scarlett O'Hara's in Gone With the Wind. In addition to telling Scarlett how to eat and lacing her stays, Mammy represents Tara to Scarlett. Helen Taylor writes that Mammy is Scarlett's comfort, even at the end, her tie with the antebellum South and her childhood. Taylor says Mammy also reinforces Scarlett's sense of superiority (132). Helen Deiss Irvin finds Mammy an earth mother (67), which reinforces her connection with Tara, the land. It is to Tara and Mammy that Scarlett plans to return at the end of the novel.

William Faulkner also wrote often of black surrogates. In "The Bear," Ike McCaslin is nurtured by the part-black, part-Indian man Sam Fathers. But most of Faulkner's black surrogates are women. In The Unvanquished, motherless Bayard Sartoris is reared by Louvinia, who brings him up with her son, Marengo (Ringo), as though the boys were brother. Bayard says,

. . . Ringo and I had been born in the same month and had both fed at the same breast and had slept together and eaten together for so long that Ringo called Granny "Granny" just like I did, until maybe he wasn't a nigger anymore or maybe I wasn't a white boy anymore. . . . (7-8)

In "The Fire and the Hearth," Carothers (Roth) Edmonds, whose mother is dead, is reared by Molly Beauchamp, who

brings him up with her son, Henry, as if the boys were brothers. But they are not, and Roth has the loneliness of knowing that he is the one who does not belong in the Beauchamp family because he is white and they are black.

If Margaret Mitchell's Mammy is the best-known black surrogate, Faulkner's Dilsey is certainly the one who appears in the most literary criticism. One of the major characters in The Sound and the Fury, Dilsey is most surely based on Caroline "Callie" Barr Clark, who cared for the Falkner children and also often watched after the Oldham children, one of whom, Estelle, Faulkner eventually married. After their marriage, Callie lived with the Faulkners; Faulkner built her a private room in his yard (Cullen 78). He also dedicated Go Down, Moses to her. John Cullen says of Callie, "Born in slavery, she felt that the [Faulkner] family belonged to her" (79). He also says that "Faulkner could not have treated his own mother with more kindness and consideration" (79). When she died at age 100, Faulkner himself eulogized her in his own living room (Cullen 79). Her tombstone reads,

Callie Barr Clark. Born 1840. Died 1940.
Beloved by her white children. (Cullen 79)

Tischler writes that Faulkner celebrated Callie "for her faith and her love of children" (170). And Faulkner himself said of her that she had been

one of my earliest recollections, not only as a person, but as a fount of authority over my conduct and of security for my physical welfare, and of active and constant affection and love. She was an active and constant precept for decent behavior. From her I learned to tell the truth, to refrain from waste, to be considerate of the weak and respectful to age. I saw fidelity to a family which was not hers, devotion and love for people she had not borne. (qtd. in Blotner, "William" 9-10)

Most critics agree that Faulkner's black characters, especially black women, are almost always admirable. Irving Howe says that the author's image of black people is always one "of memory and longing" ("Faulkner" 204). Peter Crow observes that "Faulkner's black people . . . seem capable of greater sensitivity and deeper emotion than white people . . ." (208). Richard King writes that in Faulkner's fiction, "the 'foster' parents, that is, the black man and woman, appear as trustworthy and nurturing figures against whom the fragmenting white world can be measured" (Southern 80).

In The Sound and the Fury, Dilsey literally keeps the household together. While Caroline Compson complains, Dilsey does the work of both women. Crow writes that Dilsey "manages to keep alive the only responsible spark of life to be found in the Compson house" (267-68). Faulkner says, "Dilsey . . . was a good human being. . . . [S]he held that family together for not the hope of reward but just because it was the decent and proper thing to do"

("Discussion" 21-22). Sally Page says, "It is the mother who fosters life, and Dilsey is the protecting, serving mother of the Compson household which Mrs. Compson ought to be" (67). She explains that the fourth section of the novel "focuses on Dilsey's heroic effort to hold together the family's last remnants by her sacrificial assumption of motherhood to a family that is not her own" (47-48).

Most critics focus on Dilsey's competence and her sacrifice. She manages a household with four children, one severely retarded, and a sickly, whining woman. She also has a family of her own to care for. And she has no hope of compensation for her service.

But Dilsey represents something larger than herself. Edward L. Volpe writes, "Dilsey's morality is her heart, her compassionate response to human beings. . . . In the heart, not the mind, is the salvation of mankind" (125). He continues, "In the sterile waste land of the modern world, Dilsey is the symbol of resurrection and life" (126). Davenport also refers to Dilsey's difference from the modern world; he says, "Dilsey alone offers the stability of an earlier era" (87).

But perhaps it is not an earlier era at all. Perhaps as the old world decays, Dilsey and those like her offer a new hope. Faulkner says that the will to prevail may move to the channel of the black race before giving up ("Discussion" 19). And he associates Easter, a time of

rebirth, with Dilsey. If the South does rise again, it will not be in violent, racist glory, but in the peaceful selflessness of Dilsey.

Black surrogates, especially the women, offer a hope of peaceful coexistence among races because of the love that transcends servitude. They, not the industrial New South or the return to the myth of the Old, offer hope for a South in which one's measure is not taken by race or gender.

Symbolically, the surrogate-child relationship unites two races, giving us a South in which the traditions of both can be joined, because black women are in white homes, bringing white children black values and taking white values home. Africa may be dead to the black people, and the Old South may be dead to the white people, but the symbolic new mother has been influenced by both. She combines the cultures to make the new South less oppressive and less divided than either alone.

Fortunately for black women, few have to earn their livings as servants in white homes anymore. The Civil Rights movement has brought more nearly equal opportunities in education and employment. But while this is fortunate for black women, it is probably unfortunate for white children, who are exposed to black people much less often in their own homes, where relationships can be more intimate. This is certainly not a call for a return to

the "good old days"; lynching and Jim Crow are no way to bring harmony among people. But the kind of South hinted at in literature in which white children were reared by black women is almost always positive.

Probably that South could never exist, as long as white men lynched black men, and raped black women, and denied black children a real education. But the harmony in literature in which black mothers replaced white ones, symbolically stopping the passage of the white patriarchal tradition and replacing it with a scenario in which black people and white shared their lives in the same household, is optimistic.

This theme is quite rare in literature written in this half of the twentieth century. When it does occur, it is usually in fiction set in much earlier times; The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman, for example, is set primarily during the second half of the nineteenth century. Perhaps the New South has won: black Southerners and white Southerners work together in cotton mills and furniture factories, but they still do not live together in houses or even neighborhoods. Black children and white children go to school together, but they rarely play together in the same yard. Equality and harmony are not the same.

In 1964, Shirley Ann Grau, a New Orleans writer, published a novel called The Keepers of the House, which won a Pulitzer Prize. The book is about a white girl,

Abigail Mason, whose mother dies after her parents are divorced, leaving the girl to be reared by her grandfather, William Howland, a widower. The grandfather meets and secretly marries a girl, Margaret Carmichael, whose black mother has left her to go find the girl's white father; Margaret has been reared by her grandparents. The children of the grandfather and his wife are sent to the North to be educated; thus, they, too, are separated from their mother, who pretends to be Howland's housekeeper. Eventually, Abigail marries a racist politician, prompting Margaret and William's son to tell the truth about his parents, now dead. Racist townspeople come to burn down the Howland house, where Abigail has brought her children because she is separated from the racist husband. But Abigail fights back, burning the racists' cars and shooting at the people with birdshot. Then she closes down most of the town, which she has inherited from her grandfather.

The moral of the story? The world might not be ready to accept a South that unites black people and white people in the same family, but those people who have lived the unity will preserve it as best they can. Abigail says, "It was Margaret who took care of us. And it was Margaret I missed . . ." (171). When she is grown and her grandfather is dead, Abigail visits Margaret. She says, "I felt at home and comfortable. This was my mother, she had raised me, my grandmother, too" (221). The union was not without

its horrors; the children were safe only as long as they were in the North pretending to be white and never seeing their mother, and Margaret and William had to keep their marriage secret. But it gave Abigail love, courage and freedom to break the Southern wife mold and to fight the status quo. The effect on Abigail of being reared by a black woman who was a member of her family was almost completely positive.

The Keepers of the House goes beyond the surrogate tradition to make the black woman a true member of the family. The Old South, Abigail's mother, is dead. Africa, Margaret's mother, is gone. But the new South is Abigail, and she has the freedom of motherlessness, the heritage of the Old South, and the courage given to her by a woman who is, herself, a combination of black and white, Africa and Europe. Unlike most white adolescents in Southern fiction, but like many black ones, Abigail grows up to be an emotionally healthy adult.

The South has not yet grown up. The Rebel flag still stirs Southerners, both black and white, to battle. The spirit of Malcolm X still struggles with the memory of Martin Luther King, Jr., just as Booker T. Washington struggled with W. E. B. DuBois. Vardaman's mother might be a fish, but a white Southerner's mother is often a red flag with a blue St. Andrews cross, and a black Southerner's is sometimes a green, red, and yellow talisman. Until

those images are superimposed, the South might never have one mother and might never finish its maturation.

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517-25.

APPENDIX A
A BRIEF CATALOG OF LITERATURE WITH
DEAD OR ABSENT MOTHERS

The following is a very brief list of works in which children grow up motherless or orphaned. Asian and African literature is under-represented primarily because writers in countries on those continents are more concerned with adult life than with children. The interest is in the spiritual, not the earthly. The Western world's interest in the child comes from two traditions: Romanticism and psychoanalytic theory. Therefore, maturation literature has proliferated in the West in the past two centuries. Additional works are mentioned throughout, especially in Chapter One.

Mongolia

Geser Khan. Anonymous. Trans. into German by I. J. Schmidt. Geser Khan is to pacify and rule the world, but his uncle Chotong sends the young man's mother to the underworld, from whence he must rescue her.

China

Several surviving poems in the "Yüeh-fu" tradition are the complaints of orphans.

Japan

The Tale of Genji. Lady Murasaki Shikibu. In this eleventh century romance, Prince Genji is the Emperor's son by the concubine Kiritsubo, who dies from her ill treatment by consort Lady Kokidan. The boy is reared by the clan of Gen.

Inazuma-Byôshi. Santô Kyôden. Sasaki Katsura is the son of a feudal lord; his mother is dead in this nineteenth-century novel set in the fifteenth century.

South Africa

Ingqumbo Yeminyanya (The Wrath of the Ancestors). A. C. Jordan. A child born into a royal family disappears when he is four. He grows up in a nearby village and returns to become chief.

The Story of an African Farm. Olive Schreiner. Lyndall, the daughter of an Englishman, is motherless. Her father remarries, then dies. Lyndall is extremely independent, but she dies in childbirth after being deserted by her lover.

Argentina

Black Valley. Hugo Wast (Gustavo Martínez Zuviría). Gracián Palma is motherless. When he is fourteen, his father dies; his guardian also has a motherless child.

Don Segundo Sombra. Ricardo Güiraldes. Fabio leaves his two aunts because he doubts his relationship to them. He goes to live with Don Segundo Sombra, a gaucho. Several years later he learns that the aunts really were his relatives and that he has a father, but no mother.

Brazil

Plantation Boy (Menino de engenho, Doidinho, and Bangüé). José Luis do Rêgo. Carlos de Melo tells of the killing of his beautiful mother by his father, who was probably manic-depressive. At age four the boy goes to live with his mother's family, but the aunt marries and moves away, leaving Carlos terrified of death and abandonment.

Mexico

Al Filo del Agua. Agustín Yáñez. María and Marta are the orphaned nieces of Don Dionisio, the parish priest, who rears them. Marta stays home to work in a hospital; Maria leaves to join the revolutionary army.

Pedro Páramo. Juan Rulfo. Juan Preciado is left motherless when Pedro Paramo's wife dies.

Martinique

Youma. Lafcadio Hearn. (Hearn is international: son

of a Greek mother and English father, born on Ionian island of Santa Maria, reared by an aunt in Dublin, then sent to America.) Youma, a slave, is a friend of Aimee, who dies and leaves her child to Youma to rear.

Russia

Fathers and Sons. Ivan Turgenev. Arkady, son of Kirsanov, has no mother and is reared by a stepmother.

The Brothers Karamazov. Fyodor Dostoevski. Fyodor Karamazov had three sons by two different wives. Both women die, and the father abandons the boys. A servant places them in the care of relatives.

Doctor Zhivago. Boris Pasternak. The Russian civil war separates the girl Tania, daughter of Yurri Zhivago and Lara, from her mother; her father is dead.

Greece

Dyskolos. Menander. This fourth-century B.C.E. comedy is about a misanthrope who is rearing his daughter without her mother's help; his wife has left him because of his vile nature.

Italy (Rome)

Phormio. Terence. In this second-century B.C.E. farce, Phanium is a poor orphan who turns out to be the cousin of her suitor.

Spain

Lazarillo de Tormes. Anonymous. Lazarillo's father is killed in the army, and the boy's mother apprentices him to a cruel blind man, from whom he escapes and has various adventures in this sixteenth century picaresque novel.

It Is Better Than It Was. Pedro Calderón de la Barca. This seventeenth-century drama set in Vienna has two motherless children, Flora César and her friend Laura.

The Devotion of the Cross. Calderón. The Italian Curcio left his son and daughter to die because he thought his wife was unfaithful. The two are reared separately and fall in love but find out they are siblings because they both have the mark of the cross on their breasts.

La vida es sueño (Life Is a Dream). Calderón. Segismundo's mother dies in childbirth, and his father, king of Poland, locks the boy away because he fears the child will grow up and take his throne. The boy later is freed and crowned.

Sotileza. José María de Pereda. Silda (Sotileza), the hero of this late nineteenth-century novel, is an orphan who is reared by a crippled fisherman.

Ángel Guerra. Benito Pérez Galdós. This nineteenth-century novel is about a widower with a seven-year-old daughter, Encarnación; the child dies.

France

Artamène. Madeleine de Scudéry. Asia Minor is the setting of this seventeenth-century Romance. Cyrus, the son of the King of Persia, is given to be killed because of an omen against his grandfather. The shepherd rears him and he becomes the famous general Artamene.

Marianne. Pierre Carlet de Chamblain de Marivaux. The author died before the novel's completion, and Marie-Jeanne Riccoboni finished it. Marianne, a countess, is an orphan. Riccoboni has her discover that her parents had been noble.

Émile. Jean Jacques Rousseau. Emile is an orphan tutored by Rousseau, who uses this novel to discuss education. He believes that children should be nursed by their mothers and trained by their fathers; a wet nurse and a tutor should be substituted only when necessary.

Le Père Goriot. Honoré de Balzac. Goriot is the father of two motherless daughters, whom he indulges even though they are ingrates. The stress kills him.

Consuelo. George Sand. When Consuelo is a child, her mother dies, leaving her an orphan.

Thérèse Racquin. Émile Zola. Therese is an orphan reared by her aunt.

Germany

Tristan and Isolde. Gottfried von Strassburg. In this thirteenth-century poem, Tristan is orphaned when his mother, Blanchefleur, dies in childbirth. Tristan is reared by Rual the Faithful, a steward, and his wife.

Simplicissimus the Vagabond. H. J. C. von Grimmelshausen. Simplicissimus, the hero of this seventeenth-century picaresque romance, is ten when he is separated from his farming parents during the Thirty Years' War. He is reared by a hermit, who dies. When he finds his father, he learns that the hermit was a nobleman and his true father.

Nathan the Wise. Gotthold Ephraim Lessing. This eighteenth century work is set in Jerusalem in the twelfth century. Nathan is a Jewish merchant who adopts the orphaned Recha. He is accused of depriving a Christian child of salvation, until it is learned that the girl is the child of Mohammedans, as is her brother, who was reared as a Christian.

The World's Illusion. Jacob Wasserman. Eva Sorel in this twentieth-century novel is an orphan.

The Netherlands

The Rebel Generation. Johanna van Ammers-Küller. Marie Elizabeth Sylvain is an orphan in this 1920s novel. Reared by her uncle, she rebels against social restraints, while his children conform.

Denmark

Pelle the Conqueror. Martin Andersen Nexö. Swede Lasse Karlson and his son, Pelle, a motherless eight-year-old, go to the Danish island of Bornholm in this turn-of-the-century novel.

Norway

The Lady from the Sea. Henrik Ibsen. Boletta and Hilda Wangel are motherless. Their stepmother believes that she must be freed from her marriage vows before she can care for her husband and his daughters.

In the Wilderness. Sigrid Undset. Set in the twelfth century, the novel is about Olav, whose wife dies and leaves him with a daughter, Cecilia.

Scotland

The Antiquary. Sir Walter Scott. Lovel believes himself to be the illegitimate son of unknown parents and so is

in despair, even though a benefactor has given him an estate. He learns that his parents were married but tricked into thinking they were siblings, so his mother committed suicide. He is restored as the son of an earl.

Ireland

The Finn Cycle. Anonymous. This circa eleventh-century ballad cycle is about Finn, whose mother gave him to two women to rear because she feared for his safety after his father was killed by rival warriors. He becomes heroic.

The Last of Summer. Kate O'Brien. Angele Maury's parents are dead in this 1943 novel. She goes to stay with her aunt, who resents her because the aunt was in love with Angele's father.

England

King Horn. Anonymous. This twelfth-century work is set in sixth-century England and Ireland. When Horn is fifteen, his father, King of Suddene (Isle of Man) is killed and Horn and his brother are set adrift. He later returns to become king and to find his mother still alive.

The Taming of the Shrew. William Shakespeare. Katherine and Bianca are motherless--perhaps part of the reason Kate is a shrew.

The Orphan. Thomas Otway. In this seventeenth-century play, Acasto's two sons both love his orphaned ward.

Mary Barton. Elizabeth Gaskell. Mary's mother dies in childbirth when Mary is thirteen; her father rears her.

Daniel Deronda. George Eliot. Daniel Deronda is reared by a guardian, Sir Hugo Mallinger, and did not know his parents.

The Princess Casamassima. Henry James. Hyacinth Robinson is an orphan; his mother killed his father for refusing to acknowledge their illegitimate son; she dies in prison when the boy is ten. Hyacinth eventually kills himself.

Where Angels Fear to Tread. E. M. Forster. Lilia Herriton lives with her daughter and her late husband's family. She marries an Italian and has a baby, then dies. The baby's father and the late husband's family quarrel over who will rear the baby, who is killed accidentally in the squabble.

A Room with a View. Forster. Lucy Honeychurch eventually marries the impulsive George Emerson, who is motherless.

Pygmalion. George Bernard Shaw. Part of the reason Eliza Doolittle is at Henry Higgins's mercy is that she has no mother.

The Once and Future King. T. H. White. Based on the King Arthur legends, this romantic novel has Arthur growing up in the forest with Merlyn before being apprenticed to Sir Kay.

Descent into Hell. Charles Williams. Pauline Anstruther is an orphan in her twenties who is being reared by her grandmother.

The Mighty and Their Fall. Ivy Compton-Burnett. Ninian Middleton is widowed and lives with five children between ten and early adulthood, as well as Selina Middleton, the family matriarch. No one in the family is having a good life.

Canada

Jalna. Mazo de la Roche. Several orphaned children, aged eight to over forty, live with their Grandma Whiteoak. One girl's fiance fathers an illegitimate daughter, whose mother leaves him to care for the child.

United States

Clotel: Or, the President's Daughter. William Wells Brown. At sixteen, Clotel and her fourteen-year-old sister are sold away from their mother, Thomas Jefferson's slave and alleged mistress. She is later sold again, away from her daughter, Mary.

Our Nig. Harriet E. Wilson. Frado is a child of mixed race who is abandoned and becomes an indentured servant at age six.

"Rappaccini's Daughter." Nathaniel Hawthorne. Giovanni Guasconti falls in love with Beatrice, the daughter of his neighbor, Giacomo Rappaccini. Beatrice is motherless. Giovanni gives Beatrice a potion to counteract the poison of her father's garden, but the potion kills her.

The Wept of Wish-ton-Wish. James Fenimore Cooper. Ruth is captured by Indians who have come to the Connecticut

settlement of Wish-ton-Wish to get a young Indian boy being held there. Ruth grows up as Narra-mattah and marries the boy, who is executed by other Indians. She dies beside her husband, and her mother dies soon after.

The Song of Hiawatha. Henry Wadsworth Longfellow. Hiawatha is reared by his grandmother, Nokomis, and seeks revenge against his father for a wrong committed against Wenonah, Hiawatha's mother. The men are reconciled, and Hiawatha becomes leader of the Ojibway.

Banana Botton. Claude McKay. Twelve-year-old Bitia Plant has sex with a man but feels she must call it rape. She is adopted by British missionaries, the Craigs, and taken from Jamaica to be educated in England.

In Abraham's Bosom. Paul Green. Abraham McCranie, the son of a black woman and a white plantation owner, is reared by his aunt, "Muh Mack." He wants to improve the lot of black people, but is killed by a mob after killing his cruel white half-brother.

Malcolm. James Purdy. Malcolm seems never to have had a mother. At fifteen he waits in vain for his father's return in a town where he knows no one.

Lolita. Vladimir Nabokov. Humbert Humbert marries a woman because he is attracted to her twelve-year-old daughter. When his wife is killed by accident, he takes Lolita across the country planning to seduce her, but she seduces him.

Lost in Yonkers. Neil Simon. Jay and Artie are taken to live with their unloving grandmother and loving but slightly retarded aunt after their mother dies and their father needs to travel to earn a living during World War II.

On a lighter note, a list of television shows in which at least one child character has a dead or absent mother:

My Three Sons

Bonanza

Different Strokes

The Brady Bunch

Eight Is Enough

Webster

*The Beverly Hillbillies

*The Andy Griffith Show

*I'll Fly Away (This show is particularly noteworthy, as a white attorney is rearing three children in the South in the early 1960's. After spending time in a mental institution, their mother dies. They have a black surrogate.)

*Series with Southern characters.