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Guarding Whiteness: Disability, Eugenics, and Rhetorical Agency in Southern Renaissance Fiction

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Guarding Whiteness: Disability, Eugenics, and Rhetorical Agency in Southern Renaissance
Fiction,

An Honors Paper for the Department of English,
by Philip Carl Bonanno

Bowdoin College, 2023

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“All novelists are fundamentally seekers and describers of the real, but the realism of each novelist will depend on his view of the ultimate reaches of reality.”

– Flannery O’Connor

“Some Aspects of the Grotesque in Southern Fiction”

“Someday after the revolution, disabled people will live ordinary lives, neither heroic nor tragic. Crip, queer, freak, redneck will be mere words describing human difference.”

– Eli Clare, *Exile and Pride*

Introduction

In the film adaptation of Carson McCullers's *Member of the Wedding*, tomboy Frankie Addams is on the verge of womanhood when she expresses dismay that she cannot attend the honeymoon of her brother. After she runs away from home, Frankie arrives back at home and is helped to outgrow her tomboy nature in a coming-of-age story. While the film perhaps oversimplifies its source material, it makes a variety of choices that are worth comment. Firstly, the film chooses to make Frankie quite a bit older than the twelve-year-old is in the novel, accentuating her oddities when she chooses to dress and behave in a masculine manner. Second, they make the resolution at the end of the film much cleaner, revealing at the very end of the film how Frankie changes her personality in order to conform with the expectations of her personality.

In this project, I analyze how literary representations of the South during the Southern Renaissance of the 1930s to the 1950s force people conform to their prescribed roles. In this, I recognize the near perpetual existence of disabled characters in the works of William Faulkner, Carson McCullers, and Flannery O'Connor. In particular, I focus on the instances these authors choose to include disability in their narratives, and what that reveals about power and how it functions in the space of the South in the mid 20th Century. I argue that whiteness, compulsory able-bodiedness, and discourses of normalcy are entangled when discussing power in the South. For example, Frankie is deemed abnormal in the film because of the way she dresses and refuses to fulfill the duties of a woman in the house. While the movie certainly masks some of the mental disability that Frankie has in the novel, she still has multiple moments of breaking down and crying manically in the kitchen of the family home, revealing her difference from the maid and her *younger* brother, both of whom act relatively calmly and in control within the space of

the home. These embodied idiosyncrasies separate Frankie from the others that surround her, exposing her to traumatizing experiences such as an older man attempting to sexually assault her in a hotel room when she attempts to escape the space of her home. Frankie conforms in the end, growing out her hair and wearing more feminine clothing in order to stop these events from happening, revealing that her lack of access to power makes her conform to a feminine and able-bodied person.

When examining how disability functions within literary and historical representations of the South, I aim to investigate how different intersectional identities contribute to inequality and white supremacy, rather than claiming that disability is the root cause of these issues. In David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder's book *Narrative Prosthesis: Disability and Dependencies of Discourse*, they claim literature does not focus on "disability in order to salvage its routinely denigrating social definitions," but rather that "the socially 'forbidden' nature of the topic has compelled many writers to deploy disability as an explicitly complicating feature" (3). Expressly, Mitchell and Snyder argue that disability functions as a metaphor within literature instead of focusing on the social conditions facing disabled characters often represented in literature. In this act, they often dismiss the very lived experience of disability, and instead choose to focus on what else it could mean. Rather than focusing on how disability functions as a metaphor, I want to focus on how characters in the works of these authors suffer and experience joy from their disability. Readings that commit to reading disability as metaphor often dismiss disability as a real issue that affects people and implies that disability itself is not worth examining in detail. When looking for purely euphemistic uses of disability, we also miss a lot about the overlapping nature between the discourses of white supremacy, ableism, and compulsory heterosexuality, and how these powers work together to oppress the "other." My main goal is to examine how power

functions, and I do so around theories of disability because I believe that authors of this time attempt to reveal a truth of the South by oftentimes using disabled bodies, and particularly disabled women. Thus, I am less interested in whether authors such as Flannery O'Connor, William Faulkner, and Carson McCullers reproduce negative connotations about disability in their work, but rather what they reveal about the power of whiteness and access to normative power in the process of writing disabled characters, regardless of whether these authors include this work intentionally or not. By answering this question, I can more aptly interrogate questions about the intersection of race, disability, gender, sexuality, and even religious ethnicity.

Since each chapter develops its own theoretical framework of analysis of separate ways power operates and chooses members to include in the spaces of the South, I will briefly outline what each chapter focuses on here. In the first chapter, I combine the critical race theory of whiteness studies with disability studies in order to answer the question of how real examples of freaks in history and cultural reproductions of the freak in literature impact access to power. I seek to build on the work of Rosemary Garland-Thompson and Robert Brogdon by including the discussion of race more explicitly in discourses of how the freak is produced and excluded from imagined spaces. I begin this chapter questioning how “the normal,” as laid out by Lennard Davis, operates as a new form of language arising in conjunction with eugenic movements that concentrate on eliminating difference. After, I introduce ideas of Mitchell and Snyder’s “ablenationalism” and combine it with whiteness studies, specifically Dyer’s analysis of how whiteness functions as a form of power and normalcy in political spaces. I then turn to analyze the “Wild Men from Borneo,” as a pair of P.T. Barnum’s first freaks, and how discussions and promotions surrounding them contributed to exoticizations and exclusions of the freak. I then turn to literature to see how authors utilize “enfreaked” characters with eccentric bodily

differences, analyzing the Snopes family in *The Hamlet*, Hulga in “Good Country People,” and Lymon and Amelia in *The Ballad of a Sad Café*. More specifically, I look at how all of these characters, despite their phenotypical whiteness, are excluded from the power of whiteness because of their disabilities, but still manage to wield the power of whiteness against those even more vulnerable than themselves.

In the second chapter, I turn more explicitly to eugenic histories in the South, asking the question of why white women were more likely to suffer sterilization than black women during the decade of the 1940s? I answer this by examining the social construct of “white trash” developed by Matt Wray, and biopolitics of disability and queerness advanced by Mitchell, Snyder, and Jasbir Puar concerning how societies carefully manage differences among bodies. I further with analyses of Eula Varner in Faulkner’s *The Hamlet* and an examination of the characters in Flannery O’Connor’s “Temple of a Holy Ghost.” These stories reveal how poor and behaviorally deviant white gender minorities’ sexual practices were carefully monitored by the men in their life and contain multiple warnings about the reproduction of deviance. These stories, combined with the whiteness and biopolitical theory, helps us to more thoroughly understand methods of control of deviant bodies in the South, as well as methods of elimination that these people underwent.

In Chapter 3, I look closely at Benjy in Faulkner’s *The Sound and the Fury*. Indeed, looking at the ideas of cripp time developed by Ellen Samuels and Allison Kafer, I develop how Benjy’s rhetoric expresses how he experiences trauma as a form of disability in a space that repeatedly physically beats him and emotionally berates him. In this process, I attempt to argue against previous scholarship that dismisses Benjy’s narrative as one that is either a bad representation of mental disability or dismisses his character as having the gift of language

bestowed onto him by Faulkner. In this process, I attempt to reveal these previous interpretations are based in ableism surrounding Benjy's mental disability, working in tandem with the other characters in the novel to limit his rhetorical agency. I aim to recover some of the rhetorical agency that other characters in the book seek to strip from him, and in that act imbue him with some power. Interrogating how stripping Benjy of his rhetorical agency relates to critical whiteness studies and white supremacy, I also borrow from frameworks of Katherine Prendergast and Margaret Price, and their discussions of mental disability and individual agency.

In short, this project analyzes how systems of inclusion operate in the South. From enfreaking the other to the sterilization of poor white women to the stripping of rhetoric from deviant minds, I look to literature from white authors in order to examine constructions of whiteness. The goal of this project is to examine intersectional power, adding disability to the conversation in spaces where it may have been missing. Furthermore, there have been spaces in disability criticism where the conversation of race and queerness has been sorely missing.¹ While the proliferation of crip theory has attempted to resolve the issue of queerness in conjunction with disability, I attempt to push the conversation further by wondering what role the intersection of queerness and disability play in political spaces. While more recently there have been some books by scholars such as Dennis Tyler concerning disability and race, I want to re-examine the idea of the freak during this time period with the idea of race in conjunction with disability, as previous scholarship often only briefly mentions race when it comes to social constructions of the freak. Examining all of these systems together with these stories grants us a better

¹ Much of the criticism surrounding the work of Rosemarie Garland-Thompson's work surrounds the lack of discussion about race when she discusses freaks. Outside of vaguely mentioned "non-western tribes," she omits moments where race played a key role in enfreakment. Furthermore, Mitchell and Snyder, in their book *Narrative Prosthesis*, claim that disability works as "the master trope of human disqualification," rather than examining how powers of ableism work with other oppressive structures (3).

understanding of the overlapping operational power of white supremacy, ableism, and compulsory heterosexuality.

Chapter 1: Whiteness, Physical Enfreakment, and Access to Power

Introduction

In the two decades of the 1930s and 1940s leading to the 1950s, during the time period of Southern Gothic literature and of the Southern Renaissance, William Faulkner, Carson McCullers, and Flannery O'Connor each wrote about phenotypically white characters that exist on the margins of their respective societies, usually because of a freakish or disabled embodiment. In this chapter, I will focus on William Faulkner's *The Hamlet*, O'Connor's "Good Country People," and McCullers' *Ballad of a Sad Café*. In *The Hamlet*, the Snopes family offers us one of the simplest examples of freakish embodiment leading to exclusion from the power of whiteness, where the Snopes' counterparts in the town emulate ideal masculinity and compulsory able-bodiedness in relation to the Snopes' irregular bodies. In "Good Country People," the main character, Hulga, is fetishized and pitied for using a prosthetic limb. In *Ballad of Sad Café*, McCullers similarly plays with the corporeal differences and eccentricities of Cousin Lymon and Amelia, as well as the pigmentation of Amelia's skin. I will argue that these authors are playing into the anxieties surrounding the changing landscape of the time, where working class whites, frequently of Anglo-Saxon descent, want to stratify existing social barriers in order to exclude newly freed Blacks from gaining social traction. Indeed, Faulkner, O'Connor, and McCullers nimbly demonstrate how working-class whites, deemed normative in the South, strive to protect their power above those who are abnormal.

For example, working class whites feared the large number of immigrants coming into the South from Southern Europe, worrying about their genetic quality and social worth (Wray 73). Historian Nell Irvin Painter furthers that apart from Anglo-Saxons, Irish, and Germans, the South had designated Southern Europeans as swarthy, round-headed, and ultimately genetically

inferior, thus echoing how phenotypically white people could be excluded from the larger power of whiteness (256). These two scholars of whiteness help to show us how the power of whiteness acts as a dynamic phenomenon rather than a static one, with different ethnicities being excluded and included from its power during different movements and times. In his book *Enforcing Normalcy*, disability theorist Lennard Davis shows how the use of the word “normal” proliferated during the mid-20th century in tandem with fears about genetic weaknesses, illustrating how the normal can be weaponized against those deemed non-normative (30). Beyond this, combining the work of Davis with those who partake in critical whiteness studies gives us an idea of how spaces violently and cruelly exclude othered bodies from power through methods of discovery and punishment of difference. Thus, by pairing the term normal with these working-class white fears around genetic weakness, we can see how disability and whiteness studies coincide.

When writing about whiteness in culture and film, Richard Dyer claims that white power reproduces itself “because it is not seen as whiteness, but as normal. White people need to learn to see themselves as white, to see their particularity” (10). Thus, I ultimately argue that Faulkner, O’Connor, and McCullers (intentionally or not) participate in the project of “making whiteness strange,” illustrating how the power of whiteness operates in an extremely violent and exclusive fashion, displaying in the process the abnormalities of upholding racial hierarchies. Many prior readings of these authors have focused solely on the racialized nature of the narratives, mostly ignoring the disabilities and freakish natures of the characters within them, and how those ideas could connect with the racialized nature of the text. Writing about “Good Country People,” for example, Julie Armstrong mentions that whenever one teaches Flannery O’Connor, “someone has asked the dreaded question ‘was Flannery O’Connor a racist,’” before attempting to answer

the question herself (77). Even attempting to answer this question misses the mark, as I believe a far more fruitful avenue analytically would be to ask, “What is Flannery O’Connor trying to suggest about the power of whiteness and white supremacy through her stories?” By trying to answer this question, I believe we can see that she plays with the identity of whiteness through disability and bodily difference in order to demonstrate who is included in whiteness and who is not. Indeed, rather than understanding disability as a foil for whiteness, or ableism completely separate from the discourse of white supremacy, I seek to interrogate how these arms of power work together.

Similarly, writing about the *Ballad of a Sad Café*, Cynthia Wu claims that removing phenotypically Black characters from the narrative serves a purpose, “[isolating] and [exploring] in some depth a new valence of race emerging in the New South without having to revert to the well-trodden path of imagining racialization within the black-white binary” (45). Wu reads the story through the lens of the immigration anxieties of the era. While I will certainly explore the possibility of reading Amelia as a racialized Mediterranean immigrant in a predominantly Anglo-Saxon society, I believe that we can add to this reading by looking at further bodily and social differences between Amelia and Lymon and the rest of the people in the café. As I will argue, the unnatural appearances and behaviors of Lymon and Amelia’s lack of compliance to standards of white femininity signal others to remove them from whiteness. As I further discuss, Lymon exploits his own exclusion to further exclude Amelia, revealing an underlying misogynistic hierarchy in accessing the power of whiteness.

Indeed, in David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder’s book *The Biopolitics of Disability*, they discuss the phenomenon of ablenationalism, which functions similarly to nationalism, except the phenomenon factors in norms of ability, excluding those who do not fit into that norm from our

imagined spaces. They write that “functionality, ability, and appearance all serve as determinative of participation in the surface identifications cultivated by nationalism” (Mitchell and Snyder 13). Thus, I will further focus in this essay on ‘functionality, ability, and appearance,’ and how they work in tandem to exclude disabled bodies from the cultural imagination of whiteness. While these terms are traditionally used in conjunction with disability theory, I will use them with Critical Whiteness Studies in order to demonstrate that disability, and fears of genetic weakness, play a central role in the discourse of whiteness and the upholding of white supremacy.

In her book *Making Whiteness: The Culture of Segregation in the South, 1890-1894*, Grace Elizabeth Hale writes that Southern whites used fragments of old hierarchical power structures to create “more binary orderings, imagined as natural and physically grounded” (5). Many of the pathologies applied to disabled people and women during this time reveal the truth of the natural imagining of binary orderings, as the South would include or exclude people’s, particularly women’s, access to power on the basis of compulsory able-bodiedness and race. At this time, Hale specifies that “[Southern whites] produced new grounds of difference to mediate the ruptures of modernity” (6). In other words, Southern whites, particularly poorer ones, create new binaries in order to exclude non-normative bodies from the broader access of power in whiteness, while at the same time stratifying older binaries that exclude othered bodies from power.

Dyer lays out the stakes of studying whiteness, writing that “racial imagery is central to the organization of the modern world...who gets what jobs, housing, access to health care and education, what cultural activities are subsidized and sold, in what terms they are validated” (1). Thus, I prove in this chapter that those on the margins of whiteness are only accepted and

validated through the prism of the cultural freak show, where a normal, nameless audience watches an abnormal body for their entertainment, and through this prism can express their power over others. Indeed, Mitchell and Snyder's key words of 'functionality, ability, and appearance' when it comes to inclusion in a space are embodied factors visible to others, where both disability and working class mark your body as separate. Rosemary Garland-Thompson's historical tracking and analysis of the freak show in her book *Extraordinary Bodies* can help us understand the "enfreakment" of non-normative literary characters in the American South. Garland-Thompson writes that bodies of freaks were "scrupulously described, interpreted, and displayed...always function[ing] as icons upon which people discharge their anxieties, convictions, and fantasies" (56). Thus, historical Southern freaks such as Frances O'Connor or the Wild Men of Borneo were only allowed and accepted in public insofar as they could be displayed and viewed, and once they vie for true acceptance within whiteness and the space of the South, they would be aesthetically rejected because of "functionality, appearance, and ability."

In this chapter, I argue that the stringent definition of whiteness stratified and policed by poor, Southern, Anglo-Saxons creates a form of ablenationalism, which actively enfreaks and marginalizes all those deemed non-normative as genetically inferior. Of course, this rejection from poorer whites in the South is not limited to the phenotypically white disabled, as I will focus on in this essay, and in a larger project this framework could be extended to more thoroughly understand the rejection of Black, Jewish, and Queer bodies in the South. Thus, through either validating or rejecting someone's 'functionality, ability, and appearance,' the normal can eliminate the freak from the cultural imaginary, as I will show through a literary

analysis of Faulkner, O'Connor and McCullers. First, however, I will offer a brief, initial analysis of a historical freak in the American South, the Wild men from Borneo.

Historical Freaks

During the freak shows in the space of the Southern Renaissance, disabled people had their bodies displayed and viewed, allowing for a mass of normalcy to “enfreak” and exoticize their bodies. The enfreakment often exoticized the performer by racializing them, often implying that they held the status of a recent immigrant in promotional materials, and thus removing them from the definition of whiteness that took hold in the South. In pamphlets advertising professional freaks, circus runners emphasized bodily differences and created biological fantasies that added to the mystique of the freak to the normal viewer. For example, “The Wild Men from Borneo,” a pair that were some of P.T. Barnum’s first “freaks,” were two people with dwarfism born in Ohio during the late 1820s who were each just above three feet tall (Bogdon 121). Their actual names, Hiram and Barney Davis, white men with a surname of British origin, were perhaps too American to fulfill the exotic fantasy of the role they were playing; they were thus recast as the nameless “Wild Men from Borneo.” This name exaggerates the differences between the viewer and the freak, as Borneo, an island in the South Pacific Ocean is a place where most audience members at a freak show in the South would not have been to. Their stage name, which would have been on advertisements and promotional pamphlets, casts them both as wild, demonstrating how freak shows exoticize and racialize their freaks in order to provide distance between the performer and the audience. This exoticization acts as a form of “enfreakment,” or the way in which societies turn people into freaks. While Hiram and Barney Davis may seemingly have their bodies validated under the framework of whiteness that exists in the South because of their financial gains over the course of their career (they accrued

approximately \$200,000 over the course of their careers), they have to retain the moniker of freak in order to make enough money to live, living in an era with ugly laws and other discriminatory laws that prevent disabled people from getting jobs, imprisoning their very existence within the very prism of the freak show (122). Thus, Hiram and Barney Davis have to perform if they want to make a living, revealing an exploitative relationship between them and the audience, and the showrunners. Indeed, Garland-Thompson writes that “enfreakment elaborately foregrounds specific bodily eccentricity, [and] collapse all those differences into a ‘freakery,’ a single amorphous category of corporeal otherness” (10). Beyond just foregrounding the bodily eccentricity of the performer, showrunners such as P.T. Barnum creates differences in the fabricated biography of the performer to make the focal point of their advertisements and shows. Thus, the people that put Hiram and Barney Davis on stage exploit them in order to foreground their bodily eccentricities, demonstrating how societies work to culturally produce freaks; showrunners will notice a bodily difference (in the Davis twins’ case, their height), and then exoticize the freak in order to ensure that is even more distance culturally between them and the viewer. As we move onto my reading of the works of Faulkner, O’Connor, and McCullers in this chapter, these points about the cultural constructions of the freak leading exoticizations and exploitations of the individual remain prevalent.

Faulkner and the Snopes’ Exclusion

In William Faulkner’s 1940 novel *The Hamlet*, the two main families in the novel, the Snopes and the Varners, are opposites in every way. In Frenchman’s Bend, the small hamlet where the book takes place, the Varner’s are an established family that know others in the town, whereas the Snopes have just moved from another town, creating some mistrust between the Snopes and the other members of the hamlet. Furthermore, the Snopes not only appear different

from their new neighbors, but also arrive in the town with the mystique of wrongdoing from the town where they had just moved. Indeed, rumors flow around Frenchman's Bend that the Snopes burned down a farm from the prior people they rented property from. The Varner family, with origins of slave ownership control over a plantation exert power over those who can be included within the definition of whiteness, linking the Snopes' bodily idiosyncrasies with the rumors of their crimes in other towns in Mississippi. I argue that the Snopes, as a family that poses a real threat to the monetary power and property that signals inclusion in the power of whiteness for the Varner's, are excluded from whiteness because of both their lack of compliance with existing hierarchies and bodily differences.

In *The Hamlet*, our introduction to the powerful Varner family demonstrates how Jody Varner fits within the normal discourse of whiteness. Jody Varner, the man in the narrative who initially meets the Snopes clan, is described as having "that quality of invincible bachelorhood which he possessed: so that, looking at him you saw, beyond the flabbiness and the obscuring bulk, the perennial and immortal Best Man, the apotheosis of the masculine" (Faulkner 8). Jody Varner's body, associated with ideals of white masculinity, contributes to white supremacy. Grace Elizabeth Hale can help us understand how this writing fits into the discourse of whiteness when she writes that "African American male suffrage uniquely threatened southern masculinity," demonstrating how the power that othered people demand threatens the previously unquestioned power of white masculinity (114). This loss of masculinity was felt acutely in the South because of the identity that was created on the back of a control that white men, of all classes, had over others (114). In other words, because people in Varner's world would feel threatened by the power held by Black men and white women, Varner's need to reassert his masculinity acts as a form of policing that boundary to power. Importantly then, Jody Varner is

mentioned as the ‘immortal Best Man,’ making him, and other white men like him, incapable of decaying into something that is not masculine, thus illustrating how power in the South could not disappear either. In other words, the immortality of Jody Varner’s masculinity means that other people in the town, such as the Snopes or the women in the novel such as his sister Eula, have their power directly trade off with the potency of Jody’s masculinity, which cannot deteriorate. Since losing control over other classes and races of people made Southern masculinity threatened, Varner’s reassertion of his masculinity demonstrates how whiteness polices the border of power by expressing a strict definition of normalcy.

Furthermore, Varner’s plantation home represents his wishes and melancholy for the Confederacy, as well as a familial legacy and interest in the upkeep of white supremacy. Jody and his family even live in the “site of a tremendous pre-Civil War plantation, the ruins of which— [such as] the gutted shell of an enormous house with its fallen stables and slave quarters” (Faulkner 3). Thus, Jody not only expresses masculinity in order to more acutely police the borders of power that are usually granted by whiteness but attempts to reinstall old hierarchies of the pre-Civil War era by living on a former plantation, such as chattel slavery and other heavily racialized Confederate ideas. The Varner family regularly reinforces the power of whiteness by ensuring homogeneity among their population as “they were Protestants and Democrats and prolific; there was not one negro landowner in the entire section. Strange negroes would absolutely refuse to pass through it after dark,” furthering that the Varner’s distribute the land (5). In other words, the Varner family ensures that norms of whiteness persist in Frenchman’s Bend by only giving land to Protestant and conservative individuals, making those outside of these norms feel uncomfortable and unsafe even passing through the town at night. The language

of describing uncomfortable Black people as ‘strange,’ despite the clear absence of black people in the space, denotes how the Varners work to enforce the power of whiteness through normalcy.

In sharp contrast to the description we receive of Varner, the first description the reader receives of Ab Snopes, through the perspective of Jody Varner, focuses on Snopes’ bodily differences compared to the rest of the town. Indeed, when Jody Varner first encounters Snopes, he “could see his face—a pair of eyes of a cold opaque gray between shaggy graying irascible brows and a short scrabble of iron-gray beard as tight and knotted as a sheep’s coat” (Faulkner 9). Varner sees Snopes and makes these judgments for the reader instead of an omniscient narrator describing Snopes in the same way that that happens to Jody Varner. In a way, this demonstrates how Ab Snopes functions as an othered individual, as he does not get an omniscient description of his body, but a biased description that foregrounds his otherness through the eyes of Jody Varner. This stages Ab Snopes as a freak to be viewed by the other characters in the story rather than an individual existing comfortably within the context of Frenchman’s Bend. Indeed, in one of Jody’s first meetings with Ab Snopes, he notices that Ab is “a man smaller than common, in a wide hat and a frock coat too large for him, standing with a curious planted stiffness” (8). Both encounters that Jody has with Snopes comment on his bodily idiosyncrasies, either that Ab is shorter than normal or may be poorer than those around him by not having clothes that fit. Like the historical freaks of the Davis twins, other characters in *The Hamlet* foreground Ab Snopes bodily differences and put him on display for other characters, denoting his bodily irregularity.

Later in *The Hamlet*, when Varner discusses his decision to hire Snopes with others in the town, they discuss a rumor that he and his family burned down a farm in another town, lending credence to the idea that Ab Snopes’ body leads him to commit acts of violence. Ratliff, a

salesman who frequents the shop that the Varner family owns, tells the story he hears about the Snopes family from those he sells to, recalling that on the night that the De Spain family had their farm burned down, they suspected the Snopes family. Indeed, Ratliffe says “he couldn’t say neither who it was because any animal can limp if it wants to and any man is liable to have a white shirt, with the exception that when he got to Ab’s house...Ab wasn’t there” (19). Thus, one of the identifying marks of the Snopes violence is the limp that Ab has when he attempts to escape, and the poorly fitting shirt, illustrating how those who do not possess normal or affluent bodies immediately become suspect. After this telling of the story Varner exclaims that Ab Snopes is a “durn little clubfoot murderer,” once again linking the bodily difference that he has with the crime he committed, marking Snopes as guilty without any proof of guilt (23). Thus, Varner and his social circle regularly use Ab Snopes’ limp to implicate him in crimes that he may not have actually committed, or may not have even been committed at all. This linking of bodily difference and threat continues throughout Part I of *The Hamlet*, with Varner commenting that the Snopes has “a predatory small nose like a beak” when the members of Frenchman’s Bend discuss whether he committed a heinous act of lynching a black man in the woods, once again remarking on a bodily difference while wildly speculating about whether or not he committed a crime (53). While the patrons of the Varners’ shop in Frenchman’s Bend may implicate Ab Snopes in the lynching of a Black man, they continue to accuse him of crimes without evidence absent his limp, nose, and clear class differences. The characters who embody normalcy and experience inclusion within Frenchman’s Bend display anxiety about the freakish Snopes because he does not uphold the white supremacist framework of masculinity, and thus try to link him to crimes that would exclude him from accumulating wealth and maybe land him in prison. Similarly to the story of the historical freak, Jody Varner and the mass of normalcy

within Frenchman's Bend create a biography that fits with the bodily differences in order to create more difference between themselves and the disabled character. While Jody Varner and his friends, those who embody normalcy within the space of Frenchman's Bend, attempt to implicate Ab Snopes in crimes that would make Snopes someone who polices the boundaries of power, they themselves closely guard that boundary against Snopes in order to maintain a masculine and homogeneous community in their hamlet. This action excludes Snopes from initially accessing the power of whiteness within the hamlet of Frenchman's Bend, and upholds structures of patriarchal white supremacy.

In all, the characters in *The Hamlet* rejecting the presence of Snopes in their space reveals how we can amend the term ablenationalism to fit with the region of the South, where the overlapping powers of whiteness and ableism operate to label othered bodies and then imbue them with some type of strangeness, which in this case presents as criminality. Indeed, Jody Varner and his family uphold normalcy and the power of whiteness by only distributing the land in the town to Protestants and conservatives, ensuring a homogeneity among the population. The narrative begins with the Snopes disrupting the peace and homogeneity of Frenchman's Bend, creating conflicts along the way, which illustrates their lack of exclusion from this space. Despite the discrimination they face, the Snopes family gains more power in the town, posing an even greater threat to those in the town such as the Varners and their friends who seek to keep the town as it was before the Civil War and perhaps even revert it back to the Antebellum South as shown by their masculine performance and living on a plantation. Taking what we know from both whiteness studies and disability studies, we learn how whiteness and ableism function as overlapping forms of power, and how those who center themselves in compulsory able-

bodiedness and white supremacy police the borders of power in order to ensure that they comparatively have more power.

O'Connor and Whiteness

In Flannery O'Connor's short story, "Good Country People," Hulga is an atheist woman who uses a prosthetic leg. Despite an initial reclamation of power by Hulga from those around her seek to infantilize and fetishize her, Mrs. Hopewell, her mother and Mrs. Freeman, her family friend, also pity and fetishize her disability, lamenting how the path Hulga takes in her life strays from what they expected because of her disability. Beyond this, Pointer, a working-class bible-salesman, takes the views of Mrs. Hopewell and Mrs. Freeman to the extreme, showing his fetishization and disgust of her non-normativity in a sexual assault scene that illustrates Hulga's existence on the margins of society in the world that O'Connor constructed.

Hulga, originally named Joy by Mrs. Hopewell, changes her name in order to fit in with what she perceives as the ugliness of her appearance. Indeed, Hulga thought that the name Joy was too beautiful for how she was being treated:

She had arrived at [Hulga] first purely on the basis of its ugly sound and then the full genius of its fitness struck her. She had a vision of the name working like the ugly sweating Vulcan who stayed in the furnace and to whom, presumably, the goddess had to come when called. (275)

As Joy was too pretty a name for her, she needed a name whose sound properly fit with the eccentricity of her body, and perhaps even the ugliness of her missing leg. Hulga thus chooses her name because of the 'ugly' sound, in an attempt to change the aesthetics of her name from one of beauty and pleasantness to the dread and horror associated with the ugly sound. Hulga, in realizing 'the full genius' of the name recognizes as an educated and disabled woman how she

can reject traditional norms of beauty by changing her name to what others may perceive as ugly. Outside of changing her name to fit the othered persona Hulga attempts to construct for herself, she further distances herself from the normalcy of whiteness by likening the effect of the name to the ‘ugly sweating Vulcan who stayed in the furnace.’ This imagery relates Hulga to the infamously ugly Roman god who suffers his own bodily differences from the other gods after Juno throws him from a cliff. Like Vulcan, the name performs the aesthetics of ugliness and monstrosity just as Vulcan performs grimy labor within his mines after Juno’s attack on him that removes him from the rest of the gods. In doing this labor, Hulga seemingly believes that the name would ensure beauty and love in her presence, as Venus, the goddess of love, would come to Vulcan when he called her. Beyond just love and beauty, Vulcan calling the name of Venus would ensure that power exists nearby, as Venus came to symbolize the imperial power of the Roman Empire (Segal 1). Thus, as a person who had been othered from power for her whole life, Hulga attempts to reclaim her power not just by embracing her ugliness, but also by attempting to call beauty and power to her. Interestingly, Hulga also deviates from the predominantly Christian theology of her household by relating her name and embodiment to a pagan religion. Despite Vulcan’s separation from the rest of the gods, he continues to create beauty such as thrones that the rest of the gods sit on in Mount Etna. While perhaps this may make Hulga freakish and monstrous to others such as her mother, she reclaims some of her difference and power by relating her ugliness to a god that is also considered ugly yet creates beautiful and powerful things. Hulga even describes taking the name as a “triumph,” as she can reject the norms of beauty that haunt her as a disabled and educated woman expressing agency (275). However, as we saw with the example of the Davis twins, even with the occasional and brief validation of bodily differences, characters such as Mrs. Freeman, Mrs. Hopewell, and Pointer,

who embody and define the power of whiteness and normalcy in the space she exists in, will continue to police the borders of power.

Mrs. Hopewell actively enfreaks Hulga by pitying her and foregrounding her bodily non-normativity as well as her atheism, education, and lack of compliance with natural trajectories for feminine women of her age. Indeed, because of Hulga's freakishness and deviance, Mrs. Hopewell is concerned for her,

It was hard for Mrs. Hopewell to realize that her child was thirty-two now and that for more than twenty years she had only one leg. She thought of her still as a child because it tore her heart to think of the poor stout girl in her thirties who had never danced a step or any *normal* good times. (274, emphasis added)

Mrs. Hopewell ultimately casts Hulga as a freak because of her anxiety surrounding what normalcy looks like for a Southern woman. Indeed, Mrs. Hopewell refuses to recognize her child's age because of her missing leg, making Hulga miss what would seem to be normal life accomplishments, such as going to dances, along the way. This refusal to recognize Hulga's age not only dismisses her intelligence (Hulga, after all, has a PhD in philosophy), but also refuses to admit that Hulga has grown into an adult woman, and thus refuses to grant her the agency that comes with adulthood. We can further see the relationship between the power of normalcy and the power of whiteness, as cultural milestones such as dances with partners are a part of normal life trajectories, while purposefully embracing ugliness excludes one from the power of whiteness, which operates as the underlying normal in this story. Thus, Hulga does not gain access to the power of whiteness that Mrs. Hopewell has and thus cannot be considered normal by her mother. Hulga also defies the expectations of her femininity by not going to dances and having a husband. Indeed, Mrs. Hopewell has anxiety around telling others that her daughter is a philosopher:

The girl had taken the Ph.D. in philosophy and this left Mrs. Hopewell at a complete loss. You could say, “My daughter is a nurse,” or “My daughter is a school teacher,” or even, “My daughter is a chemical engineer.” You could not say, “My daughter is a philosopher.” (273)

In other words, Hulga does not pursue a ‘normal’ career for a woman in the South, and her education feeds into the non-normativity, as well as the sexism and anti-intellectualism, that surrounds her. Recalling the ablenationalist framework of Mitchell and Snyder, Hulga is not only stripped of her normative appearance due to her use of the prosthetic but also not deemed to have a normative function because she does not have ‘normal’ work or experiences for a woman in the South. In other words, misogyny controls discourses of normalcy and whiteness, as Hulga cannot pursue a life of education and isolation without being cast as an ugly recluse. Thus, despite Hulga’s intelligence and age, Mrs. Hopewell infantilizes her and refuses to admit Hulga, another phenotypically white character, to the normal. In this, we can in part gather how whiteness functions as power, not as phenotype.

While Mrs. Freeman validates and recognizes Hulga’s change of name, she ultimately fetishizes Hulga’s disability in a way that enfreaks her. Indeed, O’Connor writes:

Mrs. Freeman’s relish for using the name only irritated her...Something about her seemed to fascinate Mrs. Freeman and then one day Hulga realized that it was the artificial leg. Mrs. Freeman had a special fondness for the details of secret infections, hidden deformities, [and] assaults upon children. (275)

Mrs. Freeman’s cheer for using the name Hulga ruins the purpose of choosing such a displeasing name, and thus robs Hulga of the ‘triumph’ that she claims when she recognizes the discomfort it gives others. Mrs. Freeman fetishizes Hulga’s bodily differences, having a fondness for the ‘hidden deformity’ of her prosthetic limb. The fetishization of deformity acts as a form of exoticization, demonstrating Mrs. Freeman’s active discrimination against Hulga and her life choices. Mrs. Freeman’s fetishization further enfreaks Hulga by casting her as a freak instead of

letting Hulga define herself in bodily difference, using terms such as ‘infection’ and ‘deformity’ instead of the ugliness that ultimately attracts both beauty and power that Hulga constructs for herself. Mrs. Freeman thus contributes to the ablenationalism and stringent definition of whiteness that takes hold in the South, as she enforces her normalcy upon the body of Hulga, fetishizing her differences and forcing Hulga to the margins. However, our conceptions of this ablenationalism can be even more deftly defined with the example of Mrs. Freeman, as we add the issue of gender into how people are marked as properly able to have self-determination in a political space. In this act of exoticization and fetishization, Mrs. Freeman elucidates how Hulga is not included in the central power that is typically associated with Hulga’s phenotypic whiteness because her bodily differences mean she should be seen and fetishized, not included.

James Pointer, a bible-salesman, sexually assaults Hulga, taking the fetishization and pity of Mrs. Freeman and Mrs. Hopewell to an extreme, further demonstrating the hegemony of normalcy over abnormality. Pointer, working class because of his job as bible-salesman, is established as normal when he is referred to as “good country people” multiple times by both Mrs. Freeman and Mrs. Hopewell, also denoting that distributing the Bible is considered normal and worth inclusion in the power of able-bodiedness and whiteness (278). However, despite the designation of normalcy from Mrs. Freeman and Mrs. Hopewell, Pointer commits heinous and deviant sexual assault against Hulga. After luring her out into the forest and beginning to force himself onto her, he demands of her “show me where your wooden leg joins on,” illustrating a sexual fetish for her prosthetic, mirroring and extending upon the fetish Mrs. Freeman has for Hulga’s prosthetic. In a similar vein to Mrs. Freeman and Mrs. Hopewell, Pointer designates Hulga as a freak during their sexual encounter as he foregrounds Hulga’s bodily eccentricity, once again making Hulga’s identity and personality collapse into a vague incorporeal otherness.

When asked why he wants to see it, Pointer responds “because...it’s what makes you different. You ain’t like nobody else” (288). Pointer thus not only crosses Hulga’s physical boundaries but also “touched the truth about her,” referencing that he touches both parts of her without Hulga’s consent (289). Pointer discovers his “attraction” to Hulga through her difference to both himself and the other two women in the story (those who possess normative bodies), both enfreaking her against his relative normalcy and leaving her face “drained of color” in the obscenity of what Pointer had just done, further revealing normalcy’s determination to physically dominate freakish embodiment (288).

After Pointer sexually assaults and enfreaks Hulga, he steals her prosthetic leg, making her completely dependent on him for mobility, once again illustrating both the dominance of normalcy over freakdom and the turning of disability into a liability within a patriarchal society. Pointer, refusing to listen to the wishes of Hulga, begins to uncover Hulga’s leg, as “[Pointer’s] face and his voice were entirely reverent as he uncovered it” (289). While Pointer has both reverence and respect for the prosthetic leg itself, he does not express the same respect for the person, whom he sees as other, freakish, and abnormal. After taking the leg off Hulga’s body, and after Hulga insists that he put the prosthetic back on, Pointer responds “not yet...leave it off for awhile. You got me instead,” creating a power dynamic where Hulga and the abnormal need to rely on the normal for assistance in order for access to power for simple needs and rights such as freedom of movement (289).

Elizabeth Grosz, in her book *Volatile Bodies*, can help us to understand the seeming tension between fetishization, reverence, and domination when she writes that “this perverse pleasure of voyeurism and identification is counterbalanced by horror at the blurring of identities that witness our chaotic and insecure identities” (64). In other words, because Hulga’s body does

not fit into neat racial or abled binaries, she illustrates the instability of identity, which in turn represents a threat to Pointer who holds a position of relative power within his society. In response, Pointer feels the need to control her body. This mirrors the instability of social classes for working class whites, such as Pointer, who were threatened by those previously considered non-normative trying to gain access into power that was previously reserved for them, such as freed blacks, Southern European immigrants, and the disabled. By creating complete dependence on him, Pointer reasserts his control in the situation, almost turning Hulga into a subaltern figure as “her brain stop[s] working altogether” (289). Pointer thus removes any instability of identity or class, and makes her and those that Hulga represents a corporeal other while confirming himself as normal and central within power. Indeed, at the end of the story, we learn that Pointer has been stealing other prosthetic body parts, claiming to have stolen a glass eye, only further proving his wish to both punish freakdom and keep it on the margins. As a Bible salesman, Pointer’s wish to dominate the freak also echoes how Hulga does not fit within a Christian and Protestant ideal that is often associated with whiteness because of her disability. While some may not consider Pointer a true Christian, his using Christianity as a facade further demonstrates how he uses discourses of whiteness to keep himself in power. Indeed, “Christianity maintains a conception of a split between mind and body, regarding the latter as at the least inferior and often evil,” adding that these constitute something of a white ideal (Dyer 16). Hulga has a body that constantly reminds others of her body, even if she prioritizes her mind. Thus, Pointer punishes her, and others like her, for their sins, not only against Christianity, but also against whiteness.

Recalling the theoretical framework that I outlined in the introduction, Hulga not only has bodily eccentricities foregrounded but is also excluded from the space she resides in because of her disability, thus shutting her out from the power of whiteness. O’Connor demonstrates that

while whiteness exists as the “normal,” many different powers work together to ensure Hulga’s assault and isolation. Indeed, Hulga subverts traditional expectations of her gender by attaining an advanced degree in philosophy, which at this time was not a respectable career for a woman in the South. Furthermore, the overwhelming Protestantism of the space works in tandem with the discourse of whiteness to foreground Hulga’s body as a mark of sin, despite her own focus on her mind in getting a PhD. Thus, we can further understand how ablenationalism continues to function in the space of the South, where determinations of inclusion in political spaces goes beyond ‘appearance, ability, and function’ that Mitchell and Snyder outline, but to intersecting identities of religion and gender as well.

Despite the clear focus on Hulga’s abnormality by the characters in the story, O’Connor demonstrates how working-class whites take part in activities that are deviant and evil, such as the sexual assault and theft of prosthetics by Pointer. Both Mrs. Hopewell and Mrs. Freeman treat Hulga awfully, excluding her from their day-to-day lives while infantilizing and fetishizing her disability and education. Pointer, who is called a “good country person,” commits heinous acts in his fetishization. Thus, O’Connor makes us see not only the dire consequences of being excluded from whiteness, but also contributes to the project of “making whiteness strange” because of her villainization of the normal characters, and what are broadly considered “good country people” in the story, as villainous and violent. Indeed, O’Connor illustrates how poor whites desperately cling to the power of whiteness by pushing down against those who seek to join them in the power they have.

McCullers, *The Ballad of the Sad Café*, and Hierarchies of Whiteness

In the novella *The Ballad of the Sad Café*, Carson McCullers writes about Cousin Lymon, a hunchback traveling into a small town to meet his cousin Amelia at a café that she owns. The town initially validates both Lymon and Amelia as they put on a show in their café that primarily centers around Lymon being a hunchback. However, once Marvin Macy, Amelia's abusive ex-husband comes back to town, he works to conquer Lymon who ultimately helps Marvin in an showdown with Amelia, showing the truly hierarchical nature of inclusion within the frameworks of whiteness and ablenationalism, as well as the misogynistic nature of inclusion within these frameworks.

The initial description of Cousin Lymon demonstrates the enfreakment that he suffers in the town;

The man was a hunchback. He was scarcely more than four feet tall and wore a ragged, dusty coat that reached only to his knees. His crooked little legs seemed too thin to carry the weight of his great warped chest and the hump that sat on his shoulders. He had a very large head, with deep-set blue eyes and a sharp little mouth. (McCullers 7)

Before we even know Lymon's name, we know about his corporeal idiosyncrasies. For example, before he is given any sort of humanity, such as a personal history, family, or name, all the reader knows is that he has a hunched back, is shorter than most fully grown men, has an abnormally large head, and has a 'sharp' mouth, all of which serve as a reflection of what the town view of Lymon's apparently different embodiment. This distinctive embodiment recalls Garland-Thompson's discussion of the freak when she writes how bodily eccentricities are foregrounded in order to signal to the reader that characters such as Lymon exist outside of normative whiteness. Garland-Thompson can further help us understand this phenomenon when she writes that "giants, dwarfs, visibly disabled people, tribal non-Westerners, [etc.]...all shared the platform equally as 'human oddities,' playing the assigned role of aberrant other to their audiences" (Garland-Thompson 63). We can place Lymon as physically disabled as he serves "as

a disruption in the sensory field of the observer” (Davis 50). In this initial description, McCullers, through the perspective of Amelia looking out from her window, puts Lymon on a type of platform, where his body is on display to the reader as both ‘visibly disabled person’ and ‘dwarf’. Garland-Thompson also helps us understand how this description furthers Lymon from the power of whiteness, as she illustrates in her work how many freaks were non-Western in their appearance and did not necessarily even have bodily marks or differences beyond this point. Thus, Lymon, unknowingly and unwillingly, performs for the reader as a visibly disabled person and becomes an ‘aberrant other.’

After this initial description of Lymon, the image of the freak becomes incredibly clear when a cluster of “normal” patrons visit the café where Lymon resides and works with his cousin Amelia. In contrast to the vivid description that Lymon receives, the other patrons of the café present as a nebulous backdrop to the spectacle that takes place from Lymon, and as I will discuss, his cousin Amelia. The group of café attendants is presented as an audience at a freakshow. Indeed, “they clustered around, feeling somewhat gawky and bewildered” in the presence of Lymon working, clearly participating in some kind of spectacle, revealing a similar sensation that the reader receives upon reading the description of Lymon, but also illustrating a similar dynamic to that of the freak show (19). Interestingly, these people receive no physical description or indicators from McCullers and just exist as a background and a normative mass to the freak show Lymon performs. The reader is even encouraged “to think of them as a whole,” turning them into a type of reader of the story alongside the reader, watching it unfold like an act at a freak show (30). Furthermore, the lack of foregrounding of their bodies enforces the normalcy of the group that attends the café and views the spectacle of Lymon. McCullers writes similarly, writing “each of them work in the mill, and lived with others in a two- or three-

bedroom house for which the rent was ten dollars or twelve dollars a month. All had been paid that afternoon” (30). Thus, not only are these patrons viewers in spectacles and “normal,” but they also have access to the power of whiteness, where they have secure work, housing, and food, despite their clear working-class status. Lymon is excluded from these assurances of even a working-class life, and thus from the power of whiteness, as when he arrives at the café “he gulp[s] down his supper as though had not smelled food in months,” highlighting his food insecurity, perhaps because of his non-normativity (11).

The spectators of Lymon’s freakdom initially validate his body when he revitalizes his cousin’s café and brings the people of the town together. Lymon defies the expectations of a freak. Robert Bogdon writes that freaks “might grunt or pace the stage, snarling and growling, letting off a warrior scream” (28). However, Lymon initially repels these notions of the ‘wild man’ that would apply to him and brings geniality to the café. In the early days of the café, the inside has “company and a genial warmth” (McCullers 22). Of course, this remained the case because Lymon’s corporeal otherness existed as a spectacle for the people of the town, as “the hunchback was still a novelty and his presence amused everyone” (22). In other words, this initial subversion of expectations concerning the freak and the validation that is given to his body only comes to Lymon because the patrons of the café get to view his body through the lens of a spectacle, further solidifying the concept of normalcy that the patrons guard and that Lymon cannot access. In the years after this initial meeting and boon of popularity for the café, Lymon “nosed around everywhere, knowing the intimate business of everybody... Yet queerly enough, in spite of this, it was the hunchback who was the most responsible for the great popularity of the café” (39). The narration uses an abnormal body part that Lymon possesses to describe a character flaw, once again linking deviant conduct to deviant embodiment. Despite this, the town

unifies through his presence at the café because the spectacle of his existence is impossible to pass up. Indeed, the narration notes that “people are never so free with themselves and recklessly glad as when there is some possibility of commotion or calamity ahead” (39). In all, Lymon begins the novel by revitalizing his cousin’s café and bringing the town together through the spectacle of his existence, defying the expectations of the freak that come with his deviant embodiment.

In *The Ballad of the Sad Café*, Amelia is also enfreaked by the people of the town, and especially by her ex-husband Marvin Macy, an embodied encapsulation of phenotypic, normal whiteness. McCullers describes Amelia as “contrary in every single respect,” demonstrating her distance from the cluster of normalcy that the chorus of the patrons reside in, and also mirrors how O’Connor introduces us to Hulga as seeing herself as excluded from prettiness (14). Furthermore, Amelia is contrary because she is a woman who left her abusive husband and who independently runs a business, defying the expectations of femininity in the South. The patrons of the café further remember that

Amelia had been born dark and somewhat queer of face, raised motherless by her father who was a solitary man, that early in youth she had grown to be six feet two inches tall which in itself is not natural for a woman, and that her habits were too peculiar. (14)

The language of the dark skin clarifies why Amelia presents as contrary to the normal in the town, as well as racializing the context around her otherness. In this sense, Amelia is coded as freakish because her skin color, ‘unnatural’ height, and upbringing as a working woman for her gender give an uneasy feeling to the viewer that would declare her an aberrant other.

Furthermore, as a phenotypically white character, the stress that the narration provides on the unusual darkness of Amelia’s skin demonstrates not only an exclusion from traditional definitions of whiteness, but also perhaps alludes to the influx of Southern European immigrants

in the South during the Southern Renaissance. Indeed, the Mediterranean Race, originating in the South of Europe, and not included in the traditional Anglo-Saxon traditions of the South, was said to have darker skin by race scientists of the era (Coon 43). However, this reading, originally done by Cynthia Wu, misses a central reason why others in the story work to exclude Amelia from power of whiteness; she behaves in a non-normative manner, having a job owning a business as a single woman. Having both Lymon and Amelia participate in this spectacle only further defines them as freakish as Garland-Thompson writes, “this determining relation between observer and observed was mutually defining yet reciprocal, as it imposed on the freak the silence, the anonymity and passivity of objectification” (62). The interchange that occurs in the café only further removes Amelia and Lymon from the power of whiteness, as the patrons remain invisible to ensure their normativity, while ensuring the enfreakment of Amelia and Lymon by focusing on their bodily and personal abnormalities.

In contrast, Amelia’s ex-husband, Marvin Macy, has a body that fits well within the power of normalcy and whiteness of the South. Marvin, unlike the cluster of normalcy, has physical characteristics described to the reader, which hypothetically separate him from the mass of normalcy that remain unembodied throughout the narrative. Despite this, he is described as “a tall man, with brown curly hair, and slow moving, deep-blue eyes” (46). Marvin is also described as having an “evil” character as well, potentially denoting him as deviant from the rest of the group. Grace Elizabeth Hale can help us understand Marvin’s opposition to both Lymon and Amelia’s embodiment. Indeed, she writes that “racial essentialism, the conception of sets of personal characteristics as biologically determined racial identities, grew in popularity among whites” (28). William Ripley, one of the founders of the race sciences, writes in his 1899 book *Races of Europe* that members of the Teutonic race, one of the races of phenotypically white

people accepted in the South as genetically advanced, are tall with blue eyes (121). Thus, as Marvin does not have any visible disabilities and his body appears perfectly natural with the right kind of whiteness, confirming his phenotypic whiteness and helping Marvin fit in with the cluster of normalcy within the café. Marvin also works a job in the mines, illustrating how similarly to Pointer, he performs a role as a working-class white man policing the margins of power in order to ensure his own place in the power of whiteness. More broadly put, however, Marvin is the right kind of white.

After being back in town for a couple of days, Marvin physically assaults Lymon, conquering the spectacle of the freak show, illustrating both the physical supremacy of the normal over the freak and the desire of the normal to push the freak towards the margins. The first time that Lymon and Marvin meet, Lymon puts on a performance where he accentuates the abnormalities of his body and “changes his skin tone,” engaging even further with the spectacle of the café, and referencing the racialized nature of the freak show (McCullers 49). Marvin found himself enraged with the exchange of this spectacle and asked the audience in the café if “the runt was throwing a fit?” (49). In Marvin calling Lymon a runt, a term usually used to describe inferior livestock or the smallest puppy in a litter, Marvin places his body above Lymon’s due to his physical differences. When Lymon refuses to stop his performance, Marvin becomes infuriated, and he

Stepped forward and gave Cousin Lymon a cuff on the side of his head. The hunchback staggered, then fell back on the ground. He sat where he had fallen, still looking up at Marvin Macy, and with great effort, his ears managed one last forlorn little flap. (49)

Marvin uses his embodiment and position in the power of normalcy to dominate the body of Lymon, attempting to show that the freak show is not welcome in the society of the café. In this, Marvin reinforces his centrality within whiteness and normalcy, making Lymon’s behavior in the

exchange of the freak show seem as though it needs to be contained violently. In other words, Marvin utilizes his whiteness and normalcy to further marginalize Lymon. After this violent assault that Marvin perpetrates, Lymon follows Marvin around in perhaps an attempt to discover this power and be included within the discourse of whiteness.

When Lymon comes to the defense of Marvin in his screaming match with Amelia, McCullers demonstrates how the power of whiteness and normalcy are not binaries, but rather hierarchies, where people want to move up and gain access to new places of power, with others guarding those points of access to power. In a scene in the café where Amelia and Marvin loudly shout at each other, Lymon intervenes, as he “crossed his eyes and aped her gestures in a way that made her appear to be a freak. There was something so terrible about this that even the silliest customers of the café...did not laugh” (60). Thus, because of his exaggerated and contorted body movements, Lymon enfreaks Amelia by making her confrontation with Marvin seem abnormal, mocking Amelia for screaming at Marvin. The narrative also suggests a seriousness in the action Lymon takes, as despite the spectacle remaining similar (it still emphasizes the bodily attributes of Amelia and Lymon), the audience within the café did not engage with it or laugh, and thus the exchange between audience and freak has a sense of seriousness that was not present before. In this act, Lymon capitalizes on the thought that freaks are considered “dangerous because they are alleged to have inferior genes that if not controlled would weaken the breeding stock” (Bogdon 34). In other words, Lymon exploits both his and Amelia’s implied genetic weakness to the audience by once again pointing out their bodily idiosyncrasies. Thus, a distinct hierarchy emerges for the three named characters, where Marvin claims the top of the hierarchy as white and able bodied. Lymon, the most enfreaked character for most of the narrative, asserts his position by enfreaking a woman in a vulnerable position by

emphasizing her “unnatural” traits to the audience. In Lymon’s action, we can see that whiteness, normalcy, and able-bodiedness do not operate as pure binaries where one can either access power or not, but rather as dynamic hierarchies where one will always attempt to assert their normalcy above another to access the power associated with normalcy and whiteness.

When Lymon and Marvin join together to fight Amelia at the end of the novella, McCullers shows how vulnerable and enfreaked women exist at the bottom of the hierarchy of phenotypically white characters in gaining the power associated with whiteness. In the fight with only Marvin, Amelia proves herself the stronger participant, but Lymon joins in and helps Marvin to defeat Amelia. Indeed, after Amelia gains the upper hand in the fight against Marvin and begins to win, “Lymon [springs] forward and [sails] through the air as though he had grown hawk wings. He [lands] on the broad back of Miss Amelia and [clutches] at her neck with his clawed little fingers” (67). After Lymon lends his assistance to Marvin, Amelia loses the fight. Amelia suffers not only from losing the fight to her abusive ex-husband, but from the further expression of language that she has a ‘broad back,’ expanding on our perception of her as corporeally different and other. While Lymon helps Marvin conquer Amelia’s unruliness, Lymon also undergoes continued enfreakment. The imagery of growing ‘hawk wings’ and using ‘claws’ in front of the audience alienates him from the mass of normalcy in the chorus. Lymon thus finally lives up to the reputation of the freak that Bogdon writes about, becoming so exotic that he is unrecognizable and dangerous to the rest of the crowd, forcing them to leave the café (68). The fight thus cements the hierarchy that McCullers creates between the characters of Marvin, Lymon, and Amelia. However, while Lymon ensures that his body is above Amelia’s, his acts contain him in a discourse of freakery. Thus, Marvin, who in some ways embodies the normal Anglo-Saxon white in the South, can exclude Lymon on the basis of ability and

appearance, but can exclude Amelia on account of her incorrect whiteness and performance of white femininity.

After this encounter, Amelia isolates herself in her café again, illustrating the power inherent in defining spaces by whiteness and normalcy. After the fight, Amelia lets “her hair grow ragged...her face lengthened until she was thin as old maids are thin when they go crazy” (69). In other words, both Lymon stratifying the hierarchy of inclusion within whiteness enfreaks Amelia even more, making the description of Amelia foreground more specific bodily features that would eliminate her from the normal than the original description. William Ripley can perhaps enlighten us to some of the coded language at the end of McCullers’ story. Indeed, in a table describing different features, he notes how people of Mediterranean races have both long faces and long heads (Ripley 121). This reading, pioneered by Cynthia Wu, accounts for Amelia being excluded on the basis of her appearance. However, Amelia is also excluded because of her function and ability as a strong and independent woman who revolts against the expectations to stick by her husband, and who instead brawls with him in a business she runs independently, revealing how simply viewing Amelia’s disability as coded for racial difference misses other ways in which Amelia differs from the clusters of normalcy around her. Marvin, a working class man himself who is somewhat already on the margins, has to police this behavior because it encroaches on the power that is exclusive to him in the hierarchy of power that he exists in.

McCullers, through the space of the café, shows us how “not quite white” people are noticed, enfreaked, and then marginalized within places of power in the South. Lymon and Amelia are differentiated from most of the characters of the book because their bodies are foregrounded in their descriptions. While Marvin also has a visible body, the language McCullers uses to describe his body fits with both the Anglo-Saxon and Teutonic races of the

time, both of which were included with the power of whiteness. Lymon, who has a physical disability, and Amelia, who is an unnatural size for a woman and is also more independent than a “normal” woman of the time, are thus both excluded from whiteness because they are not the right kind of white. McCullers’ gothic tale makes the reader sympathize with the two abnormal characters, even going so far as to label Marvin “evil,” and shows how the normalcy of working-class whiteness operates in violent and exclusionary manner against those that seek to join, demonstrating a form of ablenationalism.

Conclusion

By combining disability theory and whiteness studies, we can see how freaks are racialized and how ablenationalism functions as both a fundamentally racialized and ableist concept, expanding on the terms initially used by Mitchell and Snyder. However, there has been some reluctance to join these two fields. Indeed, David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder write “the born freak is not simply equivalent to the made freaks of gender, race, or sexuality and a credible research undertaking must at least refute the ease of comparison that such an approach cultivates” (23). While I agree that bodily differences exist between disabled freaks and racialized freaks, I believe it oversimplifies the problem of enfreakment, ignoring the existence of freaks who are both Black and disabled, as well as implying that disabled people can actually be born as a freak, rather than paying attention to their social construction. Richard Dyer echoes Mitchell and Snyder’s sentiment, writing “whiteness generally colonizes the stereotypical definition of all social categories other than those of race. To be normal, even to be normally deviant (queer, crippled) is to be white” (12). As all the characters and historical figures studied in this chapter demonstrate, to be disabled is to not have access to the power of whiteness, even with phenotypical whiteness. Furthermore, historically disabled freaks are far from “born”

freaks, but rather are constructed as such by those around them who fetishize and commodify their bodies. Because characters like Hulga and Amelia threaten the idea of whiteness as slippery, characters such as Marvin react violently in order to ensure that whiteness remains intact. While bodily differences certainly exist for those who are enfreaked for racial reasons versus those who are enfreaked for ableist reasons, it remains important to analyze how both of these powers function together as part of a much larger anti-racist and anti-ableist project.

There is a complicated relationship between whiteness, normalcy, and the term of ablenationalism. In this relationship, people who are “not quite white” do not fit in the definition of the nation and ideology of whiteness for a variety of reasons, most of which revolve around fears of genetic weakness. Indeed, during the late nineteenth century through the mid-twentieth centuries, there was a great fear about different genetic weaknesses ruining the white race, especially among racial purists in the South. Thus, while people of color are obviously excluded from the power included in whiteness, our historical analysis of the freak, within the literature of Faulkner, McCullers, and O’Connor demonstrates how some phenotypically white people do not fit into the power of whiteness either. In ablenationalism, people are excluded from the power of the polis because of their ‘ability, appearance, and functionality.’ In other words, because these characters and freaks either do not have the proper appearance to fit in with normalcy, the proper ability, or the proper function to reproduce people of strong genetics, they are not included in the power of whiteness in the South. At the intersection of disability theory and whiteness studies, we can see how freaks, such as the Snopes, Amelia, Lymon, and Hulga, are created and excluded in order to uphold the hierarchies of white supremacy.

Chapter 2: Biopolitics of Disability: Eugenics, Poor White Women and Freaks in Faulkner and O'Connor

Introduction

As I discuss in the last chapter, during the Southern Renaissance of the 1930s into the period of Southern Gothic literature in the 1940s and early 1950s, many issues of cultural reproductions of the freak have constant literary representation. In this chapter, I further investigate a specific strand of this idea, looking at how the oversexualization of reproductive characters during this time period reflects genetic fears held by upper-class and powerful whites. Indeed, as Alexandra Stern points out in her article about forced sterilization practices in the South, white women were more likely to be the victims of forced sterilization in the late 1930s and 1940s than black women (Stern 2). The central question of this chapter asks why this is the case, when we know that this time and space routinely brutalized and segregated against black people, and how literary representations of characters that seek to limit reproductive freedoms of women and gender minorities?

Critical whiteness studies can potentially help us to better understand the answer to this question. Critical whiteness studies, which interrogates the power of whiteness, and seeks to name whiteness instead of allowing it to exist as the invisible 'normal' alternative to other races. Critical Whiteness Studies insists that not all phenotypically white people exist within the power of whiteness, and experience white privilege to the same extent. Matt Wray, one of the founding scholars of whiteness studies, writes extensively about the social construction of "white trash," and how that idea materially impacts the access to power for people lumped into that category. While I will build off a lot of the work that Wray does, I first want to clarify an idea about using whiteness studies. In the following passage Matt Wray attempts to problematize the usage of the term of white trash in relation to other historically racialized slurs in the United States. He writes,

We don't say things like *n*gger trash* precisely because 'n*gger' often implies poverty. Are some African Americans 'n*ggers' because they are black or because they are poor? There is no one answer to this one; it is difficult to distinguish between race and class when discussing the derogatory meanings of 'n*gger.' In this way, *n*gger* is a term like *white trash*. (Wray 62, italics added)

While I can see why someone would initially bristle at the statement that Wray makes here (to be perfectly transparent, in an earlier draft I criticize him at some length for this passage), I interpret this passage as being more about the phrase "white trash" than about the n-word. Indeed, Wray argues that the n-word not only already classes the individual who the slur is used against as poor, but also that use of the slur indicates an expected behavior that is farther from whiteness. In this, the term "white trash" becomes a source of tension for those who actively believe in white supremacy: how can one simultaneously be white and behave in a manner that signifies waste? I agree with the assessment that the addendum of "trash" signifies a departure from the power of whiteness, despite the phenotypic appearance of those encompassed under the term. In other words, 'white trash' signifies a poor person who behaves poorly or out of touch with the upper class. The idea of white trash separating from the power of whiteness illuminates when looking at the history of eugenics in the South, when both behavioral and class factors were combined as reasons to control the sexual practices of white women at alarming rates.

In Wray's book *White Trash: Race and Class in America*, Wray discusses how popular conceptions of whiteness most often are "analytical shorthand to refer to the psychological and cultural advantages and the economic and political privileges of having white or light-colored skin, where skin color is conceptualized as a marker of racial identity" (5). While the truth of this is undeniable, power operates in a more complicated manner than just permitting admittance to economic and political privileges because of skin color. Wray further argues that "the power of dominant groups is secured not just by ethnoracial systems and practices, but also by systems

and practices, but also by systems and practices related to...class, gender, and sexuality” (5). David Mitchell and Sharon Snyder write similarly in their book *Biopolitics of Disability*, sharing that “ablenationalism conjoins the features of nationalism as a ‘deep horizontal comradeship’ with norms of ability that appear naturally synonymous with the privileges of citizenship” (13). This line of thought extends not only to disability studies, but also to queer theory where Jasbir Puar writes in her book *Terrorist Assemblages: Homonationalism in Queer Times*, that the “‘ascendancy of whiteness’ in biopower incorporates the multiplication of appropriate multicultural ethnic bodies complicit with this ascendancy. Part of the trappings of this exceptional citizen, ethnic or not, is the careful management of difference” (25). In other words, the discourse of whiteness carefully works to exclude difference, whether that difference presents itself as queerness or disability. More than this, however, structures of power will allow volatile Queer and disabled bodies to exist if they are complicit with the rise of whiteness and white supremacy. Indeed, Puar furthers that “upstanding homosexuals participating in normative kinship models” will usually experience acceptance by the power of whiteness and neoliberalism (at least today), but that further deviating queer lifestyles are still ostracized and dehumanized, put at the margin of this newly established normal. Thus, the nationalism happening in the South at this time intersects and overlaps with ablenationalism and forms of compulsory heterosexuality and able-bodiedness, seeking to establish a normal that excluded all threatening forms of difference.

One mode of biopower that incorporates gendered, classed, and disabled bodies takes the form of forced sterilization and other eugenic practices. Mitchell and Snyder write that in the modernist period, eugenics was the first intra-regional response to contain disability, making it one of the first policies relating to compulsory able-bodiedness (125). Indeed, in this time period,

they write “comparative statistical studies of feeble-mindedness in European and North American countries began; marriage laws and institutionalization practices crisscrossed the Atlantic,” indicating how the American South was far from the only country participating in this kind of science (125). Lennard Davis, in his book *Enforcing Normalcy: Disability, Deafness, and the Body*, demonstrates how during the late 19th and early 20th centuries, discourse shifted from discussing the ideal body that we all fall short of, to the normal body that some do not fit into, crediting this shift to the statistics and eugenic thought of Francis Galton (30). Amazingly, the word normal did not even enter European vocabulary until 1840 at the earliest, stunningly late for how pervasive the word is in our language (24). Thus, we see how towards the turn of the 20th century and into the time that both Flannery O’Connor and Faulkner write, there is a shift in how disability is contained, specifically with new pathologizations surrounding the newly abnormal body.

In the South specifically, much of the eugenics movement was focused on protecting a specific type of whiteness, which disproportionately impacts poorer women. The prevailing belief among white elites and secessionists in the South was that “poor whites in the South were poor not because of [the inherited wealth] of slavery—they were poor because of hereditary defects” (Wray 18). Thus, rather than structural disadvantages leading to less wealthy individuals, southern elites saw the issue as “‘bad blood’ that tainted the poor white trash” (18). This forced southern elites to ask the question of “where might such people who were nominally white, but whose morals, manners, and reputations were worse than black slaves, fit in the new republic? How could such disreputable and dishonorable whites be granted the democratic right of self-governance?” (18). While once again some of Wray’s oversimplification of the different life experiences of poor whites and blacks clearly shows, the thinking that he illustrates for us

clearly shows how eugenics in the South could function. In other words, the reason that eugenic practices affected white women more than black women during the 1930s and 1940s is because Southern elites had to curtail a system wherein they wanted to give rights to whites but did not feel comfortable giving full rights to all white people. Wray confirms this, writing “eugenic field researchers found evidence to confirm the received wisdom that poor rural white families exhibited higher levels of criminality, feeble-mindedness, sexual promiscuity, and alcoholism than did other populations of whites,” furthering that these same scientists believed that the route of these problems lay in deviant and unhealthy sexual behaviors (19). In other words, eugenic scientists and southern elites are primarily concerned with mixing their family lines with the family lines of poorer whites, misogynistically believing that the sexual promiscuity and deviance of poorer white women made them worthy of their status.

This concern of poorer whites matched the eugenic studies that occurred in the North where scientists used the Binet-Simon test to determine that almost half of the white people coming into Ellis Island could be pathologized with “feeble-mindedness,” or having a mental age of less than twelve (Cohen 34). Cohen explains how the term feeble-minded was widely used, but vaguely defined, writing how the term “had no precise medical definition...[and acted as] a catchall that covered a wide range of purported deficiencies” (16). It is my argument that these pathologizations (feeble-minded, moronic, etc.) acted to pathologize what Southern elites and eugenic scientists believed to be overly sexual and reproductive people who would weaken and dilute the genealogical power of whiteness. In reality, these actions taken by Southern elites act to limit queerness and disability from inclusion in the South. We can see this phenomenon taking shape in the William Faulkner book *The Hamlet*, where Eula Varner demonstrates her feeble-mindedness and sexual activity while the Varner family loses their wealth in the town, and

the Flannery O'Connor short story "Temple of the Holy Ghost" where the 'You-Know-What' character threatens to reproduce its queerness unless its audience conforms.

Eula Varner and Pathologizations of Mental Illness in Faulkner's *The Hamlet*

In Faulkner's *The Hamlet*, Eula Varner's character has a seemingly bizarre description, with a discrepancy between her age of thirteen (or twelve) and the sexualized discussion of her body by other characters in the novel. Indeed, Eula's beauty leads critic Lothar Hönnighausen to conclude that Eula embodies a heroine in *The Hamlet*, who's unwillingness to move and bodily differences from other characters grant her with a type of apocryphal embodiment (Hönnighausen 277). Indeed, Hönnighausen writes "Eula's curious unwillingness to 'move' appears not as a trivial idiosyncrasy but as a kind of mythic immobility" (277). Rather than ascribing any mythic immobility to Eula, I suggest that her lack of walking, talking, and normative learning in the narrative demonstrates her mental abnormality compared to the other characters in the book. Furthermore, when Eula has a child outside of wedlock, Faulkner nods to the eugenic idea flourishing that those with mental illnesses were procreating at a higher rate than those who were not. Indeed, once her family recognizes that she has had a child and had sex outside of marriage, they forcibly remove her from the entire state of Mississippi, by impelling her to marry Flem Snopes and move to Texas. In this, Faulkner demonstrates how those in power in Frenchman's Bend seek to contain the volatile and dangerous traits of mental disability.

The first description of Eula designates her as a sexual character, despite her young age. The narrator initially describes Eula as "a soft, ample girl with definite breasts even at thirteen and eyes like cloudy hothouse grapes and a full damp mouth always slightly open... apparently not even having to make any effort to listen" (Faulkner 12). The reader's initial encounter of Eula is one of both mental incapacity and sexualization, mirroring the discourse surrounding the

linkage between the two happening more broadly. Faulkner emphasizes Eula's breasts and how ample her body is, demonstrating how matured and grown her body is despite its age.

Furthermore, the language surrounding Eula's mental activity illustrates that Eula either has an attitude of disinterest or cannot make the effort to listen. Even including the detail of having her mouth always be slightly open illustrates the abnormality of Eula's body, as she either does not care to or cannot close her mouth. Faulkner compares Eula's eyes are compared to grapes, which do not comprehend the situation happening in front of them like human eyes, symbolizing Eula's lack of understanding of the situation in front of her. Adam Cohen can help us understand this description of Eula Varner when he writes that eugenic scientist Robert Goddard redefined the study of mental disability,

[unveiling a] three-part hierarchy of mental defects. At the bottom of Goddard's pyramid were 'idiots,' people whose minds were developed below the level of a normal three-year-old's. Next were what he called 'imbeciles,' people whose mental level fell between ages three and seven. At the top were 'morons'...people with mental ages from around eight to twelve. (32)

While perhaps having a body that may indicate an age higher than thirteen, Eula could be betrayed by her mental age, which makes her only thirteen years old, or borderline moronic according to eugenic science. While other characters that talk about Eula's age all talk about her as around the age of thirteen, which would technically fall outside of the 'mental age' of a 'moron,' the evidence pointing to her mental abnormality suggests that may just fall within the realm of error. In other words, the juxtaposition of how the Varner family describes the sexuality of Eula's body and her mental activity may demonstrate how they may pathologize Eula as mentally disabled and give her a mental age that does not align with the linear development of her body. Another physical description at the beginning of Book II lends further evidence to this reading, as "though not yet thirteen years old, she was already bigger than most grown women

and even her breasts were no longer the little, hard, fiercely pointed cones of puberty or even maidenhood” (Faulkner 107). Thus, Eula, rather than being twelve or thirteen, with some kind of mythic beauty and immobility, has some mental impairment that lowers her mental age in the eyes of the narrator. Thus, when considering the eugenic science of the time, an otherwise bizarre description of Eula Varner begins to make sense, as the age of her physical maturity may not match her mental age of thirteen.

At the beginning of Book II in *The Hamlet*, another description of Eula reveals the genetic and generational fears in eugenic thought. Indeed, in one of the first descriptions of Book II, Faulkner writes “like her father, she was incorrigibly lazy, though what was in him a constant bustling cheerful idleness was in her an actual force impregnable and even ruthless. She simply did not move of her own volition...She was late in learning to walk” (107). Thus, Eula’s laziness and immobility is not some natural occurrence, but rather a genetic inheritance that she receives from her father. As well, what may have been seen as ‘cheerful idleness’ is seen as ‘incorrigible’ for Eula, revealing an underlying misogyny in these discourses of control of deviant bodies. Further maintaining the idea that Eula’s mental age and physical body are at two different stages throughout the narrative, she did not learn how to walk until later than usual and still utilized a perambulator, or cart to help her move throughout the countryside, a type of baby carriage (107). When she became too heavy to be pushed around in the perambulator, she would instead sit in chairs as “she already knew there was nowhere she wanted to go, nothing new or novel at the end of any progression” (108). Another way to put this is that Eula does not progress like other people, making her laziness a volatile and threatening trait. Eula’s laziness further prevented her from participating in traditionally feminine activities, such as house cleaning and cooking, despite her mother’s efforts to get her involved (109). Eula even refuses to learn in school, as

“during the five years she attended it, which, if it had been computed in hours based upon what she accomplished while there, would have been measured not in years or even months but in days,” elucidating the idea that Eula does not progress like a normal individual who learns in school and participates in the home (110). In all, Eula’s laziness acts as a hereditary trait that she inherits from her father, which becomes dangerous when it prevents her from walking, learning in school, and working as a woman in the house. Thus, the misogynistic criticism of Eula’s genetic history creates negative traits that need to be controlled unless they get passed down to another generation in Frenchman’s Bend, revealing how whiteness controls deviance.

As Book II evolves, Eula also develops an attraction to the men within the town, and Jody Varner’s thoughts of her add to the perception of her sexualization. Jody Varner, Eula’s older brother, has the most fear pertaining to her physical development relative to her age. After she encounters a man (the extent of the interaction remains unclear) on her way to meet Jody Varner at the store that he manages, he exclaims that “no wonder she agreed so easy and quick to walk to the store and meet me...If you could arrange to have a man standing every hundred feet along the road, she would walk all the way home” (112). Jody explains that despite Eula’s seeming lack of interest in everything, she has an interest in men. Furthermore, Jody’s statement demonstrates the relationship between mental incapacity, such as the laziness and negative traits that Eula possesses and sexual promiscuity that cannot be controlled, leading to the reasoning of elites in charge of eugenic policy that controls the sexual activity of these individuals. Indeed, Jody’s “rage was only intensified by the knowledge that she had not deliberately exposed it. He knew that she simply did not care, doubtless did not even know it was exposed, and if she had known, would not have gone to the trouble to cover it” (114). In other words, Eula does not worry about the expression of her sexuality, but Jody worries and rages over her indifference to

this expression of sexuality and deviance because her body could be used to proliferate even more deviance. Thus, Jody Varner wishes to control the sexualization and behavior of Eula, and expresses his rage that she continues to behave subversively.

Not only does Eula increasingly express her sexuality to men, men notice her as a sexualized being, mirroring how eugenicists of the time feared that overly sexually active women would also corrupt ambitious and otherwise pure white men. Indeed, when the schoolteacher Labove can leave the hamlet of Frenchman's Bend and become a lawyer and politician, he refuses because of his attraction to Eula. When he attempts to leave,

even with that already forty miles of start toward freedom and (he knew it, said it) dignity and self-respect, he could not do it. He must return, drawn back into the radius and impact of an eleven-year-old girl who, even while sitting with veiled eyes against the sun like a cat on the schoolhouse steps at recess and eating a cold potato, postulated that ungirdled quality of the very goddesses in his Homer and Thucydides: of being at once corrupt and immaculate, at once virgins and the mothers of warriors and grown men. (128)

Labove, working both at the University of Mississippi and the school house part time in order to get degrees so that he can leave the constrictive Frenchman's Bend, abandons his dreams of being a lawyer and a politician in order to pursue an eleven-year-old girl, hinting at one of the other anxieties felt by white elites during this time: that these overly sexual and reproductive girls would corrupt and ruin powerful white men, diluting and shrinking the power of whiteness. Instead of marrying a woman who does not practice sexual deviancy and has mental incapacity, Labove is attracted to Eula, who others in the narrative regularly attribute as having both sexual deviancy and mental incapacity.

Labove pursuing Eula affirms how the misogynistic discourse of eugenics does not only function as a fear, but as a violent response to contain what the normal views as deviant women. Labove reveals the wish that men have to conquer the promiscuity of women, as "he did not even

want to make love to her but wanted to hurt her, see blood spring and run, watch that serene face warp to the indelible mark of terror and agony beneath his own,” further equating his assault to trapping her (135). Thus, the pathologies that characters such as Labove and Jody Varner attach to Eula reveal more about the control they seek to have over her body. This misogyny that Labove expresses as a desire to harm and control Eula works in tandem with structures of white supremacy, as pathologizations and dominations of otherness are an expression of power.

Jody’s experiences anger surrounding Eula’s pregnancy, and forces her to marry Flem, in the process having them move to Texas. This show of power from Jody Varner, the encapsulation of immortal masculinity and whiteness, illustrates more broadly how the power of whiteness and normalcy excludes traits of mental incapacity and sexual promiscuity from the space of the South. Towards the end of Book II, Jody tells their mother “Eula’s got a baby. Go up there and knock that fool in the head” (161). In this act, Jody reveals that Eula’s promiscuity is a real concern, and that she will pass down her hereditary defects. Thus, rather than having a vague concern about Eula talking to men, Jody, representing the quintessential Southern man demonstrates the desire to punish and have control over women's sexuality and reproduction. When Jody’s parents do not seem willing to punish Eula after her pregnancy is revealed, he exclaims “maybe you don’t give a damn about your name, but I do. I got to hold my head up before folks even if you aint” (164). Eula having a baby would hurt the family name because the baby was conceived outside of wedlock, which would worsen her reputation of mental incapacity and sexuality in Frenchman’s Bend. Jody, worrying about his family slipping down the hierarchy of power that has access to whiteness, wishes to show that Eula’s behavior is not accepted within his family. In the end, Tull tells the people of Frenchman’s Bend in the shop that Flem Snopes and Eula Varner got married at the clerk’s office, “and left for Texas right after the ceremony,”

showing how Jody eventually punishes his sister for having a child and being sexually promiscuous, not allowing her to exist within the space of Frenchman's Bend (166). Thus, Jody, and the mass of others in Frenchman's Bend who gossip about Eula's disappearance illustrate how they exclude sexual promiscuity and mental deviance from the space of Frenchman's Bend.

Eula Varner and her sexualized body seem bizarre when the reader initially encounters them, as Jody and others describe her as a fully developed and sexually active woman when she is between the ages of eleven and thirteen. When looking at Eula through the lens of the eugenic history of the South, an idea Faulkner would undoubtedly be aware of, her character begins to make more sense. Indeed, her physical body may very well be past the ages of eleven to thirteen, but her mental state could just be those ages, following in line with eugenic scientists of the era who would regularly pathologize sexually deviant women with lower mental ages than their physical ones. Furthermore, the anxiety and eventual punishment that Jody Varner ensures happens to Eula illustrates the control that the power of whiteness has over the reproduction of bodies in the space of the South, as Eula cannot continue to live in Frenchman's Bend after having a baby outside of wedlock, revealing once again an underlying misogyny to the power of whiteness and definitions of inclusion in the South. This anxiety and punishment reflect the control that eugenicists, specifically Southern eugenicists sought to have over poor white women's bodies in order to ensure that these, in their eyes, mentally deficient and sexually deviant women would not dilute the power of whiteness. This, in turn, serves the power of white supremacy by attempting to uphold a hierarchical power that misogynistically excludes and pathologizes all of those that are not normative.

Limiting Queer-Crip Reproduction in Flannery O'Connor's "Temple of a Holy Ghost"

In “A Temple of the Holy Ghost” by Flannery O’Connor, the narrative follows three girls, two of whom attend Catholic school and visit a freak show, encountering a gender-queer freak, named the ‘you-know-what.’ The nameless ‘You-Know-What’ is stripped by the text of both their name and humanity because of their gender queerness, telling its audience to comply with the wishes of God unless they too want to be made this way. The ‘You-Know-What,’ in this sense, acts as both the disabled and queer freak, straying so far from the normative that their body must be contained. Interestingly, by warning the attendees of the freak show that unless they conform with those around them, that they too will end up in a crip-queer embodiment, echoing eugenic sentiments of the South during this time. The third girl, an importantly nameless character, regularly behaves outside of what would be considered normal and is warned that she will be struck with physical marks of her sin if she does not comply with God’s will. O’Connor’s story reveals underlying anxieties surrounding the reproduction of deviant bodies in the South during this time, forcing compliance to normalcy unless the crowd of the show should create more freaks. More specifically, the gender-queer ‘you-know-what’ operates in a occupies a different space of deviance than Eula, as her gender queerness represents a different threat to social constructions of whiteness than the assumed sexual promiscuity of poor, mentally ill women in the South. There has not been much scholarly work done on this story, especially as it relates to the containment of crip and queer bodies, and I look forward to reading more closely into one of Flannery O’Connor’s most compelling short stories.

At the beginning of the story, the unnamed girl prays with some students at her school, when she is called a Jew derogatorily, linking her ugliness to her religious belief. After the students finish singing one of their school hymns, one of the boys comments “‘that must be Jew singing’...The girls giggled idiotically but the child stamped her foot on the barrel...‘You big

dumb Church of God ox' she roared" (O'Connor 241). Since the unnamed girl practices Catholicism instead of 'Church of God' protestantism, the boys lump her in with those who practice Judaism as a source of the other. While this may appear strange, the preeminent religion practiced in the South is Protestantism, with many towns having an equally small number of Catholics and Jews. The lack of name for the protagonist of the story, the girl, further marks her with this deviance, as she does not even warrant humanity. The other girls, in this episode laughing at the joke that 'the girl's' Catholicism makes her Jewish, do not have names because they fade into the background of normalcy, rather than having any sort of bodily or character deviance. Miriam Burstein helps us to understand this when she writes "most Protestant denominations represented Roman Catholicism and Judaism as structurally and temperamentally identical," further arguing that this is one of the central tenets of Lutheranism (333). The girl, feeling her exclusion from the group, goes to sit with the cook, remarking "I ain't eating with them" (O'Connor 241). This forces the cook to ask the girl "howcome you be so ugly sometimes," demonstrating how the cook displaces the blame for the girl's exclusion from the mass of normalcy to some part of her, or more specifically her ugliness (242). In response to the child's reluctance to change her attitude towards Protestantism and those considered normal in the South, the cook declares that "God could strike you deaf, dumb, and blind...and then you wouldn't be as smart as you is" (242). In other words, the cook threatens 'the child' because she does not conform to the other children and their Protestantism, telling her that God will mark her body with her 'ugliness' of character unless she conforms to those around her. Thus, the cook concerns himself with how the child's actions could lead to her becoming physically disabled, or the reproduction of ugliness and deviance. The narrative acknowledges that the girl "did not steal or murder but she was a born liar and slothful and she sassed her mother and was deliberately

ugly to almost everybody. She was eaten up with the sin of Pride, the worst one” (243). The deviance the girl exhibits does not actually take the form of crime or harming others around her, but rather not conforming to the wishes of her family and mocking the religion of those around her, including the Baptist preacher that came to her school, as well as the pride that she effuses when she refuses to change (243). Furthermore, the narrative illustrates her deviance as genetic, as she is a ‘born liar,’ showing how negative traits are inherited. In all, the unnamed protagonist of the story has a societally constructed ugliness that others warn her not to reproduce into further ugliness and deviance, illustrating the desire for conformity among the normal mass of people in the story.

The protagonist only gains access to the knowledge of further deviance when she proves that she knows about the inner workings of reproduction in any context, nodding at the danger of the presence of deviance, revealing an underlying narrative about reproduction that masquerades as a story about different sects of Christianity. When the girl’s cousins come to visit her, they reveal that they visited the freak show in town, positing the knowledge that they gained from their visit as inappropriate for the girl to learn about. Susan and Joanne, the named cousins of the girl, visit and wake up the girl from her sleep after she prays until she falls asleep (244). In this act, they disrupt one of the few moments of purity the girl has to inform her about the acts at the freak show, a noticeably taboo and deviant subject. When the girl asks Joanne and Susan what they saw at the show, Joanne responds until Susan “nodded slightly at the child. ‘Little pitchers,’ she said in a low voice but the child heard it and her heart began to beat very fast” (244). The subject of the freak show is taboo, and Susan and Joanne do not want the child’s ‘little pitchers,’ or ears that overhear more than the speaker’s desire, to pick up on the taboo nature of their conversations about the freak show. Furthermore, the child’s heart beating quickly signals the

disapproved nature of the topic they speak about. When Susan and Joanne refuse to tell the child what they saw, specifically about the ‘you-know-what,’ the child tells them “one time...I saw this rabbit have rabbits” (245). In talking about reproduction in any context, the child “knew she had them” and refused to tell them about how she knew about the reproduction of rabbits until “they told about the ‘you-know-what’” (245). Thus, the girl gains access to the taboo world of freaks and specifically the gender-queer freak of the ‘you-know-what’ by demonstrating her taboo knowledge of reproduction in general, something that the general normal, such as the cook and her classmates, attempt to curtail. The girl and her cousins perform a trade of deviance, where they tell her about the gender-queer freak and she tells them what she knows about the reproduction of rabbits. Susan and Joanne then tell the girl about the ‘you-know-what,’ judging her taboo knowledge to be sufficient to gain access to more prohibited knowledge. Centrally, this story that seemingly is about religion and different sects of competing Christianity is about reproduction, where characters concern themselves with the reproduction of ugliness, freaks, and all that surrounds them.

The ‘You-Know-What’ reveals an active agency that they have in the containment of deviant bodies, as they repeatedly warn the crowd at the freak show not to depart from normal behavior unless those in the crowd want to become gender-queer. When describing the ‘you-know-what’ to the girl, Joanne and Susan describe the freak as gender-queer and nameless in its deviance. Susan and Joanne begin by telling the child “it had been a freak with a particular name but they couldn’t remember the name,” illustrating both the lack of humanity that the freak had and what the girls saw as the physical abnormalities are at the forefront instead of the freak’s personality or personal history (245). The girl further recollects the events of the freak show that her cousins told her, as a “tent where it was had been divided into two parts by a black curtain,

one side for men and one for women” (245). The space of the freak show itself codifies the gender binary, without the discussion of the ‘You-Know-What’ factoring in. Furthermore, “the girls heard the freak say to the men, ‘I’m going to show you this and if you laugh, God may strike you the same way’” (245). The freak warns that if the audience laughs, they too could be struck with gender-queerness, concerning I with behavior that deviates from the normal, and how that would reproduce into a body like their own. Interestingly, this creates a different of the agency that the ‘You-Know-What’ and Eula express as oppressed individuals in this story: the ‘You-Know-What’ actively contributes to curtailing deviance by warning the crowd that they should not laugh at their deformity, while Eula barely even reacts to the control of her body but does not participate in it.

This event could also be read as forcing acceptance to deviance to those who do not wish to grant that acceptance, as if the audience laughs, they would be stricken with gender-queerness themselves; however, this reading would discount how exploitative the space of the freak show is for its performers. The gender-queer freak can never experience true acceptance within the prism of the freak show, as the audience will always seek to compare themselves to the freak and contrast their relatively normal body to that of the performer. In the words of Rosemarie Garland-Thompson,

As in the social situations of domination and subordination based on race and gender, here too the differentiating stigmata literally took center stage, magnified and intensified, while the unmarked position of power, agency, and voice remained veiled. The freak simultaneously testified to the physical and ideological normalcy of the spectator and witness the implicit agreement assigning a coercive deviance to the spectacle. (62)

Garland-Thompson helps us understand that because the ‘social stigmata’ of the freak takes center stage, it continues to mask the power that the audience actually has over the freak and continues to assure the normalcy of those that view the freak by contrasting themselves to them.

Thus, the viewer can be sure that they will be included in the power of whiteness if they do not laugh at the freak, while the freak still exists as an important other to compare oneself to.

Importantly, the 'You-Know-What' is the first character I analyze in this project that does not have an obvious physical disability or bodily difference from those around them other than their gender queerness, revealing how freaks and deviance do not just operate as discourses that affect physically disabled individuals, but all of those with social stigmata. Thus, the 'you-know-what' still does not experience acceptance in this space, rather the space of the freak show serves to codify the gender binary and other the 'You-Know-What,' and the audience capitalizes on the social differences between themselves and the 'You-Know-What.'

The audience and pastors of the town demonstrate the fear of deviant reproduction when they participate in and then shut down the freak show, effectively stopping even the possibility that the reproduction of gender-queerness and freakdom could occur. When the girl asks Susan and Joanne if because the freak expressed both female and male body parts if that meant that the freak had two heads, Susan replies "it was a man and woman both. It pulled up its dress and showed us" (245). While we could read this as the freak being solely hermaphroditic, I argue that we should read the freak as also gender-queer as a form of deviance because the town's reaction to the 'You-Know-What' and the protagonist girl is not one of only fear surrounding different body parts, but one about the contrary nature and lack of compliance with a specific sect of Christianity. Furthermore, the fact that this freak would presumably have both male and female reproductive organs supports the argument that this story truly is about reproduction rather than about theological difference in the South. The 'You-Know-What' announces to the audience that "God done this to me and I praise Him," seemingly offering the idea that God creates and sanctions gender-queerness (246). However, while the freak believes that God created and

sanctioned them, they want to ensure that those in the audience do not become like them, saying “if anybody desecrates the temple of God, God will bring him to ruin and if you laugh, He may strike you thisaway. A temple of God is a holy thing” (246). As we know from analyzing the story through the lens of the child who is ridiculed for her Catholicism at the beginning of the story, ‘desecrating’ the temple of God and the society that these people live in means deviance from the normal. Furthermore, the ‘You-Know-What’ implies that gender queerness desecrates the temple of God, hinting that the only reason God sanctions them is because they help with curtailing deviance in the community. While the freak attempts to enforce normalcy, they still represent the possibility of deviant reproduction, and thus “some of the preachers from town gone out and inspected it and got the police to shut it down” (248). Thus, the ‘You-Know-What’, despite their best efforts to curtail the rise of deviance in the town, still has to be forcibly removed from the space of the town because of the deviance it represented and the possibility for reproduction of that deviance.

In all, “A Temple of the Holy Ghost” demonstrates how power keeps their spaces white and limits the reproduction of deviance. Taking the discussion past talking about mental incapacity as pathologization of sexual deviance, the power of whiteness targets a gender-queer freak to ensure their marginalization and lack of reproduction, playing into an ablenationalist sentiment where whiteness ensures a normalcy and able-bodiedness. The ‘You-Know-What’ attempts to have themselves fit into the morals of whiteness and Protestantism but falls short because they always experience exploitation through the prism of the freak show. This reading of O’Connor’s short story allows us to more thoroughly understand how reactions to gender queerness function as an arm of power and control, where the normal repeatedly uses different (both bodily and religious) to define themselves as the normal. Furthermore, this story fits within

how a discussion of eugenics functions as an arm of the power of whiteness because it ensures a reproduction of ‘normal’ bodies, having a society systematically marginalize those of subversive religions and genders.

Conclusion

In conclusion, the story of Eula Varner in Faulkner’s *The Hamlet* and Flannery O’Connor’s “A Temple of a Holy Ghost” give us further insight into how the power of eugenics and control over reproduction functioned in the space of the South during the 1930s into the early 1950s. Beginning this chapter, I asked the question of why white women had a higher likelihood of being a victim of forced sterilization than black women during this time period in the South. In part, I believe the answer has to do with protection of power and who elites saw as a threat to their power. Indeed, in *The Hamlet*, Jody Varner worries about his sister’s “feeble-minded” or “moronic” sexual activity because of the threat it has to his own name and the power he would be able to project, rather than any concern for his sister. More broadly, in “A Temple of a Holy Ghost,” both ‘the child’ and the ‘you-know-what’ reveal how ugliness can reproduce even among phenotypically white individuals if one is not careful with their morality, which would dilute the moral supremacy that the power of whiteness espouses. Thus, the warning that the freak gives in “A Temple of a Holy Ghost” has less to do with breaking the will of God, but rather with reproducing in a manner that would reproduce queerness, ugliness, and other pathologizations among whiteness.

Thus, while the answer to the functioning of power in Chapter 1 comes, primarily, from those at the margins of whiteness attempting to consolidate what power they had by pushing disability and other identities even further to the margins, in this chapter power emanates directly from the center to keep whiteness as pure as possible. Using disability theory, queer studies, and

critical race theory when examining these texts becomes particularly important because the power of whiteness exerts its control over reproduction by limiting many identities, and allowing for only one true normal. In all, recalling cultural critic Richard Dyer, the reason the project of whiteness studies exists is “because it is not seen as whiteness, but as normal. White people need to learn to see themselves as white, to see their particularity” (10). With the readings in this chapter, we can see how whiteness actively attempts to maintain the distinction of the normal through eugenic practices and control of reproduction for “deviant” individuals.

Chapter 3: “The Past Is Never Dead. It’s Not Even Past:” Crip Time, Rhetorical Agency, and Trauma in Faulkner’s *The Sound and the Fury*

In Faulkner’s *The Sound and the Fury*, Benjy Compson performs mental disability to the other characters around him. He grunts and wails to communicate with his family and servants around him. In Benjy’s section of the novel, we see the world through his eyes, jumping from April 7th, 1928, present day within the novel, and his memories, including funerals, weddings, and multiple encounters with his siblings as he grows. These jumps occur without warning in the narrative, making the plot of the first section of *The Sound and the Fury* infamously difficult to follow. In this chapter, I ask why this narrative is structured in such a burdensome manner for the reader, what that accomplishes rhetorically for Benjy, and what that reveals about Benjy as a character. By understanding these crucial overlapping questions, I believe we can gain new understanding of how Benjy resists the compulsory able-bodied and white supremacist powers prevalent in the narrative, and how those powers respond to ensure normalcy.

As a term, rhetoric needs to be specifically defined before analyzing how it functions. Most generally, rhetoric is the study of how people use language in their writing and speaking, and is often linked to see how people create and maintain social groups. For the purposes of this chapter, I will be looking at how Benjy’s rhetoric affects his agency in social communications. In this chapter, I examine how Benjy’s spoken language compares to that of his family and his surroundings and what that reveals about the power of the social groups around him. In their book *Whiteness: The Communication of Social Identity*, Judith Martin and Thomas Nakayama argue that whiteness primarily persists as a communication phenomenon. The authors note in particular how Black contributions to labor movements and suffrage movements were written out of history until recently, contributing to discourses of race-blindness, in turn benefitting continuation of whiteness as normal (13). Thus, “normal” rhetoric will overlap with white

rhetoric, as whiteness, as a politics of normalcy, has controlled how rhetoric and agency functions.

Katherine Prendergast debates how mental disability impacts one's ability to create rhetoric more generally. In her essay "On the Rhetorics of Mental Disability," Prendergast writes that "I've noticed that if I mention mental illness in the company of many colleagues, I become suddenly culturally unintelligible," seemingly echoing how many readers comment on Benjy's language and storytelling as unintelligible in his section (Prendergast 46). In another essay, Prendergast concludes that to be mentally disabled is to be excluded and disabled rhetorically--placing disabled in a "rhetorical black hole" (191). Interestingly, many will remark on the seeming unintelligible nature of Benjy when they first encounter him, and then make no further attempt to dive into his character like they do into the rhetorically deeper characters of Jason or Quinten. Indeed, when critic James Berger writes about Benjy, he writes that "the language of Benjy is not at all some supposed inner language of a cognitively impaired person. It is the language of literary Modernism" (Berger 83). Instead of counting Benjy as a real character produced from the time of the South as many consider Jason Compson and other Faulkner characters, critics continually disregard Benjy's mental disability as part of a modernist aesthetic.

Critics such as Maria Truchan-Tataryn disregard Benjy's intellectual disability in a different way, commenting how Benjy makes a poor representation of an intellectually disabled person because of his grasp of the English language. Truchan-Tataryn argues that the rhetoric employed by Benjy could not possibly originate from a cognitively impaired person themselves, writing that academia's acceptance of Benjy's idiocy reveals "an underlying ableism in the literary critical endeavor and an academic acquiescence to the dated socio-cultural constructions of disability" (Truchan-Tataryn 160). While Truchan-Tataryn calls the work done before her on

Benjy that discusses his mental disability “textual abuse,” she roots herself in ableist thinking about the communicative abilities of mentally disabled individuals, believing that mentally disabled individuals cannot totally grasp and espouse their own language (161). Instead, we should be looking to how the differences in rhetorical choices between Benjy and the other characters in the novel can enlighten us towards other ways of being human and experiencing humanity.

Faulkner studies critic Taylor Hagood goes even further with this idea, writing that “the first eight paragraphs [of Benjy’s narration] give us what is, in terms of formatting, a very traditional narrative. The paragraphs are organized logically and organically. The dialogue is set apart in quotes. No words are misspelled” (Hagood 95). It is important to note what is marked as cognitive impairment or intellectual disability by these critics, such as misspelled words and the narrator being unable to distinguish between outer and inner dialogue. By discussing intellectual disability in this way, many critics unintentionally only grant legitimacy to intellectual disabled individuals who cannot imitate any form of language, an untrue and vastly othering summation of how mental disability functions. In short, since Benjy contains *any* rhetorical agency in his section, making decisions about what stories to tell and when, these critics have deemed that he could not possibly be intellectually disabled, in the process erasing the possibility for any cognitive and rhetorical agency when it comes to mental impairment. Differently, Michael Bérubé, in his book *The Secret Life of Stories: From Don Quixote to Harry Potter, How Understanding Intellectual Disability Transforms the Way We Read*, argues that Benjy’s narration functions as a vessel for a larger religious revelation for Dilsey, rather than having any power or rhetorical agency in his own right (115). While I do not necessarily disagree with this claim, it still relegates Benjy as a second-class character not worthy of analysis himself. Bérubé

puts it himself quite nicely when talking about the need to discuss intellectual disability, when he writes “it is all the more urgently important then—not in spite of these ideological limitations but precisely because of them—to find in fictional modes of intellectual disability a way of imagining other ways of being human that transcend the limitation of our own space and time” (116). Thus, when analyzing mental disability as critics, we should try and find new ways of being human, rather than seeing impairment as serving as a vessel for other meanings or judging it as not authentic enough.

Lacking rhetorical agency may not seem overly oppressive compared to some of the other rights discussed in this project, but like other rights, it is granted from a “normal” body and mind onto others. In Margaret Price’s *Mad at School: Rhetorics of Mental Disability and Academic Life*, she explains the impact that not being granted rhetorical agency can have. Indeed, she writes that liberal humanists, because of disability rights activists, make arguments for basic rights for those with mobility and sensory impairments, but that the “system breaks down” when it comes to mental disability often because of a lack of relatability (Price 27). This echoes how critics often analyze Benjy as beyond or other than his intellectual disability because his chapter is either not authentic enough or too difficult to ascertain meaning from. This results in a lack of advocacy that often culminates in an absence of basic human freedoms and rights, as can be seen as Benjy attempts to navigate the world getting beaten and regularly threatened with either bodily harm or institutionalization. Thus, the trend of treating Benjy as a cognitively impaired character and as a symbol being mutually exclusive becomes concerning: it follows a trend where cognitively impaired individuals are regularly stripped of their rights because of what can be understood as rhetoric. Prendergast puts it quite directly when she writes that “if people think you’re crazy, they won’t listen to you” (Prendergast 57). Benjy is not listened to in

this chapter as he repeatedly is said to be something else, whether that be the face of modernism or as Hagood suggests “a spokesperson for empowered whiteness” (Hagood 99).

One way to potentially recover some of the rhetorical agency in Benjy’s section, and discover new ways of being human when analyzing intellectual disability, is to look at how the concept of crip time functions. As Allison Kafer explains in *Feminist, Queer, Crip*, crip time emerged as an almost inside joke among disability activists, who had their disability related events always start late or had some of their disabled attendants never arrive on time (Kafer 26). However, Kafer outlines how crip time has come to define “ableist barriers over which one has little to no control” (26). In other words, a disabled individual may encounter steps, a curb cut that still has snow inches high, or an elevator that has broken, causing them to be late on their way to a meeting with their boss or advisor. Thus, crip time becomes a recognition of how disabled people could need more time in order to accomplish a task (such as time and a half on tests) or arrive somewhere. Moreover, crip time has developed past this in scholarly spaces as a “reorientation to time” (27). Indeed, Kafer explains that “crip time is flex time not just expanded but exploded; it requires reimagining our notions of what can and should happen in time, or recognizing how expectations of ‘how long things take’ are based on very particular minds and bodies” (27). Thus, crip time is not just the recognition that some people need “more” time, but also a challenge to how linear time works best for a select few minds and bodies. In all, Kafer writes that rather than “bend disabled bodies and minds to meet the clock, crip time bends the clock to meet disabled bodies and minds” (27).

Crip time and trauma intersect because traumatized individuals often experience memories that have occurred in the “past” repeatedly as part of their trauma. In her book *Unclaimed Experience: Trauma, Narrative, and History*, Cathy Caruth loosely defines trauma as

“the response to an unexpected or overwhelming violent event or events that are not fully grasped as they occur, but return later in repeated flashbacks, nightmares, and other repetitive phenomena” (Caruth 91). Crip time helps us understand this point of trauma, as the disability of trauma ‘bends’ the clock to meet the traumatized body of the individual experiencing the traumatic episode rather than progressing linearly. Jennifer Marschisotto, in her chapter in *Sex, Identity and Aesthetics*, writes that “in the context of trauma, crip time bends the clock as memories of the past event(s) uncontrollably and often unexpectedly surface, forcibly interrupting the normative progression of time,” referencing how Kafer uses the bending of the clock in her own intersection between crip time and trauma (Marschisotto 60). Ellen Samuels, in her personal essay “Six Ways of Looking at Crip Time ” writes that “crip time is time travel. Disability and illness have the power to extract us from linear, progressive time with its normative life stages and cast us into a wormhole of backward and forward acceleration, jerky stops and starts, tedious intervals and abrupt endings” (Samuels 1). Samuels furthers that “grief time is crip time,” writing that when she experiences grief, “the days slowed and swelled unbearably” (Samuels 2). In other words, trauma distorts time, not only making traumatic events resurface unexpectedly, but also slowing the time and making the days when trauma is experienced seem more significant.

Trauma can often reorient our understanding of history, changing our reference points.

Caruth extensively analyzes this point, writing

I would propose that it is here, in the equally widespread and bewildering encounter with trauma—both its occurrence and in the attempt to understand it—that we can begin to recognize the possibility of a history that is no longer straightforwardly referential...Through the notion of trauma, I will argue, we can understand that a rethinking of reference is aimed not at eliminating history but at resituating it in our understanding. (Caruth 11)

Thus, not only does trauma distort time, but can also distort our histories, or accounts of time. In order to understand the progression of time properly then, Caruth contends that we need to understand how trauma functions as a reference point within our personal histories, which would change our relationship to time.

Angela Carter, writing about trauma and disability, notes that trauma can change the neurological makeup of the individual who experiences it, and can even be genetically transmitted onto the next generation (Carter, DSQS). Thus, Carter, in linking disability and trauma, does not seek to “further marginalize the marginalized, but rather draw attention to the intersecting forces of white supremacy and ableism” (Carter, DSQS). Similarly looking at how this trauma may be racialized in the text, Hagood does note how Benjy is referred to as a “bluegum” by Versh, a derogatory term to describe a Black individual (Hagood 92). Hagood notes how this “crossing over into African American spaces...testifies to the fact that he ‘belongs’ in the marginal space of the other” (92). Continuing on previous chapters, I argue that not only does this descriptor of Benjy signal that disability and Blackness share a marginal position outside of the normal, but that Benjy’s cognitive impairment pushes him further away from the power of whiteness and normalcy.

Marschisotto’s term of “crip rhetoric” becomes quite useful at this time, when she argues that crips “resist or even refuse articulate representation” (Marschisotto 64). Using the framework of complex embodiment, she furthers “these experiences bend rhetoric to accommodate their own representation” (64). I argue that when we look at the character of Benjy through the intersection of crip time and trauma, we are able to regain some of his crip rhetoric, which resists the compulsory able-bodied and white supremacist rhetoric employed by Jason Compson. Furthermore, by analyzing the potential for trauma present within Benjy’s narration,

we can see how anti-Blackness and white supremacy further function as discourses of power, pushing individuals they traumatize from the normal. Indeed, Jason, at the end of the novel, violently takes control of the reins of the carriage, restoring and reorienting normalcy despite Benjy's resistance to the power of whiteness.

Looking at the first paragraph of the narration done by Benjy yields dividends when analyzing his narration, revealing the intersection of his cognitive impairment and trauma. In the opening passage, Faulkner writes,

Through the fence, between the curling flower spaces, I could see them hitting. They were coming toward where the flag was and I went along the fence. Luster was hunting in the grass by the flower tree. They took the flag out, and they were hitting. Then they put the flag back and they went to the table, and he hit and the other hit. Then they went on, and I went along the fence. Luster came away from the flower tree and we went along the fence and they stopped and we stopped and I looked through the fence while Luster was hunting in the grass.

‘Here, caddie.’ He hit. They went away across the pasture. I held to the fence and watched them going away. (Faulkner 3)

In this paragraph, there are not only hints of future themes of the section, such as repeated mentions of flowers, the fence along the Compson property, and the rather wry reference to a golf caddie, but we also receive a hint of the trauma Benjy suffers. Indeed, in this opening paragraph Benjy utilizes noticeably violent language such as ‘hitting’ multiple times and ‘hunting,’ along with recounting how the players use his sister’s nickname, Caddy. Furthermore, while in this opening passage we do not encounter the leaps in time that come rapidly later in the section, we do get a sense of a rambling narrator, with multiple run on sentences and a very unclear picture of the events actually occurring (many people miss that this is about golf the first time they read this). Immediately after this passage, Luster says “listen at you, now...ain’t you something, thirty-three years old, going on that way...Hush up that moaning” (3). Thus, countering the argument of Hagood, we actually receive our first indicator of cognitive and

mental impairment well before the end of the eighth paragraph but rather in the third, when Luster comments on Benjy's groan. Benjy's groan, or his attempt to communicate with the outside world when he cannot speak through his narrative, is dismissed as whining by Luster. This dismissal by Luster is the first time we witness the stripping of Benjy's rhetoricity in the text, beginning a trend where characters attempt to speak for his moans. However, as readers of his narrative, we know that he has conscious and affective thoughts about the events of the day. In all, the opening passage of Benjy's narrative illustrates how he has trauma as a cognitively impaired and disabled individual.

The first occurrence of crip time travel within Benjy's narration occurs within the first couple of pages, where he gets caught on the fence, reminding him of when he similarly got caught on a fence with Caddy, exposing how crip time can force a sort of time travel within the narrative where Benjy will forcefully get pulled into another time by a traumatic memory. After Luster warns Benjy to wait because he had been caught on a nail in the fence, Benjy transports us through time;

Caddy uncaught me and we crawled through. Uncle Maury said to not let anybody see us, so we better stoop over, Caddy said. Stoop over, Benjy. Like this, see, We stooped over and crossed the garden where the flowers rasped and rattled against us. The ground was hard. We climbed the fence, where the pigs were grunting and snuffing. I expect they're sorry one of them got killed today, Caddy said. (4, italics included).

In this passage, we are introduced to characters we have never encountered before, leading us to believe that we are now in a new time, but the same place. Indeed, in this passage Caddy demonstrates to Benjy how to crawl through the fence that surrounds the Compson property without getting caught in the nail. In the narrative, this memory is recalled immediately after he gets caught looking for a quarter with Luster, making his brain associate the memory that he made with Caddy years before. Marschisotto can help us understand this when she writes that

“histories of trauma and mental disability become recognizable as they are told through the simultaneous integration of past and present, maintained through networks of affective association” (Marschisotto 60). Thus, as Benjy felt a surge of feeling after thinking he heard Caddy’s name on the golf course, he associates the nearest memory that he can with her, getting caught on the fence. We as readers are taken along for the ride in this crip time travel in the narration as Benjy associates events that happen on certain days with events that happen on others, forcing time travel in the narrative.

Benjy’s method of occupying time and space within the world makes him vulnerable to further violence as an already traumatized individual, as his mother cannot cope with having a mentally disabled son, forcing Benjy into spaces of the home outside of the power of whiteness. After Benjy and Caddy come back inside from encountering the fence, people around the living room try to guess what Benjy’s moans mean. When Versh says that he wants to go outside and Uncle Maury wants to let Benjy go, his mother intervenes and says that it is too cold for him and Caddy to go outside (Faulkner 5). She then says to Benjy “if you dont be good, you’ll have to go to the kitchen” (5). Mirroring how Versh later refers to Benjy as a ‘bluegum,’ his mother not only seeks to push his mental disability out of sight when she is directly encountered with it, but actively attempts to push him into the Black spaces in the home. After Benjy’s mother threatens him with sending him to the kitchen, Versh responds that Dilsey wants to “keep him out the kitchen today,” indicating that she and the other Black characters in the novel do most of, if not all of the cooking (5). Thus, because of his mental disability, Benjy loses his access to the power of whiteness, getting called ethnic slurs and pushed into Black spaces. Later in the conversation, when she and Uncle Maury discuss Benjy’s condition, Benjy’s mother says “it’s a judgment on me. I sometimes wonder,” indicating how she views Benjy’s moaning as perhaps a religious

punishment for her actions (5). Benjy takes us back to this time because he cannot control how the memory arrives in his head after getting caught in the fence, as it triggers this time in his life. However, this narrative time travel reveals to us the trauma that Benjy undergoes within his family, with his mother and uncle discussing how he functions as a punishment and looking for ways to get rid of him right in front of him.

Benjy overlaps cognitive impairment, crip time, and crip rhetoric when he encounters physically traumatic events, revealing his life through a string of beatings that seem as though they happen all at once. Back on April 7th, 1928, Luster discusses his desire to attend the fair with another member of the Black servant class. After the unnamed person asks Luster what he will do, if while looking after Benjy he begins to moan, Luster “came and caught my arm. ‘You old looney.’ he said. ‘You want me to whip you’” (17). The confirmation of the repeated trauma that Benjy suffers resurfaces another memory in his brain of spending time with Caddy and Quinten. After Luster directs Benjy to get in the water and play, Benjy indicates another incident of time travel in the narration, briefly switching to italics before changing back to normal text, writing “*It’s not supper time yet. I’m not going. She was wet*” (17). The italics, spoken by Caddy, become a signal for the readers about the switch in time. Versh warns Caddy that “you know [your mother] whip you when you get your dress wet” (18). Even though this memory does not relate directly to Benjy getting whipped (like the original one that triggers it), it relates to another deeply traumatic experience for Benjy; Caddy leaving home. After Quinten mentions that because both he and Caddy are wet, their mother will just whip them both, Caddy responds “I’ll run away and never come back,” to which Benjy begins to cry (19). The presence of physical violence triggers other traumatic events for Benjy, revealing a further intersection between the study of trauma and disability studies, and allows us to see how bodies change and

are damaged as they go through life. Multiple times throughout the narration, physical violence informs Benjy's perception of the progression of time, whether memories force their way into his consciousness while he watches others get beaten or Benjy himself undergoes a physical trauma. Indeed, when Benjy spends time in the kitchen with Dilsey and Luster, he says "I could still hear the clock between my voice. Dilsey reached back and hit Luster on the head. My voice was going loud every time" (59). Thus, Benjy connects the violence that he witnesses with the clock, showing how time factors in with the incidences of physical trauma that he encounters. Importantly, Benjy connects his own voice, what other characters would hear as a moan, to this violence as well, informing us of the idea of his "crip rhetoric" where he will attempt to express himself in the face of violence, despite the lack of understanding that others have.

The initial trauma that Benjy experiences is Caddy's absence from his adult life, and it continues to serve as a reference point for other traumatic events in his life, reorienting his relationship to time. As the only person who treats Benjy with humanity and decency, Benjy becomes deeply emotionally attached to Caddy, mourning her absence from his adult life throughout his narration, repeatedly flashing back to different memories that center Caddy. Indeed, when Benjy encounters Caddy in a wedding dress, he narrates "Caddy put her arms around me, and her shining veil, and I couldn't smell trees anymore, and I began to cry" (40). After this, Benjy time travels to when Caddy dresses up in a wedding dress, playing pretend, also wailing at this prospect. When he runs away from this version of Caddy, she follows and says "Why, Benjy...she put her arms around me. 'Did you find Caddy again.' she said. 'Did you think Caddy had run away.' Caddy smelled like trees" (42). The return of the smelling of trees symbolizes the return of Caddy. Caddy's wedding exists as such a traumatic memory in Benjy's

mind, marking the instance where she leaves him, that he time travels to a time where she dresses up as a fantasy and promises him that he will not escape.

Caddy, because of her understanding of Benjy's language despite others unwillingness to attend to him, demonstrates how crip rhetoric demands a rethinking of language through a different aesthetic representation of trauma. After this, Caddy attempts to calm Benjy by making him smell her perfume, which presumably smells like trees, and she comes to realize "that was it. And you were trying to tell Caddy and you couldn't tell her. You wanted to, but you couldn't, could you" (42). In this action, Caddy grants Benjy rhetoricity in his actions, attempting to discover what he signifies when he speaks rather than dismissing the moans as incoherent. In this instance, the traumatic memory of Caddy having her wedding and leaving the Compson household does not trigger a traumatic memory itself, instead triggering a memory where Benjy spends time with Caddy and is taken seriously. Thus, crip temporality does not always have to be traumatic, but can also resist linear, progressive temporalities in order to attend to happier memories.

In a different set of memories, Benjy stumbles upon Caddy having sex with her boyfriend, which triggers an episode of moaning in him. Caddy's boyfriend attempts to both silence and ignore Benjy by continuing to have sex with Caddy, refusing to recognize Benjy's rhetorical or individual agency. Her boyfriend, Charlie, decides that because Benjy cannot talk that they should keep going in front of him even though the action clearly upsets him. "Call that ni***r.' Charlie said. 'What do they let him run around loose for'" (47). Charlie attempts to restrict Benjy's freedom of movement by utilizing rhetoric that would refer to a dog or animal of some kind, questioning why they can freely move around. Charlie once again insists that Caddy "call that ni***r," directly labeling Benjy with a racial slur, and elucidating his belief that Benjy

deserves to spend time in Black spaces because of his cognitive disability. After Caddy asks Charlie to go away, he responds “he cant talk,” stripping the moans and cries that he hears from Benjy of meaning or importance, and thus rhetoric (47). Once Charlie begins to force himself on her, Charlie demands that she “send him away,” a common euphemism for sending Benjy to Jackson to a mental asylum where he would further be stripped of his rights (47). Charlie strips Benjy of his ability to speak and have desires in this scene, not even mentioning and analyzing how he forces himself upon Caddy.

This traumatic incident of being stripped of rhetoricity seems to trigger another incident in the text where Luster utilizes Benjy’s mental disability in order to strip him of his rhetoric when Luster and Benjy cross paths with Little Quinten and her boyfriend also having sex. When Little Quinten expresses anger that Luster does not keep Benjy away from that scene, Luster replies “He can’t tell what you saying...he deaf and dumb...been that way thirty three years today...born looney” (49). In other words, Luster does not see an issue with Benjy witnessing the sexual acts of his niece because he was ‘born looney,’ dismissing Benjy’s cries as equally crazy. Thus, while these scenes initially appear to be traumatic encounters with female members of the family having sex, they also traumatize Benjy because they take away his ability to have agency as an individual. Thus, these instances of crip time travel occur because of both the traumatic experiences of individuals who are the nicest to Benjy engaging in acts that would lead to them leaving Benjy, but also because people constantly refuse to engage with Benjy’s individual agency.

Benjy further experiences crip time travel when he attempts to chase after girls who he thinks are Caddy beyond the fence of the Compson family’s property, but are actually the

children of Mr. Burgess, revealing Benjy's underlying desire for freedom and love. Indeed, going along the gate to the Compson property, Benjy narrates

I went along the fence, to the gate, where the girls passed with their booksatchels. "You, Benjy." Luster said. "Come back here." *You cant do no good looking through the gate, T.P. said. Miss Caddy done gone long ways away. Done got married and left you. You cant do no good, holding to the gate and crying. She can't hear you.* (51)

Benjy experiences crip time travel in this episode, repeatedly getting stuck at the gate and wanting to escape to the outside world. While traditionally these scenes are read as a pining after Caddy, I want to suggest that the language Benjy uses contains more than that. Caddy, as the only character that takes Benjy's rhetoric in the narration as signifying meaning would symbolize a type of freedom for Benjy. Thus, beyond the gates would also signify the space of freedom where he can have meaning, and thus he pines for that meaning, not necessarily for Caddy herself. After time traveling back to the first non-italicized memory, we learn that Benjy chases the girls with the booksatchels as his father asks Jason if he left the gate open to which Jason replies,

Of course not...Don't you know I've got better sense than to do that. Do you think I wanted anything like this to happen. This family is bad enough, God knows. I could have told you, all the time. I reckon you'll send him to Jackson, now. If Mr Burgess dont shoot him first. (52)

As Benjy escapes and chases the girls who get off the bus, he scares them, but also reveals that the Compsons have a family shame to be revealed about the destruction of the power of whiteness, as I will analyze when discussing Jason. Indeed, in attempting to project power as a family, they keep Benjy penned in, knowing that the Compson family 'is bad enough,' and getting worse with the decline of each passing generation. Jason lastly mentions Jackson, a mental institution infamous for castration and stripping a totality of rights. Discussing these extreme measures directly in front of Benjy reveals how they strip him of freedom, but also of

the rhetorical agency to respond, degrading his wails as meaningless noises devoid of understanding. Benjy, in return, experiences a time travel to experience that day repeatedly when his family beats and discusses taking him away just for attempting an escape at freedom.

The Compson family changes Benjy's name from his uncle's name of Maury to Benjamin, revealing their attempt to remove him from the power inherent in a family name, and thus the power of their whiteness. All of the mentions of Benjy's name change come within ten pages, suggesting that Benjy felt traumatized about the name change removing him from the power of whiteness and making him more common. Indeed, Benjy narrates "*your name is Benjy, Caddy said. Do you hear. Benjy. Benjy*" (61). Changing his name from Maury changes his power to be taken seriously as someone who speaks and writes, containing less power than the rest of his family now that he does not have a family name. Versh comments on this phenomenon, saying "*Your name Benjamin now. You know how come your name Benjamin now. They making a bluegum out of you. Mammy say in old time your granpaw changed ni***r's name, and he turn preacher, and when they look at him, he bluegum too*" (69). Versh notices how Benjy's renaming follows a tradition of renaming slaves, racing Benjy as other than white, even using a racial slur to describe blackness. While Hagood correctly notes how this move by the Compson's intends to remove Benjy from the power of whiteness, he concludes that Benjy operates as a spokesperson for that whiteness (Hagood 97). I suggest that Benjy becomes so far removed from the center of power that he cannot operate as a spokesperson for that whiteness, and rather that his brother Jason operates as the spokesperson for whiteness and white supremacy within the narrative. This removal from whiteness has even removed Benjy's ability to perform rhetoric that is taken seriously. Richard Dyer, discussing the political power of whiteness has such influence "because it is not seen as whiteness, but as normal. White people need to learn to

see themselves as white, to see their particularity” (Dyer 10). In other words, Benjy strays from the normal, cannot inhabit the power of whiteness, forcing a name change that signals Benjy’s departure from his rhetorical agency and power. Furthermore, Benjy’s mother, when Caddy insists on calling Benjy the shortened nickname instead of Benjamin, reacts that “nicknames are vulgar. Only common people use them” (Faulkner 64). Thus, Benjy’s name not only races him as not white or other than the power of whiteness, referencing the recognizable instance of powerful white families renaming slaves, but also changes him to a common individual, making his class lower.

In his section, Benjy resists the rhetoric employed by his family, often utilizing crip time and rhetoric to tell his story. Despite his family’s insistence of removing him from power, he reclaims some of it by telling his story. The fact that this narration is often dismissed as either contrived or incoherent not only by the other characters in the novel, but also by critics of Faulkner illustrates the power of compulsory able-bodiedness and white supremacy. Indeed, Benjy, as I’ll explore further, resists the white supremacist choices that his family makes, only repeating slurs and other language when repeating what others said. In exploring his narrative through his trauma, we can rediscover the rhetoric that Benjy attempts to use, and grant him some power that he desperately needs and desires. Discovering how Benjy utilizes crip time travel elucidates how we can read other traumatized characters who seemingly have little power.

Benjy’s father and brother Jason both regularly apply white supremacist rhetoric to their lives, worrying about the changing landscape and how it affects their bloodlines and the different types of people they have to do business with. While Jason Compson III does not feature much in *The Sound and the Fury* (he dies of alcoholism in 1912, technically before the start of the narrative), he does appear in Benjy’s time travel. Talking to Mrs. Compson, he says “I admire

Maury. He is invaluable to my own sense of racial superiority. I wouldn't swap Maury for a matched team" (43). Importantly, Jason Compson III's speech includes the proper apostrophe in the contraction, denoting how his rhetoric is proper, contrasting to Benjy who omits the apostrophes in his contractions. Furthermore, Jason removes Maury from the power of whiteness even more explicitly than what they do for Benjy, saying that Maury makes him feel more superior, suggesting a dynamic where the Compsons, as former slave and plantation owners, have power over other whites who do not have the same political power to make decisions over inclusion. Often, these inclusions and exclusions were based from where one descends, leading to suspicions among Southern elites about purity of blood and marrying below class, even referring to Maury, the brother of Mrs. Compson, as "afflicted" on more than one occasion, mirroring the analysis of white trash that I did last chapter (224). Mrs. Compson defends herself and her family saying, "my people are every bit as well born as yours," illustrating how even phenotypically white people need to defend their inclusion in the political decision-making process (44). Thus, when Benjy is born with intellectual disability and is seemingly unable to communicate with others, Jason Compson III may link his disdain for his wife's family genetically to what happened to Benjy, explaining why his white supremacist rhetoric would appear in Benjy's crip time travel.

Similarly, Jason IV fears the development of industry as it relates to his loss of power and thus wishes to reinsert different ideas of whiteness that would stratify binaries of power. Indeed, Jason remembers the fairs that used to come into town and how they would "call us all a bunch of hicks and think it's too small to hold them," resenting that people from such a low form of entertainment could mock his home to such a degree (243). Jason, by the end of his narration, seems to bemoan the loss of power that his family has suffered with the loss of significance of

Southern agriculture. He even narrates “like I say if all the businesses in a town are run like country businesses, you’re going to have a country town,” indicating how country towns have less economic potential than their urban and Northern counterparts (248). As the United States becomes increasingly less agrarian, Jason feels as though he loses his agency to exert his power, degrading his town and seeing his profile decrease in the eyes of others. From this, he feels the need to constrict who can have a political stake in the future of the South, leading to racialized and white supremacist beliefs.

Jason Compson IV holds similarly racialized beliefs to his father, often ranting against Jews and racial minorities in his section of the narration. Indeed, after a day where he loses most of his money, Jason IV narrates that the telegram company that he attempts to trade with is “hand in glove with that New York crowd. Anybody could see that” (227). While certainly not the most explicit antisemitic reference Jason makes to the racialized conspiracy that Jews have control over the economy, the reference still has power when he and other descendants of plantation owners resist change and attempt to narrowly define inclusion in the South. Indeed, Jason explicitly buys into the racialized exclusion of the South, revealing his beliefs in the illuminating end to his narration;

But that would have been too simple for a Compson to think of. Not half complex enough. Having to wait to do it at all until he broke out and tried to run a little girl down on the street with her own father looking at him. Well, like I say they never started soon enough with their cutting, and they quit too quick. I know at least two more needed something like that, and one of them not over a mile away, either...Like I say once a bitch always a bitch. And just let me have twenty-four hours with any dam New York jew to advise me what it’s going to do...And once I’ve done that they can bring all Beale street and all bedlam in here and two of them can sleep in my bed and another one can have my place at the table too. (264)

Jason, thinking about the level of forethought that went into how his family handled Benjy, comments that they overthink the decision, indicating that they should instead have reverted to

castrating Benjy and more people like him. His comments reveal an interesting biopolitical truth about the South during this time period from those who had a lot of political control during the eras of slavery and while dismantling reconstruction, but see their power dwindle because of new influxes of immigration and industrialization which make their segments of the economy less prevalent. Indeed, Faulkner reveals through the characters of Jason Compson III and IV how Southern white elites wish they restricted the power they had further when they had the chance, as Jason wishes they ‘cut’ sooner and never stopped, revealing his eugenic beliefs. As covered in previous chapters, not only does this belief extend to disabled populations of the South, limiting crip futures, but pathologizations of lower-class promiscuity and any non-white behavior that they could limit through birth-control, leading us back to the term of ablenationalism to define the political space of the South. Not only this, but Jason explicitly references how he believes the Northern Jewish population controls the economy that his investments have failed in, revealing an intersection between ablenationalism and antisemitic behavior, even suggesting there could be an overlap between how the two discriminations function. Thus, Jason further reveals how the biopolitics of the South illustrate a form of ablenationalism, wherein inclusion in the political power of the region is defined by pathologies and abilities. Benjy, as a character in this space of rampant discrimination, experiences a traumatic lack of rhetorical agency, forcing him into situations where he time travels to preserve his crip rhetoric against the white supremacist rhetoric espoused by others.

At the end of the novel, Jason IV violently takes control of the family carriage, seemingly reorienting time, suggesting how his assertion of white power violently excludes other characters from the political space he creates. Jason, after seeing that Benjy had once again left the family property with Luster releases “a backhanded blow,” tossing “Luster aside and [catching] the

reins” (320). In the act of taking control of the carriage, Jason controls the narrative as well, forcing its end. However, before its end, the narrative comments that on the ride home in the carriage Benjy’s “eyes were empty and blue and serene again as cornice and façade flowed smoothly once more from left to right, post and tree, window and doorway and signboard each in its ordered place” (321). In other words, the last violent act that Jason does puts the town in ‘its ordered place,’ illustrating his maintenance of power and whiteness. Furthermore, the emptiness of Benjy’s eyes elucidates how he does not experience liberation at the end of the narrative, but rather is stripped totally of meaning and rhetorical agency by the end of the novel, closing on the possibility for him to experience more *crip time travel*. In all, Jason’s final act of taking control of the carriage reveals how the maintenance of power limits the ability for other forms of time to take hold, basing the narrative from this point forward in linearity and whiteness.

In conclusion, as Jason attempts to tighten his control over the changing dynamics of the South, Benjy and others employ subtly resistant tactics. Jason and other Compsons besides Caddy seek to strip Benjy and other groups of people not included in the able-bodied, rich, white nation they have created of their ability to have rhetoric, forcing their white supremacist and bloodline ideas upon the text. However, *crip theory*, *critical trauma studies*, and *whiteness studies*, allows us to recover some of the rhetoric employed by the seemingly powerless characters in the text. This form of analysis, while not completely forgoing the possibility of the cultural production of disability, allows us to locate wounds we have in our bodies that give us further agency. Indeed, Daniel Morrison and Monica Casper write that in many works of disability studies “wounds, impairment, and pain are erased, and in many framings, the object of analysis is an individual being, whose now-disabled body is socially constructed, and whose agency is posited as being in struggle and resistance against normative culture” (Morrison and

Casper, DSSQ). While I certainly believe that some agency for disabled people exists in fighting against 'normative culture,' defined here in this project as whiteness, I believe that we should not totally distance ourselves from the pain inherent to our bodies. Allowing ourselves to exist in that gray space where we demand more rights politically, fighting back against normative culture, and allowing ourselves to recognize our own impairment remains important. Even when writing about literary characters such as Benjy, who are forced to rhetorically struggle against the politics of normalcy and whiteness, we should not wholly dismiss as disabled merely because of cultural production. Benjy's use of crip time travel in his rhetoric, resisting the same white supremacist, sexuality conforming, and eugenic practices that his family uses because of the cognitive impairment that he possesses does, despite increasing his agency, not guarantee him liberation, as Jason ensures at the end of the narrative. In all, the ablenationalist tendencies of the South are still prevalent in Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* ultimately prevent Benjy's crip rhetoric and utilization of crip time travel from functioning.

Conclusion

Writing this project in 2023, when we see so many intersectional issues in our news every day, I believe projects such as this can help us in a much larger anti-ableist and anti-racist project. Indeed, the censures and removals of recent Black Tennessee state representatives Justin Jones and Justin Pearson, as well as the censure of Transgender state representative Zooley Zephyr in the Montana State Legislature shows how much we need to study how the system of white supremacy and normalcy function. Even eugenics, a topic long discussed as though it is a science of the past, has reared its head recently, with the CDC considering disabled deaths as “acceptable” during COVID, and continued sterilizations in prisons (Dickinson 1).

As I have shown in this project, a strong relationship exists between the maintenance of whiteness and white supremacy and disability, with many race scientists using ableism as an underlying reason for why Black and poorer white folks should not be able to have a voice in political issues. Powers of normalcy will even seek to exoticize fellow phenotypic white people, such as the freaks I analyzed in the first chapter, and as can be seen now with our nation’s treatment of Transgender individuals. With my investigation of the “You-Know-What” in Chapter 2, we can see how both transphobia and ableism intersect, with those placing themselves in the normal seeking to limit the futures of both disabled and Trans populations. In a time where disability is a regular reason why lawmakers claim we cannot have gender affirming healthcare, gun control, or universal health insurance, investigating how ableism and its ties to white supremacy become even more valuable.

In future projects in the field concerning Southern Renaissance literature, constructions of whiteness, and disability, there should be analysis of Black authors. While this does not necessarily count as an omission from this project because of my focus of white people’s own construction of whiteness and how white people see the power of whiteness, including theorists.

However, authors such as W.E.B. Du Bois wrote about whiteness and class in *Black Reconstruction* published in 1935, writing

Most persons do not realize how far [the view that common oppression would create interracial solidarity] failed to work in the South, and it failed to work because the theory of race was supplemented by a carefully planned and slowly evolved method, which drove such a wedge between the white and black workers that there probably are not today in the world two groups of workers with practically identical interests who hate and fear each other so deeply and persistently and who are kept so far apart that neither sees anything of common interest. (700)

These ideas follow closely with stories written by Richard Wright in one of his books about the South, *Uncle Tom's Children*, where working class white people in the South repeatedly hunt and beat Black individuals. I believe this would give a fuller account of how power operates in the South. Indeed, in Chapter 1 I analyze how working-class white men, who often already operate on the margins of the power of whiteness, maintain the power of whiteness by ensuring the marginal power that they have, often violently excluding disabled and women's bodies from political spaces, sometimes coding the characters who get excluded for blackness and darker pigmentation. By upholding the power of whiteness, many of these stories demonstrate more thoroughly how systems of white supremacy are upheld and maintained. Despite this, we cannot thoroughly examine systems of white supremacy without the presence of black authors.

In this project, I want to ensure that we do not read disability in these narratives in two ways. First, I am less interested in if disability is represented well in literature, but rather what disability demonstrates about power and inclusion when authors choose to include it. Second, I want to ensure that disability is not read purely as allegory. In other words, one of my concerns about not examining representation in literature is if we dismiss the presence of disability completely, and just say that the presence of disability serves as an allegory for racial inharmony.

Rather, I believe the better, and messier answer lies in inspecting how discourse of ableism, racism, compulsory heterosexuality all overlaps and uphold the system of white supremacy.

For the second chapter, I invite more work on the biopolitical management of disabled and queer bodies, especially in the future as the time period I examine and question I ask are both relatively limited. Indeed, institutions only sterilize more white women than black women in the South for a limited amount of time. When the Civil Rights Movement occurs, this shifts at such an alarming rate that black women are almost four times more likely, opening up a space for people to examine how white supremacy manages black and disabled bodies, and increased pathologies for black bodies. A lot of work has already gone into this in books such as Dennis Tyler's *Disabilities of the Color Line: Redressing Anti-Blackness from Slavery to the Present*, where he examines how the law and cultural customs cast black people as disabled as a form of ableism that makes them unfit for self-governance and inclusion in political spaces (Tyler 3). Work such as this is truly invaluable as we begin to further ideas of how discourses of white supremacy and ableism intersect and prop each other up.

For the third chapter, I believe the work of looking at the intersections of crip rhetoric, crip time, and whiteness is just beginning. As we begin to look into other characters who portray mental disability in literature instead of purely casting their roles in the narrative as allegorical, I suggest that the theories of crip time and its relationship to trauma could prove fruitful as an avenue of academic exploration. Particularly as disabled and crip scholars begin to further interrogate the intersection of disability studies and queer theory, ideas of non-linear and non-traditional forms of bodily expression and familial ties become even more prescient.

In all, this project serves as a piece of cultural criticism for the time period of the Southern Renaissance in the 1930s to the 1950s. Much of this time revolves around the careful

management of difference as well as maintenance of whiteness and able-bodiedness. Authors such as Flannery O'Connor, William Faulkner, and Carson McCullers demonstrate and reflect how these systems get maintained by the people around them. More specifically, these authors demonstrate how white men will degrade, pathologize, and exclude white women, especially when it comes to the intersection of controlling sexual activity and medical pathologies.

McCullers even demonstrates how Lymon in *Ballad of a Sad Café* can wield power despite his relatively marginalized position in a domestic dispute between Amelia and her ex-husband, Marvin Macy. One example of a truly marginalized man is Benjy Compson in *The Sound and the Fury*, who gets stripped of his rhetoric by those who refuse to take him seriously as a character both in and outside of the novel, demonstrating how incapacity can infiltrate the idea of gender roles if it presents stronger than gender, particularly as Benjy gets castrated. These authors, and some of the freaks that they reflect from real life, represent how disabled people are enfreaked, othering disability to uphold systems of whiteness. The same effect happens when upper-class men pathologize poor, "white trash" women so that they could control their sexual activity, and refuse to recognize the rhetoric of Benjy, thus denying him power and self-determination. As witness the rise of white supremacy through the forms of eugenics, anti-queer and anti-Black legislation, the importance of studying how power limits inclusion becomes even more important. I hope this project serves as the first step of many in my career as a scholar and an activist.

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