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Race, Place and Young Adulting in Southern and Adolescent Literature

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Race, Place and Young Adulting in Southern and Adolescent Literature

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Abstract

This thesis applies southern literary theory to contemporary young adult literature (YAL) in order to analyze constructions and representations of the South and adolescence(ts) in the texts discussed. Arguing that Harper Lee's *To Kill a Mockingbird* acts a master narrative for popular conceptions of southern adolescent identity, this project proposes that Lee's 2015 novel *Go Set a Watchman* along with contemporary publications in YAL disrupts the master narrative *Mockingbird* and Scout Finch present readers. Though analyzing how representations of adolescence(ts) act as a construct used to establish a white-normative narrative about childhood, the second and third chapters discuss how this white-normativity has carried over into YAL, only to be challenged by the works of minority authors within the genre, who write about the South in ways that do not create space for southern exceptionalism or white-normativity. I conclude by offering pedagogues and educators a theoretical framework to use in teaching about the South, race, adolescence(ts) and teen agency in the secondary classroom.

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Finally, to my Savior and my God Jesus Christ—all I am and have done I lay joyfully at your feet. Any glory, honor or praise I return to you in full knowledge that it is by grace that I am saved through faith because of your deep, abiding love. Thank you for captivating my heart and renewing my mind. Thank you for answering the many prayers I prayed over my thesis. This work is a testimony to your faithfulness, loving-kindness and grace.

Dedication

To my parents, who have shamelessly encouraged my love for stories.

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Introduction: Dialoguing Southern Literature with YAL

Recent debate about contemporary children's and young adult literature (YAL) attempts to dismiss this subset of literature as trite genre fiction in comparison with the works of "the" literary canon, or it laments that such literature has stunted adult development within the contemporary consumer in the United States. Leslie Fielder likens all American literature to a sentimentality he associates with pre-adolescents, as he remarks that American literature, in general, too often returns to childhood experience to its own detriment (xix). However, the +22.4% sales increase in adolescent literature for 2014 shows that the contemporary public has ignored Fielder's warning ("Book Sales up 3.9% in first ¾ of 2014: AAP"). The 2012 Bowker study reveals that at least 55% of buyers of YAL are between the ages of 18-44, and of those 55%, a minimum of 78% of the consumers are buying YAL novels for personal enjoyment ("Young Adult Books Attract Growing Number of Adult Fans"). Similarly, teachers, school administrators, parents and children testify to the benefits that YAL has for students inside and outside the classroom. The National Council of Teachers in English (NCTE) found that teachers need to incorporate texts that offer "multiple perspectives on real life experiences" for adolescent readers ("A Call to Action"). The Young Adult Library Services Association (YALSA) remarked on the increase of "adult" authors entering into the YAL field and suggested that YAL is "made valuable not only by its artistry but also by its relevance" ("The Value of Young Adult Literature"). Thus, YAL is about more than sentimentality; it has evolved into one of the most influential markets and reader communities today.

The establishment of YAL owes much of its rise in popularity to the bildungsroman tradition in Romantic literature (Talley). It was not until after World War II that society distinguished between child and adolescent development, and as such, children's fiction and

young adult fiction became a marketable commodity in the publishing industry (Talley). Though

the development of marketable YAL owes its origins to WWII, within the literary movements of

the United States, Mark Twain, Louisa May Alcott, and Harper Lee position the Civil War and

the Jim Crow Era as the defining historical moments that created a nostalgic desire within the

national imaginary to return to and recount childhood. Because these books blend children's

experience with adult experience, these authors cross the boundaries between child and adult

spheres in their literature and readership.

Since its growth into a commercial and cultural staple, contemporary YAL moves beyond

the traditional bildungsroman plot as authors and readers delve into political, social, and

economic complexities in both realistic and fantastic ways. My interest in this fiction focuses on

the ways that YAL is rooted in southern literature even as it makes decisive movements away

from regional or temporal classification. (I use the term "southern" here tentatively as scholars

like Michael Kreyling have pointed out that what it means to "be southern" is at the center of a

tradition of long debate.)[1]

Ultimately, YAL is about questions of realism: authority, identity, form and genre

("Young Adult Literature"). It is about movement and stasis: moving away from childhood and

returning to inhabit childhood. Similarly, Scott Romine argues that the South, like YAL, is about

perpetual movement; it is a territory without territory, a time-space dimension that continuously

shifts to meet the utopian desires of the nation (17-26). The South acts a fantasyland that the

nation uses to create and project different narratives to reflect its desires—narratives in which

that utopian desire exists in spaces with elusive and open-ended boundaries (17-26). Similarly,

Lillian Smith's theoretical memoir *Killers of the Dream* establishes the integrated relationship

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[1] Kreyling, Michael. *Inventing Southern Literature (*Jackson, Mississippi: University Press of Mississippi, 1998).
Print.

between southern exceptionalist ideology and southern childhood narratives. Smith's memoir insists on the need to return to childhood in order to evaluate the utopian desire inherent in southern exceptionalism, or the Romanticized versions of southern regionalism and identity as distinct from the nation. For a white southerner, childhood is rooted in an identity of southern exceptionalism and ideology; it acts as the petri dish for reproducing a fantasy of elitism and a reality of racism within its children (Smith 73-74). Per Smith, childhood becomes the source of ideological authority for the southern child. Adolescent literature, like contemporary southern literature, wrestles with questions of culture and assimilation, with fantasy and reality. It parallels Romine's argument that there is no "terra firma" in the South. Likewise, there is no "terra firma" in adolescent literature.

In order to analyze the interaction between adolescent literature's representations of the U.S. South and southern literature's representations of childhood, it is important to define what I mean by narratives of traditional southern childhoods. James Paul Gee proposes that all individuals operate from within the security of "figured worlds" (95). "Figured worlds" are "simulations" that people use to "infer what is 'normal' or 'typical'" and "construe aspects of the world in their heads" (Gee 95). When applied to human interactions, they negotiate behavior between social interaction and institutions, thereby, defining normal for any given situation (Gee 95).

In other words, some "figured worlds" become master narratives, or controlling narratives deployed to explain, justify or manage stories about populations and people groups. In *Cradle of Liberty,* Caroline Levander proposes that the image of the child in the formation of the United States acts as a controlling narrative, an image that is raced to favor a narrative of white superiority (3-4). In fact, the U.S. nation-state used the image of a child to create a racial

hierarchy so that race is the cornerstone of national and civic identity (Levander 39). Thus, the white child's narrative becomes the "figured world" out of which the nation identifies itself and others at institutional and personal levels. As Robin Bernstein points out, white children are allowed to perform innocence, or transcendence of social categories, in ways that children of color cannot (6-8). What neither Levander nor Gee outline is the way that this child becomes figured in specifically southern ways to project a controlling narrative of childhood and the South for adolescent readers.

This project argues that YAL offers readers a space to project, reject and reimagine master narratives about adolescence(ts), race, the South and teen agency. By merging the discussion of the role of the child in southern literature with the role of YAL in a contemporary context, I demonstrate that contemporary YAL moves beyond a simplistic rendering of the world. YAL serves more than didactic or entertainment purposes; rather, YAL allows us (readers, parents, teens and educators) to return to a fictional childhood and reveals the necessity to interrupt traditional childhood narratives of the South as established by Harper Lee 1960 novel *To Kill a Mockingbird*. Contemporary YAL engages with and represents the South in order to create the capacity for retelling the past and present in a way that disrupts the traditional narrative that southern exceptionalism presents.

Relationship to Southern Literature Studies

Much work has already been done on the subject of politics and economy of the U.S. South as both a physical and imagined time-space dimension. Leigh Ann Duck retraces the historic othering of the South within the U.S. national imaginary and demonstrates how individual and group identity became a means for navigating questions of time and belonging in a regional and national context. Through its othering of the South, Duck shows how the U.S.

South mediates the ways that the nation projects its faults (i.e. racism) and its desires (i.e. national pride) upon the South in the national imaginary and in literature (26-27, 34-36).

On the other hand, Scott Romine interrupts any static understanding of time or place through his analysis of southern cultural phenomena. Romine insists that southern narrative is a negotiation between the "real" and the fake Souths that are "grounded in space and time, a register of imagined relations to artificial territorialities, themed spaces, virtual terrains, built environments, localities and 'the global'-imaginable precisely because of the breakdown of coded territorialities" (*The Real South* 17). In other words, Romine suggests that the southern narrative is about fixating a cultural, social or historic desire to a specific place or time. Because desire is elusive, Romine argues, the paradox emerges by substituting a fake version of the desired object to satisfy a desire for the real object. The fake becomes the real, but never fully satisfies (*The Real South* 24-25).

Romine's interrogation of southern culture and their representations on screen and in literature opens the door to rework an understanding of the representations and manifestations of southern childhood narratives in canonical southern literary texts and current YAL novels. Like desire, identity becomes a portable commodity. Because of its ability to cross-over between children's and adult literature genres, YAL becomes another space to view the ways the child confirms or subverts figured worlds of race and place. If, as Levander proposes, the child is a tool for establishing a raced system of personal and social identity, then YAL becomes a place in which to analyze that establishment. In turn, YAL challenges these "figured worlds" and offers a new simulation of southern childhood. YAL serves to project and be projected upon by the national imaginary.

For this reason, Smith insists for a continual return to childhood assumptions and events

in order to challenge, interrogate, and make sense of the present in light of the past (73-74). Smith calls our attention to the ongoing interaction between bildungsroman, childhood and ideology in southern literature. As Smith narrates her childhood exposure to racial superiority, she insists that turning a critical eye to our childhood and the ideas behind "Southern Tradition" is essential for unmasking racist or sexist ideologies. She muses, "We know it [Southern Tradition] has woven itself around fantasies at levels difficult for the mind to touch…And, like the dirty rag or doll that an unhappy child sleeps with, it has acquired inflated values that extend far beyond rational concerns of economics and governments, or the obvious profits and losses accruing from the white-supremacy system, into childhood memories long repressed…" (74). Here, Smith links childhood memories of "Southern Tradition" with the "profits and losses accruing from the white-supremacy system" of racial hierarchy within that region's socio-historical tradition. She argues that the notion of "Southern Tradition," which is highly invested in its own form of exceptionalism, validates systems of racial hierarchy. But, it is a white southerner's childhood that justifies such a system.

Essentially, Smith insists on interrogating our own models and notions of what southern childhood is and does, which she most effectively performs through presenting the reader with the "Southern Tradition" play. In this scene, Smith recalls how the children at her summer camp put on a production based on *The Little Prince*. When the play's own Little Prince voices a desire to play with every child on earth, the actors and audience invite the characters of Conscience, Southern Tradition, Religion, and Science to participate in determining whether or not the Little Prince's desire can be realized. However, as the actors and audience discover, their attempt to merge fantasy with reality within the play cannot exist outside of the confines of their performance. As one camper remarks, "It was as if somebody had swung a bright mirror in front

of us. The whole thing opened up in that moment! How it would be--if we tried to live the way we have learned to want to live" (44). Smith highlights the incongruity between the play and reality in order to reveal the camper's inability to merge the two, or even to use one to justify the other. The play (read: "Southern Tradition") can only work when the mirror, which reveals reality to the actors, is removed. What I propose is that YAL is that "bright mirror in front of us," exposing the incongruities of our own systems of southern exceptionalism and racial hierarchies. Thus, reading southern literary coming-of-age narratives alongside contemporary YAL offers readers and pedagogues the opportunity to question and reconsider the ways that we approach YAL and southern literature as genres within academic, publishing and consumer-based spheres.

Southern literary coming-of-age narratives are, of course, the rabbit hole entrance into this debate. Concerning *Mockingbird* and the cultural enigma that is the Finch family, Henninger analyzes reader response to position *Mockingbird* as the nation's master narrative for conceptions of American childhood and southern identity (599). While Henninger's argument focuses on this response as a direct result of the racial innocence at the heart of Lee's narrative and the nation's fantasies about that narrative, her analysis stops shy of interrogating how questions of race and adolescence are intimately linked to questions of southern exceptionalism and the "threat" of adulthood in *Mockingbird* and Lee's 2015 companion text, *Go Set a Watchman*.[2]

Thus, my first chapter considers the implications of the public's, per Henninger, acceptance of *Mockingbird* and rejection of *Watchman* as master narratives about adolescence(ts) and the South. Drawing on Romine's theory of cultural reproduction and Petrone

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[2] Technically, *To Kill a Mockingbird* would be considered literature for adolescents, not YAL. Literature for adolescents refers to literature that might feature an adolescent character, but regardless of the character's age or the author's original intention, has become targeted to adolescent readers within secondary education classrooms. Hence, *Catcher in the Rye* would also be considered literature for adolescents. And while literature for adolescents may often be shelved in the teen sections of libraries, it is rarely marketed as strictly YAL.

et al.'s theory about adolescence, I place *Mockingbird* and *Watchman* in dialogue to reveal the undercurrents and challenges to white-normativity, southern identity and adolescent identity as it concerns national fantasies about the South. Though Scout Finch's narrative in *Mockingbird* acts as a bolster to the pillars of southern exceptionalism even as it subverts it, her return to Maycomb in *Watchman* attempts to move Scout and her narrative beyond adolescence and into adulthood. My use of "attempts" here should signal that I ultimately find *Watchman's* resolution problematic. In using *Mockingbird* and *Watchman*, I demonstrate how Scout Finch's narrative of and about southern childhood becomes a type of cultural reproduction and figured world for larger conceptions about what it means to "grow-up" and "be southern."

While in the previous chapter I lay a foundation for exploring YAL elements in two novels of the southern literary canon, my second chapter investigates the ways that contemporary YAL interrupts the "traditional" Scout Finch rendering of the adolescence(ts) or the South. Within the past few decades, contemporary YAL has gone out of its way to incorporate more narratives of writers and characters of color within its fold. Guadalupe Garcia McCall's 2011 novel *Under the Mesquite* tells the story of a young Mexican girl's move from her small town in Mexico to a border town in Texas as she grapples with physical, maternal, and spatial loss. Cynthia Kadohata's 2004 *Kira-Kira* narrates the economic and cultural struggles of a Japanese-American family's transition from the fields of Iowa to factory work in Georgia. Written in verse, Thanhha Lai's 2011 novel *Inside Out & Back Again* explores one Vietnamese family's attempts to immigrate and assimilate in Alabama during the Vietnam War. Each of these novels works against a simplistic portrait of childhood or the South in order to disrupt the figured world of raced southern exceptionalism and homogenous experience.

Using Garcia McCall, Kadohata and Lai as examples, I demonstrate Sarah Hughes-

Hasnell's claim that multicultural YAL disrupts white-normativity as the controlling narrative of teens and for teens (214-215). Unlike Hughes-Hasnell, however, I propose that multicultural YAL, when read through the lens of intersectional and southern literary theories, not only disrupts expectations of white-normativity, but also disrupts expectations of southern-normativity, or the South as a monolithic cultural identity, for readers. In doing so, I seek to answer the question of how migrant narratives and readings of the South could expand or compress the traditional notion of what it means to be southern and what it means to be adolescent.

Naturally, the uptick in dystopian fiction within YAL presents us with the following question: what happens when the South as we know it, either Maycombian or multicultural, totally disappears? My third and final chapter approaches this quandary by using Sherri L. Smith's 2013 dystopian novel *Orleans* to analyze southern exceptionalism, race and adolescence(ts) in a dystopian context. Smith's narrative presents an alternate version of the South, one that is biopolitical[3] at its core. Throwing aside contemporary notions of geographic or temporal boundaries, *Orleans* presents a precarious, even non-existent, South in relation to the nation-state. Through analyzing the protagonists' attempts to navigate hostile, southern landscapes in the Delta and Gulf Coast region, I will explore the ways that *Orleans'* protagonists mediate their identities and agency within the biopolitics of a "disposable" South.[4]

With the increase in dystopian YAL, it is important to make this final movement toward a reconfiguration of YAL and southern literary themes and spaces. Since works like *Orleans* use alternative worlds to engage with questions of mortality and morality through the characters'

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[3] Here, I draw on Michel Foucault's theory of biopower and biopolitics in that biopolitics is the attempt to manage, regulate or control biomatter.

[4] Henry Giroux connects the disaster of the post-Katrina disaster relief to a "biopolitics of disposability,"or a biopolitics that renders certain populations and people groups invisible and, therefore, disposable to the nation-state. I apply his theory to my analysis of the biopolitics in *Orleans*.

engagement with and challenges to social norms, *Orleans'* engagement with the South and the

nation-state serves to map out the various ways that contemporary society tries to understand and

reimagine the future in light of current cultural and social anxieties.

Because the texts that I will analyze are frequently incorporated into secondary education

classrooms and curriculum, my intent is that the discussion here will be useful in the secondary

education classroom. In the current society of constant migration and change, I'm curious to

discover if there is a way to incorporate YAL without completely sacrificing the current literary

canons and without turning the discussion into an act of tourism and othering within the

classroom. Finally, incorporating these novels, or similar works, benefits teachers and students

because they allow for multiple voices to speak about the South and about adolescence(ts), and I

do this through presenting a critical lens for educators to use as they address issues of southern

exceptionalism, race and controlling narratives within YAL and southern literature.

Chapter I: Building a Foundation for Narratives of Southern Adolescence(ts)

Conjure up an image of the U.S. South, and what does your mind's-eye see? Scott Romine argues that you probably see *Gone with the Wind*'s Tara plantation home, or some knock-off version of it. As Romine demonstrates, Tara becomes the iconic symbol of southern culture within the national imaginary due to its own cultural appropriation. This appropriation of Tara throughout literature, discourse, and popular culture resulted in placing feelings of memory and desire upon an object of fantasy, an antebellum Tara, which in turn produces nostalgia for that fantasy (*The Real South* 28). In producing and promoting this nostalgia within the national imaginary, Tara becomes "the sim-plantation that all real plantations of the tourist industry strive to reproduce, an ineffable space toward which actual spaces of all kinds are mobilized…" (*The Real South* 29). Using real plantations, the national imaginary attempts to capture this nostalgia through relocating Tara to contemporary spaces or historical sites. Essentially, Tara "mobilizes an *idea* of culture" by using a fantasy to perpetuate a specific relationship to reality (*The Real South* 59, emphasis in original). Romine's theory of southern cultural reproduction interrogates the ways that southern literature and culture invoke a fantasy to perpetuate a specific configuration of reality in the South.

While Romine insists that Tara is inextricable from our configurations of the U.S. South, Leslie Fielder argues that literature for adolescence are fundamental to American literature more broadly. In fact, Fielder claims that American literature is marked by male protagonists' "retreat to nature and childhood which makes our literature (and life!) so charmingly and infuriatingly 'boyish'" (xxi). While Fielder connects American literature with a boyish escape from and fear of women and sexuality, Roberta Seelinger Trites argues that themes of social reform and growth are integral to many adolescent literary works. Though Trites highlights Mark Twain and Louisa

May Alcott's contribution to the tradition of reform novels, she contends that "the growth that the characters in the story experience leads to at least one or more person's ability to live in the world more justly," meaning that adolescent literature reform novels still fall within an *entwicklungsroman* narrative of growth or change (144). Narratives of growth or change loosely define the young adult literature (YAL) genre as a whole, whether or not the intent of the novel is to encourage a type of reform within the reader.

On the other hand, Romine's insistence on examining cultural reproductions about and by the South and Trites' insistence on examining adolescence(ts) within adolescent literary contexts leads to two questions: of how to study the interplay of these two literary genres and of how to define southern childhood within literature. These are two of the questions that have guided my research, and while this project is not an exhaustive response to these two questions, it is my intention to address how southern and adolescent literary texts offer figured worlds about southern childhood. In order to begin to understand this relationship, it is important to study a text that establishes a model for southern childhood narratives even as it overlaps between these two genres of literature.

Harper Lee's 1960 debut novel *To Kill A Mockingbird* continues to hold a privileged place as a canonical text inside and outside of academic and educational spheres. In fact, the well-worn cover of my particular copy heralds it as "A Timeless Classic of Growing Up and the Human Dignity That Unites Us All." If we were to read this like an equation, the summation of "Growing-Up" and "the-Human-Dignity-That-Unites-Us-All" yields a narrative that is considered timeless and classic, one that transcends static boundaries of time or relevance. My intention here is not to enter into a reductive debate about what constitutes a "timeless classic"; instead, what I find worth probing are the assumed parallels between growing-up and the novel's

status as a canonical American and southern literary text.

For the purposes of this project, I build off of Katherine Henninger's argument and propose that Lee's *Mockingbird* and its companion text, *Go Set a Watchman,* work in tandem to present contemporary readers with a specific type of southern childhood, one that becomes fixated in the national imaginary as *the* cultural model for southern childhood, adolescence(ts) and our notions of the South within contemporary adolescent literature. As Scout matures through the course of *Mockingbird*, she re-orders her figured worlds through navigating race-defining situations. Though *Watchman* continuously reasserts that Jean Louise does not see color, I will put these two texts in dialogue in order to demonstrate how Scout's childhood defines and is defined by race. Scout's childhood in *Mockingbird* acts as a bolster to the pillars of southern exceptionalism even as it subverts it. Through close readings of the moments when Scout re-configures her figured world, I show how Scout offers a figured world of southern childhood and southern identity that then becomes the model for questioning and constructing figured worlds of racial hierarchy and place in literary southern childhood traditions.

While both novels refer to the protagonist as Scout and Jean Louise, for the sake of clarity, I will use Scout in reference to her character in *Mockingbird*, and Jean Louise in reference to her character in *Watchman.* On that note, it is important to mention that Scout's character is revealed in two ways: as the protagonist of the narrative and as the omniscient narrator who reflects on her past. Jean Louise repeats this narrative form in *Watchman*, which can be used to provide a possible expansion on Scout's character and *Mockingbird* in general. However, for this project, I will read and treat *Watchman* as a companion text rather than a sequel because this allows for flexibility in character development as well as accounts for plot inconsistencies between both narratives.

As such, I will first discuss encounters with Scout the subject and Scout the narrator in *Mockingbird* before turning my attention to the moments of memory and flashback in *Watchman*. Through analyzing the moments when Scout's memory bumps against memories of race awareness, I will discuss how Scout's childhood acts as a controlling narrative for conceptions about the South, adolescence(ts), and southern exceptionalism in the U.S. national imaginary.

Racial Innocence, Childhood and Scout Finch's Figured Worlds

Caroline Levander proposes that the figure of the child "works to establish race as a central shaping element of ostensibly raceless Western ideals" (3). As previously noted, Levander argues that the figure of the child works within national discourse and literature to stabilize racial hierarchy, define belonging and merge the notion of the self with the culture (4-5). Essentially, the nation appropriates the figure of the child to regulate racialized conceptions of oneself and community. Racism becomes naturalized by the figure of the child in popular discourse and literature so that the child "links slavery to black bodies and liberty to white ones in order to found the nation and then reinforce its organizing racial ideals as it eradicates slavery" (33).

As Katherine Henninger argues, *Mockingbird* solidifies this naturalization in the national imaginary through "a singularly effective device with a long tradition of simultaneously revealing and concealing the workings of whiteness in American literature: childhood" (601). Using Bernstein's concept of racial innocence, which proposes that childhood innocence is raced white with the purpose of excluding non-white individuals, Henninger demonstrates how Scout and her brother Jem enact a form of childhood innocence about racism and social hierarchies that, in turn, produces racial memory while allowing its enactors to transcend it through

purposeful erasure of it (Bernstein 8, Henninger 605). As Henninger further argues, *Mockingbird* has become a cultural trope for readers so that what it "preserves—creates in order to preserve–is white southern childhood as American childhood, a salvational space-time awakening of double consciousness and coming into a childlike racial innocence that can safely put it back to bed" (608). Essentially, Henninger asserts that Lee's descriptions of Maycomb and Scout's childhood serve to justify and solidify a specific type of childhood as *the* American experience of childhood.

Henninger argues that in *Mockingbird,* this racial innocence involves Scout and Jem coming into an awareness of the evils of racial superiority so that they can comfortably forget it (607-608). This allows Scout and Jem, even readers, to feel indignant at Tom Robinson's verdict and death while applauding Atticus as the novel's hero of justice. As Henninger points out, childhood racial innocence is self-serving: it rejects a raced version of childhood even as it upholds a white childhood as the quintessential example of childhood (608). However, for the reader, Scout's childhood leaves the pages of narrative and transforms into a controlling narrative for the national imaginary. Because *Mockingbird*'s narrative contains two temporalities (Scout the protagonist experiences the plot and Scout the narrator recounts the plot), the reader experiences Scout's childhood as events happening and events happened, meaning that Scout the narrator allows for a level of nostalgia about Scout the protagonist. What is interesting is that this nostalgia occurs in real-time so that the reader experiences nostalgia via Scout the narrator for the present experience of Scout the protagonist. The nostalgia for Scout's narrative, then, compels the reader to claim ownership of the narrative as if it were his or her own narrative. When the reader equates Scout's experiences with the experiences for all children in the South, or as Henninger would argue for all children in America, then *Mockingbird* morphs into a

controlling narrative about the South, about adolescence(ts) and about race. As readers, we witness this transformation in two compelling scenes: Scout and Jem's creation of a "nigger snowman" and Scout's courthouse encounter with biracial children (66-68, 161-162, 200-201).

When snow falls for the first time after decades in Maycomb, Jem and Scout decide to build a snowman with what little snow had stuck to the ground of their house and the houses of their neighbors. As Scout rakes up the snow in the yard, Jem begins to mold dirt over tree branches from the yard until "he had constructed a torso," to which Scout responds: "Jem, I ain't never heard of a nigger snowman" (66). James Paul Gee's idea of figured worlds contends that figured worlds are internalized cultural models, a type of internal simulation, that we use to navigate, experience and order social situations and giving meaning to those social interactions (95). When we are confronted with a social situation in which we have no preconceived simulation, we use our figured worlds to help deconstruct and order the situation in a way that works for or against our internalized cultural models (95). Having "ain't never heard" of a "nigger snowman," nor having ever seen snow, Scout relies on her preconceived idea of what a snowman should be and would be in order to make sense and give meaning to the snowman.

Scout encounters a circumstance in which she has no figured world (a snowman made of more than snow), and in order to derive meaning from the situation, she uses what she does know (race as skin color) to ascribe significance back onto the snowman. For Scout, the snowman now has a specific social identity: it has a race. The fact that Scout uses the term "nigger," which is a socially-constructed label applied to a group of people, illustrates how Scout assigns race and a social identity based upon the color of the snowman. Furthermore, her bemusement and incredulity at the constructed torso signals her inability to permit the snowman to be made of anything in addition to snow and, based on her system of signification, anything

other than white.

Having placed a social label on the snowman, and rejected it due to its label, Scout cannot see a snowman as a raceless object. As Scout the narrator further recounts, "Jem scooped up some snow and began plastering it on. He permitted me to cover only the back, saving the public parts for himself. Gradually Mr. Avery turned white" (67). In "saving the public parts for himself," Jem inadvertently places higher value on the public's perception and affirmation of his snowman. Jem wants his neighbors to see the "white" side of the snowman. Scout the narrator shows this value to be raced by demonstrating that the snowman did not turn into Mr. Avery, their neighbor, but rather that Mr. Avery became white, indicating his racial and social standing in Maycomb. Thus, when Atticus, insists on changes to the snowman so that it does not resemble a specific person, Scout narrates, "Jem explained that if he did, the snowman would become muddy and cease to be a snowman" (67). In fact, Atticus describes the snowman as a "caricature," which Jem mistakes as "characterture" (67). A caricature exaggerates the character in order to create an ironic double-purpose. Either the flaws of the caricature are exaggerated to highlight the difference between the original and the caricature so that the joke is on the untruthfulness of the portrait; or the flaws of the original are exaggerated to highlight the truth of the portrait, and thus the joke rests upon the original.

When Jem misunderstands Atticus, Lee creates an ironic humor for the audience by implying that a "caricature" and a "characterture" might be the same thing. What is interesting about this "characterture" is that it operates on two levels. On one level it contrasts the snowman as Mr. Avery, delineating the similarities between the figure of the snowman and characterization of the neighbor. On the other hand, it contrasts one type of accepted snowman with the rejected type of snowman. While Atticus' reference to caricature is a response to the

snowman's resemblance to Mr. Avery, the snowman itself might also be understood to be the object of the caricature. Atticus' recognition and Jem's misrecognition create a pleasurable slippage when directed at Mr. Avery; however, when directed at the "nigger snowman," the slippage reveals the raced implications of their play.

As Robin Bernstein argues, "Children do not passively receive culture. Rather, children expertly field the co-scripts of narrative and material culture and then collectively forge a third prompt: play itself" (29). By creating a raced object through play, Jem and Scout assign rules to the characters, the snowman and Mr. Avery, that elevates one snowman through the rejection of the other snowman. Thus, if the "nigger snowman" is a caricature of black men and women in Maycomb, then, through play, Jem and Scout ascribe race onto the snowman and reject one race in favor of their own. While I do not propose that building a snowman is a racist act, this scene illustrates how Scout's childhood operates from an assumption of white-normativity. Placing the scene within the historical context that the narrative provides, this assumption would not be uncommon for a white southerner in the 1930s.

Nevertheless, in this scene, Scout reproduces for the readers a white-normative childhood that elevates one race under the guise of humor and racial innocence. While Jem and Scout's responses to their first snow are comical, and indeed the snowman serves to exact revenge on Mr. Avery, the "nigger snowman" results in a subtle form of race superiority that presents a caricature of one race at the expense of another. Through Scout's supposed ignorance over what a snowman can and cannot be, "Lee tweaks American literary conventions of childhood racial innocence, presenting such innocence as much acquired as it is natural" (Henninger 607). Racial innocence is embodied and naturalized in the snowman so that when Scout finally does "rake him up," she calls the snowman a "Morphodite," later misrecognizing this as an improper proper

name while forgetting the raced connotation that initially surrounds the snowman (74). As the logic of Scout's system of nomenclature is so incongruous, the racial innocence that bolsters this scene hides behind the ironic humor of Scout's misrecognition. While Henninger does illustrate how *Mockingbird* reproduces its version of racial innocence for the reader, she does not account for Lee's use of humor in these scenes. Because Scout as narrator is so ironic, implying one thing through demonstrating the falsity in its opposite, the reader experiences the pleasure of Scout's irony without interrogating to what problem Lee's irony points. What pushes back on the reading of racial innocence here is the fact that Scout returns to this scene as a narrator. Her return to this moment in her childhood suggests her inability to forget the implications of this moment, and her ironic humorous recital about the snowman indicates an awareness of her own racial innocence.

If the snowman scene serves to demonstrate Scout's adherence to the project of racial innocence, the scene with Dolphous Raymond and his biracial children complicates this notion of racial innocence. During the infamous trial scene, Dill begins to cry at the prosecuting attorney's treatment of Tom Robinson. Jem sends Scout and Dill out of the courthouse where they meet Raymond. Scout the narrator reveals that Raymond, who had previously been introduced as a landowner from an old Maycomb family, is known as the town drunk and the father of "mixed chillun" (161). Jem describes Raymond's children to Scout as "real sad" and "in-betweens" (161).

Though Jem's description of Raymond's biracial children encapsulates Bernstein's idea of racial innocence through his remembering only to feel pity and forget, Scout's reaction to Jem's description interrogates his white-normative epistemology about race. When Jem comments on who qualifies as a "mixed chillun" and who does not, Dill and Scout repeatedly ask: "But how can you *tell*?" (162). In other words, when faced with a biracial individual,

Scout's previous figured world, whereby she ascribes race and social status to skin color, is rendered inapplicable. As Henninger clarifies about the novel in its entirety, "This is a racial innocence that knows better and is all the stronger for forgetting. Locked in the warm, comfortable past, it projects change into the future and puts the present off limits" (608). Even Scout's insistence on being able to "tell" suggests a need to make a verbal distinction between races. Because Scout's epistemologies about race are based on her white-normativity and her racial innocence, verbalization ensures that this epistemology progresses within her community as she learns to "tell" others and be told about this epistemology.

By questioning Jem's ability to "tell," a telling that is based on a factor other than skin color, Scout turns Jem's epistemology about race upside down. Invoking the paradox of Jem's telling, she asks: "Well how do you know we ain't Negroes?" (162). Citing historical possibility that their racial ancestry may not be purely white, Scout subverts Jem's system of telling, which leads Jem to affirm the inconsistency of his racial innocence. Though Jem acknowledges the validity of Scout's questions, he concludes, "...but around here once you have a drop of Negro blood, that makes you all black" (162). The irony here occurs in the slippage between Jem's ability to "tell" and his inability to verbalize or contextualize that telling. Jem invokes the inconsistency of his racial innocence by asserting that, first, a "tell" exists and that, second, that that "tell" does not exist except "once you have a drop of Negro blood." Although Jem answers Scout's question by problematizing his ability to "tell," since he may very well have such a "drop of Negro blood," he does not continue to interrogate his racial innocence. Instead, as Henninger concludes, Jem's racial innocence is stronger for forgetting. In fact, the reader and Scout witness this most clearly in Jem's later outburst of anger about Scout's comparison between racial injustice and Hitler's regime of persecution (247). As Scout narrates in response

to Jem's anger, "Atticus said Jem was trying hard to forget something, but what he was really doing was storing it away for a while, until enough time passed" (247). Jem's anger at Scout's comparison signals his awareness of the inconsistency of his justifications for racial hierarchy. Whether consciously or not, Jem's attempt to forget the injustice of the Maycomb community against Tom Robinson shows his willingness to subscribe to his community's racial innocence. Scout's narration of this instance leaves the reader with two possible conclusions: her acceptance of Jem's outburst or her awareness of its incongruity with his professed ideals.

Even though Scout's insistence to learn to "tell" presents readers with the internal paradox at the center of Scout and Jem's race epistemology and racial innocence, her further interactions with Raymond and her conclusions as a result of her community's racial innocence lay the groundwork for *Watchman*'s interrogations into the cultural reproductions of the specific type of childhood found in *Mockingbird*. As Dill expresses his feelings about the court proceedings, Raymond explains that he performs the actions of a drunk man so that society could enact its own form of racial innocence (200). In condemning Raymond as a drunk man, Maycomb could reject his choices while forgetting the reason for their rejection due to his stigma as an alcoholic (200-201). The narrator Scout intervenes here and says: "I had a feeling that I shouldn't be here listening to this sinful man who had mixed children and didn't care who knew it, but it was fascinating" (201). While Maycomb enacts a racial innocence, the narrator Scout reflects that society would condemn her interaction with Raymond because of his biracial children, but that she could not perform that level of racial innocence. Lee here juxtaposes narrator Scout with protagonist Scout. While protagonist Scout quotes Atticus and says that cheating a colored man is the worst thing a white individual can do, narrator Scout ironically juxtaposes this latent form of racial superiority through ironically suggesting Raymond's sin is

based on his biracial children (201). Instead, the narrator's ironic humor emphasizes the opposite, that sin is not tied to race.

Furthermore, Raymond responds to protagonist Scout's repetition of Atticus' assertion by a denial and a pause: "'I don't reckon it's--'" (201). Raymond's pause, following his denial, is what opens the door to interrogate Scout, and by extension Atticus', racial innocence. Here, Raymond's pause pushes back on Scout and Atticus' racial superiority. Though a pause does not deny, it also does not affirm. Through pausing, Raymond offers the first contradiction of Atticus' moral code. By contradicting Atticus notion of "the worst," a notion based on the inherently superior position of his race in comparison to others, Raymond's pause denies Atticus' assertion and signals his racial innocence. Though protagonist Scout continues to enact racial innocence, the narrator's incredulity as society's rejection and affirmation of Atticus shows how Scout's childhood defined and was defined by race: "I came to the conclusion that people were peculiar, I withdrew from them, and never thought about them until I was forced to" (243). In this instance, Lee complicates reading Scout's narrative as the "mobilize[d] idea of culture" that popular culture assumes. While Scout does engage in reproducing a racial innocence for the reader, the narrator's comments here signal a deeper problem with which the narrative engages: the problem of using Scout's narrative to define childhood for the national imaginary. The narrator's desire to withdraw emphasizes Scout's sentiment of disconnect from her community and offers an alternative, less-romanticized reading to her childhood. In this way, the narrator's withdrawal could also signify a removal from readers who would use the narrative as a source of cultural reproduction and southern exceptionalism. In *Watchman,* Lee addresses the problems with that exceptionalism and cultural reproduction by using Jean Louise's recollections of childhood.

Re-Constructing Adolescence(ts) in *Go Set a Watchman*

In turning to Lee's companion text, *Watchman*, Henninger argues that if *Mockingbird* establishes a raced childhood narrative as the controlling narrative about childhood, then *Watchman* dissolves the ideological readings of its predecessor. Because Henninger argues that *Mockingbird* behaves as a cultural icon and signifier of a national childhood identity for the reader, she highlights the reaction of readers to *Watchman*'s release to show how *Watchman* effectively critiques the childhood racial innocence in the Finch family, and that this critique is what bothers most readers. She writes, "Where *Mockingbird*, following American literary tradition, offers childlike racial innocence as the solution, *Watchman* excoriates it as the problem" (608). Even though Lee uses the ironic voice of the narrator to subvert Scout's racial innocence, *Watchman* goes further by bringing Jean Louise into a reckoning with her and her community's racial innocence. Before demonstrating how *Watchman* challenges the project of racial innocence in Scout's childhood, it is important to return to Romine's theory of cultural reproduction to discuss how a narrative becomes appropriated as the controlling idea of southern identity, and by extension, national identity.

Romine argues that cultural reproduction occurs when we substitute reality for a fantasy and then forget the original object in the act of fiction-making—the reproduction becomes cultural when it's applied to a culture and reproduced as the controlling idea of that culture (*The Real South* 36-37). In the case of southern culture and literature, Tara becomes a fictive site to which all real and historical sites attempt to emulate. Tara reproduces and upholds a nostalgia for the antebellum South by organizing itself around themes of loss, memory and desire. Within conceptions of the South, the nostalgia manifests itself as a type of homesickness that positions Tara as if it were "home" (*The Real South* 28-29). Nostalgia, then, causes the reader to see Tara

as a lost ideal and desire to reclaim it as home (*The Real South* 28-29). Likewise, the nostalgia experienced via Scout as protagonist and Scout as narrator positions *Mockingbird* and Scout's childhood as a lost ideal that the reader memorializes and desires in the act of reading. The nostalgia produces homesickness in the reader for a return to the "home" of southern childhood: *Mockingbird.*

Essentially, Tara becomes similar to a signifying image around which the South organizes its identity. In his earlier work, *The Narrative Forms of Southern Community,* Romine argues that a signifying image or icon is necessary for a community to use to organize and validate its cultural identity (4). In other words, Tara acts as that icon and that community's "reterritorialized desire," or the result of placing desire on a familiar object and then defamiliarizing that object just enough so that it produces nostalgic longing (*The Real South* 42). In this way, Tara operates as a constructed idea of the South that becomes reproduced as the controlling idea of the South. As previously discussed, Scout and *Mockingbird* perform a similar function. Both act as a controlling idea of childhood that is southern and raced.

Although Henninger and Romine offer insight into the way that constructions of southern literature present master narratives for contemporary readers and culture, neither tackles the implications of reading *Mockingbird* or *Watchman* as literature for adolescence(ts) or about adolescence(ts). Since the goal of this project is to analyze the various ways that *Mockingbird* becomes emblematic of our conception of adolescence(ts), and how *Watchman* opens the door to interrogate it, I will incorporate Petrone et al.'s Youth Lens (YL) theory to make connections between Romine's theory of cultural reproductions, adolescent literature and the controlling narrative of southern literature found in *Mockingbird* and *Watchman*.

As Petrone et al. propose, the YL is "the idea that adolescence is a construct, that adolescence does not represent a universal experience for all youth, that conceptions of adolescence have material consequences, and that adolescence often functions metaphorically in ideological ways" (508). Though Petrone et al. acknowledge the developmental biology and psychology of adolescence in general, the YL argues against placing monolithic social expectations, assumptions or significations upon adolescence(ts) (509). Using the YL allows readers to view the ways that Scout and Jean Louise become stand-ins that uphold a raced and exceptionalized understanding of southern identity and adolescence(ts).

The YL first proposes that adolescence be viewed as a socially situated category rather than a monolithic identity, acknowledging that adolescence does not look the same everywhere or for everyone. Viewing Jean Louise through this aspect of the YL problematizes many of the figured worlds about childhood and southern identity established in *Mockingbird* and solidified in *Watchman.* For example, *Watchman* opens with Jean Louise's journey to Maycomb from New York. The closer she gets to Maycomb, the site of her childhood, the more Jean Louise assumes a childlike persona. She changes her clothes to reflect her habits as a child (4); she revisits Finch landing, the historic site of her adolescence and the adolescence of her father (76); and she struggles to picture Atticus as other than the image she recalls from her childhood (17). Jean Louise even describes her return to Maycomb as "always summer" where time "stopped, shifted, and went lazily in reverse" (54). In other words, for Jean Louise, returning to Maycomb is like moving backward in time to childhood. Jean Louise's Maycomb defies time and space.

As such, much of *Watchman* is peppered with flashbacks to childhood games and antics that seem to totally absorb Jean Louise's imagination and attention so that she has to be "roused" or awoken from her recollections (70). For instance, Jean Louise's nostalgic desire to return to

her childhood is so strong that Henry, her date, asks her: "'Going Southern on us? Want me to do a Gerald O'Hara?'" (74). Though Henry's comment appears as jest, here Lee presents the reader with a clear parallel between Jean Louise's fantasies about her childhood and the national imaginary's fantasies about Tara. Interestingly, Jean Louise's desire to preserve the South occurs in way that is specifically through re-inhabiting her childhood. Jean Louise cannot return to the South without simultaneously returning to a self-imposed state of adolescence.

By returning to Maycomb as an adolescent, in her memories and in her mannerisms, Jean Louise attempts to preserve the South and her relationships to her community through her adherence to Maycomb's expectations of adolescence. However, when her Aunt criticizes Jean Louise's behavior, it is because Jean Louise does not fit the social expectations of the new people in Maycomb. Instead, Aunt Alexandra viewed Jean Louise as a part of the "young people" who were "the same in every generation" (36). Here, Aunt Alexandra imposes a social expectation that differentiates between adolescence and adulthood. Operating from an adult-normative perspective, Aunt Alexandra expects Jean Louise to adhere to her views and behave as an adult, which is the more valued perspective here. Or, Jean Louise rejects her aunt's views, and in doing so, behaves like an adolescent. As her aunt reflects, "Now she needed bringing up to the line and bringing up sharply, before it was too late" (36). The fact that this line is of Aunt Alexandra's own making and is based in her own expectations about what it means to behave as an adult escapes her notice. When Jean Louise walks that line, she is an adult. When she does not, she is an adolescent.

Yet, even as Jean Louise rejects this classification of identity imposed on her by her aunt, she adheres to her own construct of childhood: a childhood that is raced and gendered as much as it attempts to reproduce the exceptionalism at the heart of her view of the South and her view of

her community. For example, when Jean Louise confronts Henry about his involvement in the Maycomb Citizen's Council and his refusal to take a stand against racist ideology, he says, "'So you can parade around in your dungarees with your shirttail out and barefooted if you want to. Maycomb says, 'That's the Finch in her, that's just Her Way.' Maycomb grins and goes about its business: old Scout Finch never changes'" (231). What Henry expresses here is that Jean Louise does not have to conform to society's expectations of adulthood or adolescence because her childhood serves as the validation for her southern identity and her current identity. Jean Louise, as "old Scout Finch" does not have to change "Her Way" because it is the expectation of society: her childhood becomes society's, even the reader's, expectations for her adolescence and her adulthood. The fact that the "Way" of "the Finch in her" is gendered female corresponds with Bernstein's argument that racial innocence is typically validated through play objects of young white girls.

Furthermore, Jean Louise comes to recognize her childhood as raced, as being based in white-normative expectations and interactions. Though Lee asserts that Jean Louise was "born color blind," her interactions with Calpurnia reveal the contrary (122). Jean Louise frequently notes the changes between Cal's vernacular when directed at white Maycomb or black Maycomb. She even recognizes when Cal begins to address her in a way typical of addressing all the rest of white Maycomb or when Cal addresses her a "Miss Scout" rather than Scout (139). Instead of questioning why Calpurnia uses company manners with her, Jean Louise shrugs it off as "getting old" (139). Therefore, when Jean Louise visits Calpurnia's home and is distraught at Calpurnia's treatment of her as white Maycomb, Henninger points out that "Calpurnia repudiates Jean Louise's gambit to continue performing childhood racial ignorance and marks her whiteness" (617). Calpurnia's rejection confronts Jean Louise with the white-normative

expectations tied to her constructed childhood. Jean Louise reflections, "It was not always like this...People used to trust each other for some reason, I've forgotten why," are markedly based in the past tense, in her childhood recollections, in a way that does not account for the experiences of another. What Jean Louise cannot remember, or refuses to remember, is that that "trust" was itself rooted in white superiority. Jean Louise could afford to be trusting as a child and again as an adolescent, whereas Calpurnia could not operate with the same trust or expectations because, in Maycomb, both are raced white. For this reason, not only does Calpurnia's rejection obstruct Jean Louise's childhood racial innocence, it also obstructs Jean Louise's ability to continue her constructed adolescence.

In this way, Jean Louise takes her childhood and applies it as a monolithic experience for her community's childhood, seen in her inability to view Henry's need to conform or Cal's rejection of her. She applied her childhood as the model for all childhoods in the South, and as Petrone et al. point out, her social projection has "material consequences." Thus, when Jean Louise recognizes the racial innocence of her family and her community, she feels a "sharp apartness, a separation" from her family and from her community (154). The consequence of her construct for adolescence is that Jean Louise must sever her connection to "old Scout Finch" and reorient her understanding of adolescence from a perspective other than her childhood or her father's adulthood. Jean Louise must stop herself from allowing Scout Finch to be the master narrative for her identity or her childhood.

However, applying the YL to *Watchman* also complicates Jean Louise's break from Atticus and from Maycomb. As Jean Louise comes to terms with her community, her childhood and her family, she learns to "agree to disagree" with her father. Lee demonstrates how Jean Louise idolizes her father as her moral compass and uses him to validate her exceptionalist

perspective of her community and her childhood (265). Even Uncle Jack reinforces this viewpoint when he attempts to explain Atticus' logic and racism as "incidental" to the South's predicament (201). Eventually, Uncle Jack explains to Jean Louise that she had to "kill" the part of her conscience that was bound to her father even as her father had to "kill" Jean Louise's vision of herself as a perpetual adolescent dependent upon her father (252, 265).

As the YL suggests, adolescence(ts) is often used as a metaphor in order to justify ideology. While Atticus' killing of Jean Louise's "conscience-latching," and possibly the reader's conscience-latching, allows Jean Louise to break from a construction of adolescence that is dependent upon Atticus and her community, this break does not occur on her own terms. Instead, Atticus and Uncle Jack, as the adults, must instruct her in her break and bring her to that breaking point as Jean Louise herself notices in her discussion with Uncle Jack (265). If Jean Louise's adolescence figures metaphorically, then her break does not reject the expectations and conventions placed upon her by adulthood. Rather, her break is seen as the natural, long-awaited consequence that the adults in her life expect to occur (265). The YL problematizes Jean Louise's break from adolescence because it reveals that her break from adults was encouraged and enabled by adults. Operating from adult-normativity, Jean Louise leaves one type of adolescence only to enter an adult-normative type of adolescence. As Petron et al. demonstrate, "a YL draws attention to the idea of adulthood as the norm in relation to which adolescence is an othered, inferior category" (512). Though I do not propose that entering adulthood is necessarily wrong, I highlight this problem because it perpetuates an assumption that adolescence must be metaphorically "killed" in order to reach adulthood.

Although the YL complicates Jean Louise's notion of herself and her relationships to her father, family and community, applying the YL to *Watchman* accentuates the ways that

Mockingbird, Scout and Jean Louise serve as controlling narratives about childhood and adolescence(ts). In *Watchman* especially, Jean Louise attempts to use her childhood to justify her perspective and relationship to the South. Whereas Jean Louise's return and departure from childhood and adolescence is problematic for the reasons listed above, *Watchman* does attempt to confront the reader with his or her own cultural reproduction of *Mockingbird* as the cultural ideal for adolescence and southern identity. As Henninger points out, *Watchman* is important because "Jean Louise and Lee recognize [racial innocence] as a tragic and untenable state, with implications not only for Jean Louise's maturity, but also, more importantly, for perpetuating systematic racism in the South and the nation," but that Lee offers no "effective way forward from this realization" (620). By attempting to defamiliarize *Mockingbird* through Jean Louise's progression and growth in *Watchman,* Lee unintentionally sustains a nostalgic desire for *Mockingbird* within the national imaginary that aligns with Romine's theory of cultural reproduction. Organized around loss, *Mockingbird* and *Watchman,* like Tara, "mobilizes an idea" of the South and of adolescence(ts) (*The Real South,* 59).

<p align="center">**Moving Forward: Literature for Adolescence(ts) and Adolescent Literature**</p>

Applying the YL lens to *Watchman* allows readers to recontextualize both of Lee's novels and observe the interactions between southern literature and literature targeted at adolescence(ts) across genres and culture. In particular, looking at Scout and Jean Louise in tandem helps deconstruct cultural reproductions of southern exceptionalism within literature for adolescence(ts) and popular culture more broadly. Henninger's argument that *Mockingbird* repeats racial innocence only to have that innocence shattered by Jean Louise's in *Watchman* offers a broader understanding of the novels' implications upon national conceptions of childhood; however, her argument does not extend to the work of adolescent literature (YAL) or

look at the ways that YAL disrupts such a master narrative.

Although Henninger's argument does not specifically interrogate the ways that adolescence(ts) is portrayed in *Mockingbird* and *Watchman,* reading Henninger's work alongside Romine's theory of cultural reproduction allows us to see how a text like *Mockingbird* becomes a type of cultural reproduction for YAL texts and American identities of adolescence(ts) in general. On the one hand, this allows readers to interrogate YAL as it reproduces a narrative of racial innocence, white normativity or southern exceptionalism in its texts. Though more texts speak to white normativity, fewer YAL texts push back on the South as a cultural reproduction in itself or question the interplay between raced notions of adolescence and exceptionalist notions of the South.

On the other hand, understanding how *Mockingbird* and *Watchman* reproduce narratives about southern childhood identities opens the door to YAL to respond to such productions by offering counter narratives that oppose static or "Maycombian" renditions of the South. In particular, YAL has recently embraced a broader, more multicultural perspective of adolescence(ts) and has begun to produce more literature that speaks to an adolescence that does not subscribe to white normativity and does not reinforce *the* model of American childhood that Henninger associates with *Mockingbird.* Although YAL continues to subvert *Mockingbird's* master narrative about what is means to be southern and what it means to be a young adult, it does not nullify Levander's claim that the child has been historically figured to racialize individuals and the nation. As such, YAL may continue to subvert this master narrative, but it has not fully eradicated it.

Finally, discussing *Mockingbird* and *Watchman* in tandem with contemporary YAL creates an avenue for educators to bring such a discussion into the classrooms and the

curriculum. YAL does not, as a whole, undertake a project of racial reconciliation, but when placed alongside *Mockingbird*, it does provide an opportunity to expand an adolescent's appreciation of the raced normativity within culture and society. Thus, the following two chapters will pick up this discussion by analyzing the ways that YAL re-configures the master narrative about adolescence(ts) and southern identity in general.

Chapter II: Reconciling Race, Adolescence and the South in Contemporary YAL

In January of 2017, Beau Hughes addressed The Village Church on racial reconciliation inside and outside of the contemporary American church. Speaking as a Christian and within the context of a Christian ontology, Hughes says that ethnicity, gender, generation, class or geography "shapes our perspectives and our preferences, and yet in deep, transformative, inevitable ways, our racial heritage and racial identity is a foundationally shaping influence in our worldview. Our racial heritage, for all of us, has colored (pun very much intended) everything about the way we view and live our lives." While here Hughes is exhorting a contemporary congregation, his assertion on the influence of racial heritage and racial identity upon society echoes Tara McPherson's assertion that "narrative impact[s] the real, shaping not only personal memory and perception but also our public and 'official' histories" (11). As Hughes states, race is an important aspect of an individual's identity and perspective whether or not they are a part of that society's racial majority. Although Hughes is not speaking about literature, adolescence(ts) or the South, we can apply his assertions concerning racial heritage, racial identity and "the way we view and lives our lives" to young adult literature (YAL) in the United States.

In a related way, James Paul Gee connects an individual's perspective to popular culture through what he calls figured worlds. For Gee, figured worlds are "ways in which people picture or construe aspects of the world in their head" that "are rooted in our actual experiences in the world" and build a simulation of what is normal (98-100). Gee proposes that an individual's figured worlds are shaped by the media so that popular culture plays as much a role in informing our perspective as do other institutions and individuals. He comments, "But these figured worlds are not just mental. They exist in books and other media, in knowledge we can gain from what

other people say and do, and in what we can infer from various social practices around us" (101).

This is not to say that objective truth or an objective reality cannot exist because of a person's

figured world. Rather, I use Gee's concept of figured worlds to highlight the way that literature,

and as I argue, YAL, reproduces a specific model of adolescence(ts) and southern identity.

Though Gee does not discuss racial identity or racial heritage in terms of figured worlds, he does

acknowledge that figured worlds are shaped by lived experience, social practices and books, in

which race acts as a influential category in each. What I am suggesting is that figured worlds, or

master narratives about people groups in society, are tied to racial identity and racial heritage.

However, figured worlds are not just about people groups or the various ways we shape

and are shaped by popular culture. Scott Romine demonstrates how figured worlds can also

function as cultural models for the U.S. South within contemporary literature. He argues that the

South, as a community, organizes itself around norms that seek to "establish the essentially

cohesive nature of its social order" (*Narrative Forms* 3). Romine then suggests that deferral is a

central component of southern communities so that "community relies not on what is there so

much as what is, by tacit agreement, not there" (*Narrative Forms* 3). In other words, narratives

of southern communities arrange themselves around boundaries (like race or class), and in doing

so reveal those categories both as the result of the community and as foundational structures of

that community (*Narrative Forms* 14). In the context of southern communities, Romine suggests

that adherence to these norms and the community itself is often a form of coercion masquerading

as cohesion (*Narrative Forms* 18). While Romine's project engages with those moments in

literature in which the narrative of the southern community reveals its contradictions, I use his

work to lay the foundation for viewing narratives about the South as investments in a specific

version of the region that does not consider narratives from those that would be considered, as

Romine puts it, as "not there." Instead, I demonstrate how the South adheres to and creates a master narrative about itself for itself, and that this narrative always involves a narrative about race and racial identity.

Returning to the relationship to racial identity and adolescence(ts), Caroline Levander reminds us that the figure of the child has been historically construed by popular discourse and literature to justify a racial hierarchy in society, to personalize and racialize the nation and to reveal race as the cornerstone of national identity (4-6, 39). As I argued in the previous chapter, Scout Finch in *To Kill a Mockingbird* illustrates Levander's assertion that the child is linked to the way racial hierarchy is naturalized and questioned. As such, racial identity and racial heritage also are linked to the figure of the child, and this child is most iconized in a southern context. Although Levander does not include YAL in her project or an explicit investigation into the South's relationship to the figuring of the child, the recent push for multicultural YAL in that genre offers a rich site to discuss the interworking relationship between adolescence(ts) and race. When these YAL narratives occur within a southern context or narrative, they open the door to push back on master narratives about southern identity and adolescence(ts) by subverting and challenging the figured worlds that exist about these categories.

This chapter, then, will explore contemporary multicultural YAL and its relationship to southern literary studies. Using literature written for and marketed to adolescence(ts), I show how YAL about the South and written by multicultural authors grapples with these larger questions of what constitutes a southern identity and a southern childhood, and how racial identity works to solidify or challenge master narratives about the South and about adolescence(ts) in general. Though none of the works I consider are explicitly southern literature, meaning they do not form a part of the canon of southern literature nor would they consider

themselves as subscribing to that genre of literature, each engages with larger questions about

identity that intersect with questions about their relationship to the South as a place to which they

belong.

This analysis is not comprehensive, meaning there are many YAL texts that I do not treat

here. Instead, each text was chosen based on its engagement with feelings of displacement,

community identity and adolescent growth or change. Finally, each of the texts are written by

authors who are not of the majority of contemporary YAL writers, meaning they are not white

women. Since this chapter acts as a response to *Mockingbird's* role as *the* model for southern

adolescent identity, this distinction is important as we consider how YAL challenges the project

of cultural reproduction and white normativity naturalized and problematized by Scout and Jean

Louise.

Southern Exceptionalism, Racial Identity and Adolescence(ts)

Before entering into an analysis of the different YAL texts that I will consider here, it is

necessary to delineate the interworking relationships between southern exceptionalism and

southern identity, racial identity and adolescent identity. Considering instances of southern

exceptionalism within popular discourse and southern literature, Leigh Anne Duck demonstrates

how the U.S. nation, as a whole, uses the regionalism of the South as a type of scapegoat for its

own raced ideologies (6-7). In doing so, the nation and the national imaginary reinforce a

narrative of uniqueness and otherness that the South embraces about itself. While the South's

own regionalism "gestures inward, proffering organic models of affiliation beneath the

boundaries of the nation, racism gestures throughout and beyond national space; where

regionalism presents claims for inclusion of local habits within a dominant national culture,

racism presents claims for exclusion" (33).

What Duck indicates here is how the regionalism of the South and the nation's use of the regionalism was contradictory in its nature because "regionalism masks national participation in racism, and racism celebrates and maintains certain regionalist tropes" (33). In other words, the relationship between the nation and the South is linked to the relationship of the South and racism. This racism then allows for the nation to reject the South as racist and make it a place that is unique from the nation, reinforcing the southern exceptionalism that southern regionalism celebrates about itself. Essentially, southern exceptionalism operates in tandem with regionalism and race discourse for and about the South.

In a similar vein, Tara McPherson demonstrates how southern exceptionalism does not account for the interaction between the global and the local in the South, meaning that the South's brand of exceptionalism does not allow for narratives that envision a different type of region-nation relationship (10, 13-15). While Tara McPherson does not factor adolescence(ts) into her argument, she does describe the interplay between race and southern identity with regard to conceptions of the South in the national imaginary. She proposes that race and gender work in tandem within popular constructions of the South to establish a white-normative vision of southern communities (5). McPherson, rejecting southern exceptionalism, or what she calls the "Old South," calls instead for "new models of cross-racial alliance and narrative," models that do not simply reproduce white sensitivity and white subjectivity about cross-racial narratives (6-7). While McPherson text refers to narratives of black southerners, her call for new narratives gets at the need to view the South as a non-monolithic narrative and southern as a non-monolithic identity.

Thus, just as the South is not a rigid experience and race is not a rigid identity, and both are intimately connected in relation to one another, adolescence(ts) is also not a monolithic

experience within the context of the South. Petrone et. al label this way of examining adolescence(ts) as the Youth Lens (YL). According to the YL, adolescence(ts) is seen as "a unique identity marker [that] might take on different meaning when linked to other socially constructed identity markers" (Petrone et. al 515). What this means for YAL is that the "YL provides a way to move from textual representations to how the genre of YAL involves broader social, cultural and ideological preoccupations" (Petrone et. al 517). To put it in another way, the YL allows the reader to view adolescence(ts) as an axis of identity that intersects with the axis of racial identity and the axis of southern identity.

The intersectionality of these axes of identity is where multicultural YAL builds its nest. While Kimberlé Crenshaw describes intersectionality within the context of oppression and "the consequence of the imposition of one burden that interacts with preexisting vulnerabilities to create another dimension of disempowerment," multicultural YAL, and even the texts considered in this chapter, do not necessarily undertake the same project of revealing dimensions of oppression (though many do); however, an understanding of the ways that southern identity, racial identity and adolescent identity intersect is helpful for investigating YAL's embrace or rejection of southern exceptionalism within individual books and the genre as a whole. In fact, looking at racial identity in tandem with southern exceptionalism draws our attention to the ways that YAL reproduces and disrupts figured worlds about the South. Therefore, given the theoretical basis established here, I now turn to three works of YAL in order to investigate how multicultural literature in YAL responds to the master narrative *Mockingbird* presents about southern adolescence(ts).

Under the Mesquite

Written in 2011 by Guadalupe Garcia McCall, *Under the Mesquite* narrates the life of Lupita, the protagonist, as she moves with her family of ten from Mexico to Texas and wrestles with the unexpected death of her mother during her senior year of high school. Written in first-person free verse poetry, *Mesquite* frequently shifts between Lupita's memories of her younger self in Mexico and her present experiences in Texas. While not an autobiographical work per se, Garcia McCall does describe how *Mesquite* reflects her experiences as a child. In an interview with Lee & Low Books, Garcia McCall remarks how the poems in the books are fictionalized, but that she "kept the essence of [her] life in them." In fact, the realism of the narrative and the poetry allows Lupita to comment on her experiences in Texas and Mexico without having to justify her authenticity.

Though Lupita does question her sense of belonging within her family, her community and her heritage, she does not sacrifice her identity as a Mexican for her identity as an American. Instead, Lupita often looks for ways to reconcile her multiply-situated categories of identity. In this way, Lupita mirrors Gloria Anzaldúa's theory about what it is like to exist in the borderland, or place where two worlds converge to create a third world (25). As Anzaldúa describes, those belonging to the borderlands do not belong to one category of racial or ethnic identity; rather in the borderlands "people of different races occupy the same territory, where under, lower, middle and upper classes touch" (19). Aware of this, Garcia McCall's portrayal of Lupita does not shy away from the moments when her racial and ethnic identity bump up against her community or her sense of belonging to that community. Instead, Garcia McCall uses those moments to emphasize how Lupita's racial identity intersects with her adolescent identity and opens up a space for Lupita to engage with and relate to her many communities.

While the novel is written in English, Garcia McCall incorporates Spanish words, phrases

and dialogue into the poetry. In fact, Lupita draws the reader's attention to the fact that most of the dialogue with her family occurs in Spanish, though the dialogue is written in English. Before reciting her part for a school play to her mother, Lupita comments on her mother's desire to hear her speak in English even though her mother speaks only Spanish (108); Lupita learns to speak without an accent by talking around lollipops in her mouth (66-68); she laments that the *girasoles* will no longer understand her because of her English (36); and she describes the heavy, sour feeling of English in her mouth (34, 36). As Anzaldúa reminds us, "Ethnic identity is twin skin to linguistic identity--I am my language" (81). In other words, language informs ethnic identity which informs racial identity, and vice versa. For a bilingual individual, like Lupita, racial identity is on display in her linguistic identity.

Thus, Lupita's relationship to language and her use of language are inseparable from her racial identity and heritage. In fact, though Lupita comments on the strangeness of English, she does not express a sense of guilt or shame over her bilingualism until her high school friends mock her for her English. Lupita narrates, "Sarita glances at me sideways, / holds up a taco, and say, / 'How about a tay-co? / Anyone want a tay-co?'/…'I don't talk like that,' I protest. / 'Yes, you do' Mireya jumps in. / 'You talk like you're one of *them*.' / She spits out the word in disgust / and looks down at her lunch tray, / like she can't stand the sight of me" (78-80). Interestingly, Lupita's friends mock her for her lack of accent in English rather than too much of an accent in English or Spanish. It is her ability to linguistically inhabit two arenas that upsets her friends. When Mireya calls Lupita "one of *them*," she makes a distinction between herself, the "*them,*" and Lupita, placing Lupita in a third and separate category. While Lupita does not directly interact with a single white character throughout the course of the novel, Mireya's recategorization of Lupita pushes her into a type of linguistic borderland. Because she is

bilingual, Lupita does not fit neatly with either linguistic or racial group.

As such, Lupita acknowledges how her linguistic identity is interwoven with her racial identity and heritage. As she recounts, "*I'm not acting white!* I want to shout / after my so-called friends. / *I couldn't be more Mexican / if you stamped a cactus on my forehead*" (83). Here, Lupita's internal dialogue affirms that racial identity is a socially negotiated contract, and within the social context of her friends, Lupita's bilingualism indicates a racial identity that her friends place on a different tier of racial hierarchy. However, Lupita's exclamation of "*I'm not acting white!"* indicates that she recognizes the difference between her racial identity and ethnic identity. Instead of affirming herself in terms of her race, Lupita calls herself "Mexican," implying her racial identity is not necessarily linked to her ethnicity. At the same time, in asserting her Mexican-American heritage, Lupita reconciles her bilingualism with her racial identity. By exclaiming that she is not "acting white," Lupita draws the reader's attention to the concept that "acting white" is an action and is somehow different, but related to being white. In doing so, Lupita demonstrates that her bilingualism does not make her any more or less "white."

Moreover, Lupita's attempts to reconcile herself to her linguistic and racial identity is connected to her adolescence(ts) and reflects her capacity to carve out her identity as a Mexican-American teenager. For example, Lupita laments her new role as a "*senorita"* and that she cannot wear jeans like American teenagers after her fifteenth birthday (76); she juxtaposes "*los Estados Unidos*" with her hometown in Mexico, feeling a nostalgia for her former life and a sense of displacement in her current community (38-39); and she assumes the role of caregiver as her mother and father spend the summer in a hospital far away from their home (132). In each of these instances, Lupita does not fit the expectations for American teenagers or Mexican teenagers. Unlike Jean Louise in *Watchman*, Lupita's adolescence(ts) does not operate around a

metaphoric return to childhood in order to become an adult. Instead, Lupita, in many ways, assumes the responsibilities expected of adults in her family. And while the first two examples above demonstrate a slippage between her adolescent identity and her racial identity, so that she cannot be a teenager in the same way as a monolingual Mexican or a monolingual American, the slippage also highlights Lupita's own sense of adolescence(ts) as unique to her engagement with her racial identity and heritage.

Because of her race, ethnicity, bilingualism and family circumstances, Lupita's state of adolescence does not reflect the expectations for teenagers that those inside or outside her community hold. When thrown into relief with her racial identity and, by extension, her linguistic identity, Lupita's adolescence is neither that of a "*senorita"* nor that of an American teenager. Instead, Lupita views herself less in terms of her adolescence and more in terms of her significance in her family. When Lupita uses the term "*senorita,*" she defines the expectations of adolescence for herself and her community and links adolescence to her racial and linguistic identity. Thus, even though her adolescence is linked to racial identity, again "*senorita"* is the expectation that she uses to define her own state of adolescence, Lupita recognizes that this label does not fit with her current experience as an adolescent. Because she cannot fit the expectations bound within the "*senorita*" state of adolescence, Lupita is distanced from her community and her community's definition of what an adolescent is and does. Because her adolescence distances her and displaces her on one level from her community, it allows her to define her adolescence in terms of her relationship as a leader and caregiver in her family. No longer a blue-jean wearing American teenager nor a Mexican "*senorita,*" Lupita is simply Lupita.

Although the fictional setting of the narrative occurs within the general context of the U.S. South, neither Garcia McCall nor Lupita concern themselves with an identity strictly

aligned with "southerness." In fact, Lupita consistently reaffirms her Mexican-American identity as more of a relationship or connection between border-worlds and border-cultures. When Lupita leaves her home for college, her experience does not invoke nostalgia to return to either the hometown of her childhood or of her adolescence(ts). Instead, she looks at her move as another type of transplant, one that incurs growth as an avenue for reconciling her racial identity and her adolescence. Upon her arrival at the university, Lupita narrates, "This is a welcomed uprooting / for me. I am transplanting myself / to a whole new place, / with a new kind of language to learn" (206). While Lupita's geographic break from her home does not signal an alignment with a southern identity (or a rejection of it), it does signal a break from her former community and a willingness to belong with a new community. Her ability to uproot and replant herself in a "whole new place" suggests a type of agency that gives Lupita the capacity to continuously adapt and grow in her displacement and replacement-- and her reconciliation between her racial identity and her adolescence(ts) gives her an elasticity between herself and her new environment. In pulling back to *Mesquite*'s challenge to contemporary YAL, Lupita's experiences in her community all demonstrate that what is, to quote Romine, "not there" is actually very much present. When contextualized with southern literature, *Mesquite* shows us how a character's participation in "southerness" or a southern identity does not mean that those works in which southerness is "not there" are invalid. Instead, works like *Mesquite* offer a way to critique the limitations of southern identity and multicultural YAL.

Kira-Kira

Although Lupita's narrative is unique in that it does not directly reference the South, though set in Texas, Cynthia Kadohata's 2004 novel, *Kira-Kira*, utilizes the 1950s and 1960s pre and post-integration South to engage in a dialogue between southern identity, racial identity and

adolescence(ts). *Kira-Kira* follows the life of Katie, a second-generation Japanese American girl who moves with her family from small town Iowa to small town Georgia. Aside from navigating a new town and new life with her family, Katie also watches as her older sister Lynn slowly dies from a terminal illness. While her sister's illness and death are at the heart of the novel's plot, Katie's recollections of her childhood in Georgia navigate her own sense of displacement and belonging within her southern community.

When Katie learns of her parents' decision to move to the South in search of work, Katie "did not see" their reasonings, but accepts their decision to move. Though Katie is aware of her racial identity and heritage, explaining her Japanese identity within the first pages of the novel, she does not reject her parents' reasonings on the basis of racial identity--she rejects the move based on logical reasoning. As she reasons, "I did not see why we had to move to a southern state where my father said you could not understand a word people said because of their southern accents. I did not see why we had to leave our house for a small apartment" (17). In this instance, her rejection of her parents' rationales signal her desire to remain where she knows her community: she is not necessarily rejecting the South as an entity in itself. Instead, Katie is affirming her sense of belonging to her current community. Her conclusions, based on the illogicality she perceives in her parent's arguments, emphasize her linguistic and geographic belonging to her current community. Though "regionalism presents claims for inclusion of local habits," Katie has no point of reference for the South's local habits of inclusion (Duck 33). Here, Katie does not subscribe to an exceptionalist fantasy about the South because neither she nor her family have an cultural or historical point of reference to the region. As the daughter of first-generation Asian immigrants, Katie's cultural and historical points of reference are her current life in Iowa and her parents' memories of Japan.

Although *Kira-Kira,* like *Mesquite,* does not assume a cultural or historical relationship to the South, Katie, unlike Lupita, has to negotiate racial boundaries that are more explicitly defined by her southern community. Once Katie and her family stop for their first night in the South on their journey to Georgia, they bump up against the racial expectations and assumptions of the pre-integration South. As Katie's father requests a room for his family, Katie watches as he waits for the woman to end her personal call. Instead, the receptionist "moved her mouth from the phone and said to my father, 'Indians stay in the back rooms'" (20). While her father silently fills out the registration card, Katie corrects the woman, replying that they are neither Indians nor Mexicans, as the woman subsequently assumes. After the receptionist berates Katie for causing "trouble," Katie wonders that her father did not respond physically to the woman's verbal attacks.

Here, Kadohata presents the readers with an image of Katie's experience of racial inequality to indirectly draw attention to the contradictions of the receptionist's racial logic, alerting the reader to incongruity of the receptionist's system of racial hierarchy and the reality of Katie's racial identity. Because Katie does not fit the receptionist's idea of who a brown person is, she experiences a hyper-awareness of herself as a raced individual. Through the contrast of her actual identity with the racial identity the receptionist attempts to place upon her, Katie recognizes the contradiction in the logic of a racial hierarchy. Because Katie is brown, so thinks the receptionist, she must be either (1) Native American or (2) Mexican. When Katie is neither, the woman cannot place her in her, or her society's, system of racial classification. Through this encounter, Kadohata reveals that race is not a monolithic determining factor of identity. In this instance, the reader indirectly, for Katie does not comment on her race, sees that race as a construct is negotiated by the society's assumptions and classifications for and about

race. Katie's first moment of racial awareness in the South reveals the inconsistency at the core of racial hierarchy.

Ironically, Kadohata then creates an immediate encounter for Katie with "some real Indians sitting on the curb," mentioning that "They looked at us as if they had never seen anything quite like us, and we looked at them the same way" (22). Using irony, Kadohata bring Katie, and by extension the reader, one step further in her critique of the receptionist's racial logic. By bringing Katie face-to-face with the receptionist's definition of her race (brown means Indian or Mexican), Kadohata uses irony to contrast what Katie is with what Katie is not; thus, Kadohata figuratively estranges race from skin color. The misrecognition between the Katie and the Indians on the curb signals the difference between the two families, even though society would group them together. Even after the meeting, Katie recalls her knowledge of the Ainu people in Japan, attempting unsuccessfully to place the American Indians within her own system of classification and, thereby, recognizing the cultural difference (22).

Since these instances serve as Katie's first encounter with the racial hierarchy of the South, she does not immediately question or critique the South itself. It is as Katie and Lynn begin to acculturate to their new home in Georgia that Kadohata invites a critique of a monolithic southern identity, and by extension, southern exceptionalism itself. When Katie arrives in Georgia, she reflects on how Georgia seems no different inside the car, but changes once she interacts with people. She comments, "The restaurant signs said things like COLORED IN BACK. The white people sat at the front. We didn't know where to sit, so we always ordered to-go. We didn't see another Japanese person anywhere" (24). Recalling the incongruity of the receptionist's racial logic, the Georgia community cannot imagine an individual who does not fit the white-colored system of classification. Even when Katie begins to speak with a southern

accent, she is ignored by her peers because she is Japanese (50). Katie's southern accent

indicates a southern identity that her "southerness" is still rejected because it does not fit

society's idea of a southerner. At the same time, her southern accent indicates that she is actually

a linguistic southerner. In Katie's linguistic shift, Kadohata draws the reader's attention to a

version of southern identity that is neither white nor black, and yet, neither is it linguistically

different. Again, Kadohata uses irony to suggest that a southern accent does not imply a white

southerner. We can extrapolate her irony one step further to suggest that a southern accent in the

mouth of a southern girl does not make that girl a type of Scout Finch. Thus, Katie becomes an

alternative Scout Finch, redefining what constitutes a southerner and a southern identity.

But, what makes Kadohata's portrayal of Katie so interesting is when we bring her racial

identity and southern identity into conversation with Katie as adolescent. Heather Snell

complicates the relationship between multicultural YAL and its relationship to adolescence(ts).

Snell argues that the problem with many YAL novels is that the protagonists "are often depicted

in ways that emphasize their commonalities with North American young people, who are, as I

have suggested, largely positioned as white and middle class" (270).While Kadohata does

position Katie in relationship to her white community in school as mentioned above, she also

positions Katie in relationship to her Japanese community. Lynn, her older sister, often acts as a

foil to Katie in that Katie often positions herself and her actions in relation to the actual or

hypothetical actions of her older sister. In fact, Katie feels most betrayed by her sister when her

sister begins to be socially accepted by her mostly white classmates (39). In this way, Katie

begins to indirectly associate Lynn with the white-normative culture of the town, although Lynn

is in fact betrayed by her friends and no longer goes to school due to her illness. On her last night

with her sister, Katie reminisces how similar Lynn looks to "the white ghost of Brenda I'd seen

at the swamp" (102). Brenda is the ghost of a ten-year-old girl who died in the swamp and remains there searching for her parents (49). While Katie's experience with Brenda is mostly fictional (she think she sees movement in the swamp that she attributes to Brenda), Brenda still represents the swamp, Georgia and the South to Katie. Thus, when Katie compares Lynn to the ghost, Katie sees Brenda, not Lynn. Interestingly, Katie does not see Brenda in the swamp, but as she looks at Lynn, she asserts that she did see Brenda in the swamp. The slippage between her two visions of Brenda demonstrate how Brenda is a projection of southern imagery and identity onto Lynn. In doing so, Katie distances herself from both her sister and the ghost. Thus, when her sister dies, Brenda dies too.

Although Kadohata complicates Lynn as a non-white foil to Katie, she does provide another foil in Katie's recital of her father when he was an adolescent. After Lynn's death, Katie's father reminisces about all of the opportunities he missed when he was 12 years old (123). However, Katie rejects his nostalgia saying, "I knew he couldn't remember such a time, only thought he could, because he'd told me how when he was twelve, he and Uncle Katsuhisa had needed to stop their education in Japan and return to California to help their parents on the family farm" (123). Here, Kadohata uses Katie's recital of the reality of her father's adolescence to draw a comparison with Katie's own adolescence. Although Katie's adolescence is not typical in that she watches her sister die, cares for her younger brother while her parents work long hours, and does not fit into the social or racial hierarchies of adolescents in her communities, in this example, Kadohata frames Katie's adolescence with her father's adolescence. While Kadohata does not elevate one narrative over the other, Katie's awareness of her adolescence in comparison to that of her father suggests that she identifies with and rejects her father's adolescence. In identifying with her father, Katie rejects an adolescence that is based in white-

normative assumptions or the expectations of her southern community, affirming her heritage as a Japanese adolescent. At the same time, when Katie rejects her father's nostalgia, she rejects the adolescence of her father as her ideal of what an adolescent is and does. In distancing herself from her father's 12-year-old self by distinguishing between his nostalgia and the reality, Katie distances herself from a conception of adolescence that is based in Japanese American expectations and norms. In doing so, Katie disrupts the image of white-normative southern adolescent identity that southern exceptionalism promotes, but she also disrupts the normativities for a Japanese American adolescent displayed in the narratives of adolescence her family provides.

Inside Out & Back Again

In the above examples, Lupita and Katie eventually experience some commonality with their southern community, even if that commonality is not expressed in terms of "southerness" or southern exceptionalism. However, Thanhha Lai's 2011 novel *Inside Out & Back Again* does not resolve the protagonist's (Hà) distance from her community. In fact, by the end of the narrative, Hà still feels and remains the linguistic, racial and cultural outsider in her school and her town. Also containing largely autobiographical material, as Lai notes in a letter to the reader at the end of the novel, *Inside Out & Back Again* is unique in that it is not just an immigrant story. It is a refugee-immigrant narrative. Lai draws the reader's attention to this fact in her dedication: "To the millions of refugees in the world, may you each find a home." Similar to *Mesquite,* Lai presents Hà's narrative in first-person free verse poetry that connects scenes through images. Unlike the other two narratives considered here, *Inside Out & Back Again* takes the reader through Hà's experiences with the Vietnam War, the fall of Saigon, her experience on the escape ship and her time in two refugee camps before her family's eventual sponsorship by an Alabama

businessman.

In thinking about Hà's narrative as a refugee-immigrant narrative, Lisa Lowe's "immigrant acts" theory is useful for demonstrating how Hà's narrative pushes back on the model narrative for southern adolescence(ts) found in Scout Finch. Lowe's theory proposes that the law, along with other sociohistorical dynamics, molds and stabilizes gender, race and citizenship (11). She writes that "'Immigrant Acts' names the *agency* of Asian immigrants and Asian Americans: the acts of labor, resistance, memory and survival" (12, emphasis in original). Lowe argues that the legal formation of Asian American as cititzen and Asian immigrant as non-citizen helped to establish a "racial formation" that bound race to the law (13-14). While my argument does not discuss the relationship between the law, gender and citizenship, I do think that her argument about racial identity formation and the Asian American and Asian immigrant's capacity for agency through resistance and memory applicable to Hà's experiences in her Alabama community.

Unlike Katie or Lupita, Hà's southern community consistently rejects her and her family. She is constantly bullied in school, and when her home is vandalized, her neighbors slam their doors at her and her family's gesture of friendship (162-164, 207). She discusses her experience with a segregated lunchroom "as if it never occurred / to them / someone medium / would show up" (143). She practices hiding from her community and being seen by learning self-defense from her older brother, and she reminisces about her home in Saigon with the papaya tree and the "beautiful furniture and matching dishes" (126). Because of Hà's status as refugee-immigrant, racial outsider and adolescent, she is uniquely vulnerable to the antagonisms of her community, and we as readers see this most clearly in the bullying she experiences in which her teacher thinks her name is a joke, children pull her arm hair and two boys chase her yelling "Boo-Da"

(140, 145, 207). Many of these examples display how Hà's vulnerability results from her racial identity, her legal status as Asian immigrant, and her adolescence. All of these identity markers interconnect to shove Hà outside the southern community and then work to keep her outside.

But, as the above examples imply, Hà's agency results from her ability to resist her conforming to her community's expectations. Even though Hà learns English throughout the narrative, she includes mini-grammar lessons in which she critiques the grammar rules, eventually declaring "Whoever invented English / should be bitten / by a snake!" (128). In fact, Hà uses many Vietnamese terms and expressions throughout the novel, which Lai leaves un-translated. This resistance to a supposed white readership and English itself proves to an immigrant act that points to Hà, and by extension, Lai's agency to resist. Lai draws our attention to this form of resistance when Hà expresses frustration over the sound a horse makes: "To make it worse, / the cowboy explains / horses here go / *neigh, neigh, neigh, /* not *hee, hee, hee. /* No they don't. / Where am I?" (134). By denying the cowboy's explanation about the sound horses make, Hà denies his system of classification. Interestingly, her denial results in a moment of incredulity about her community.

While I do not think Hà's question is existential in nature, I think it signals her hyper-awareness of her community. Her question draws attention to the strangeness of the town in Alabama. In questioning where she is, Hà questions her community's assumed normality. In this moment, Lai signals that Hà's experiences and her reaction are normal, not the community. Here, Hà's resistance acts on two levels: resisting that a horse goes *neigh* and resisting her placement within that community. Her question figuratively displaces her from Alabama--in it, she chooses to remain outside and apart from her community.

However, Hà's resistance is not only verbally expressed. For example, Hà wears a flannel

dress to school, unaware that it is typically worn as a nightgown. When her classmates tease her for the nightgown, pointing to the flower on the dress that makes it a nightgown, Hà responds: "I look down / at the tiny blue flower / barely stitched on. / I rip it off. / *Nightgown no more"* (245). In this moment, Hà resists embarrassment at her mistake and even resists the mistake itself. By removing the tiny blue flower, Hà removes the signifying object for her mistake. Her removal of the flower symbolizes her resistance to her society's mockery or the classification on which that mockery rests. She transforms a nightgown into a dress as if to illustrate her own resistance to her society's attempt to categorize her based on a system of racial signification. By removing the flower, Hà shows her mistake to be the result of a social expectation and discards that expectation as simply as she discards the flower itself.

Immigrant acts of memory also result in agency, and Lai makes this clear through Hà's response to images of the Vietnam War and her insistence to remember her home. This is most clearly witnessed when Hà's teacher shows the class images of burned bodies and death in an attempt to instruct Hà's class on the war and on Vietnam (194). Hà rejects these images of Vietnam saying, "She should have shown / something about / papayas and Tết. No one would believe me / but at times / I would choose / wartime in Saigon / over / peacetime in Alabama" (195). Here, Lai not only offers a critique of the South as worse than a warzone, but she also emphasizes Hà's memory of her home. If, as Snell argues, the majority of readers of YAL are white and middle-class, Hà's critique of Alabama and her teacher's attempts to familiarize the class with her culture disrupt the expectations of identification to Hà's narrative or her experiences. In defamiliarizing the reader in this way, Lai also displays agency that is not dependent upon the dominant narratives of her readers.

For this reason, Hà's narrative offers the strongest critique for southern exceptionalism.

However, Lai goes one step further. In her notes to her readers, Lai explains that her purpose in writing the novel was to contextualize her home and her experiences for her nieces and nephews. She writes, "...they can't really imagine the noises and smells of Vietnam, the daily challenges of starting over in strange land. I extend this idea to all: How much do we know about those around us?" (262). Although Lai's question extends her narrative to those who cannot identify with her experiences, it also acts as a challenge to take her narrative and apply it as *the* model for Asian immigrant or refugee narratives. The question is Lai's final immigrant act to preserve her memories but a denial to allow that narrative to become, as Romine puts it, a "mobilize[d] idea of culture" (*The Real South* 59). Her question is a call to read her narrative and to know her experiences as much as it is a challenge to the reader to find other narratives. It is Lai's immigrant act of preservation and resistance.

Multiculturalism in YAL

Returning to the idea of racial reconciliation, the intent of this chapter is not to offer a clear-cut formula to apply to YAL or to use in discussing multicultural YAL and its relationship to society. Indeed, reconciliation implies a work toward restoration that is fixed and continual, fixed in a single restorative action and continual in the continuous repetition of restorative actions. To an extent, pluralism, even multiculturalism, as concepts attempt to engage in projects of reconciliation by working to bring multiplicity into dialogue in arenas that rely on white-normativity. Though pluralism cannot resolve all issues, it does offer many benefits. In YAL, pluralism that accounts for the narratives of other cultures and communities offers readers an opportunity to question their assumption that a monolithic narrative exists for racial identity, the South or even adolescence(ts). For many of authors of multicultural YAL, especially those mentioned in this chapter, their narratives are highly personal, often reflecting semi-

autobiographical content of their experience as immigrants to or in the South. And though I do

not propose that simply publishing more YAL multicultural texts with fix all issues of racial

heritages, multiculturalism does draw attention to the problems within systems of racial

hierarchy. This is important for a genre that, in recent years, has become dominated by white

female writers. Incorporating the works of minority authors into the genre disrupts the powerful

vision of white-normativity that YAL, whether consciously or not, reproduces.

In returning to *Kira-Kira*, what I find interesting is Katie's own identification as a

southerner. Indeed, her linguistic change signals an allegiance to the region even as she rejects it.

This is important for readers to have a fuller awareness of the cultural multiplicity within a

region that prides itself on its Tara-like cultural reproduction. In *The Real South,* Romine argues

that Tara becomes "the sim-plantation that all real plantations of the tourist industry strive to

reproduce, an ineffable space toward which actual spaces of all kinds are mobilized…" so that

Tara "mobilizes an *idea* of culture" that is based in reality's attempt to reproduce a cultural

fantasy (29, 59 emphasis in original). For the South, Tara acts as the hallmark of southern

cultural aspirations and assumptions.

Yet, as many of the narratives here present, in the world of the immigrant southerner,

Tara itself, as a fixed point of cultural reference, does not exist. Although this does not negate the

plantation-based social and economic hierarchy still present within these narratives (even Katie's

parents work in factories in the shadow of their boss's plantation-like estate), it does limit and

even impede the cultural reproduction of Tara as the South's fixed point of reference and cultural

aspiration. In presenting their narratives, *Mesquite, Kira-Kira* and *Inside Out & Back Again*

disrupt this cultural reproduction within contemporary YAL and southern literature. Similarly,

each of these texts pushes back on *Mockingbird*'s status as the model for southern adolescence

and identity. Because of the interaction between their racial and adolescent identity with notions of southern exceptionalism directly or indirectly referenced in each novel, Lupita, Katie and Hà do not conform to a Scout-Finichified version of adolescence(ts) or belonging. Instead, each of these protagonists reveals the inconsistencies in using Scout Finch as a prism to define southern adolescent identity.

The engagement between racial identity, southern identity, adolescence(ts) and southern exceptionalism displayed in these texts ultimately raises the question of what happens when the South as we conceive of it disappears. What happens when racial categorization, so neatly packaged in a white-normative racial hierarchy, ceases to exist? How do we approach southern exceptionalism in YAL through the lens dystopia provides? The next chapter picks up these questions and interrogates how YAL approaches race, the U.S. South, and adolescence(ts) when these categories cannot be easily marked, combined, or separated by society.

Chapter III: Dystopia and the South in YAL's *Orleans*

Within its genre, young adult literature (YAL) has seen the rise of post-apocalyptic and dystopian narratives targeted at and consumed by its readers. Series like Suzanne Collins' *The Hunger Games,* Veronica Roth's *Divergent,* or James Dashner's *The Maze Runner* have seen international commercial success and demonstrate the influence of YAL for the contemporary teen and adult consumer. In their study of YAL dystopian novels, Justin Scholes and Jon Ostenson point out that "[d]ystopian fiction features protagonists who are likewise questioning the underlying values of a flawed society and their identity within it--who they are going to be and how they are going to act [...] Teenagers connect with these protagonists as they feel a similar weight on their shoulders" (14). Far from alienating teens, YAL dystopian fiction creates a bridge for readers to connect the fictional world with their actual world. In particular, teens feel a "similar weight," or a similar responsibility to their society and community that the protagonists feel in YAL dystopias. I point out the weight of responsibility because I believe it is one reason YAL dystopias are so popular across age and gender: teen protagonists in dystopian fiction often assume similar responsibilities and consequences as would be expected of adults. YAL dystopias then disrupt monolithic characterizations about teen agency.

Interestingly, most YAL dystopias are set in communities or environments outside of the U.S. South. Ebony Elizabeth Thomas highlights YAL genre's trend to locate narratives in either "urban landscapes of privilege" or "urban landscapes of challenge." Whereas "urban landscapes of privilege" are narratives that tend to glorify material cosmopolitanism and offer readers a tourism of privileged lifestyles, "urban landscapes of challenge" describe environments of "decay and criminal justice systems" (15, 17). What is crucial to Thomas' analysis of urban landscapes of privilege and challenge is how YAL landscapes can become synonymous with

levels of raced privilege and access. Thomas suggests that "[w]hen characters do venture outside of the ghetto, the barrio, or the trailer park, they are faced with the realities of racism and class privilege. This type of landscape is what *urban* has come to mean in our popular consciousness" (17, emphasis in original). In other words, urban places of privilege and challenge are connected to the reader's conceptions of race and, inadvertently, racialize certain spaces. By extension, all YAL landscapes have the potential to become raced in a specific way due to their association with racial hierarchies, whether urban or not. Likewise, in discussing the South in YAL, the context of the landscape within the novel becomes an instrumental signifier in pointing to underlying issues of race and identity within the text.

As Scholes and Ostenson insist, YAL dystopias remain so popular with readers because of dystopia's ability to satirize the underlying principles of society and reveal how "humanity is the cause of its own nightmarish situation" (11). Scholes and Ostenson demonstrate that YAL dystopias frequently present societies in which people are divided into groups based on privilege and the non-privileged groups are defined as "rote, meaningless or inhuman" (11). They further propose that the reoccurrence of inhumanity and isolation within YAL dystopias is one reason that these texts resonate with teen readers (14). For this reason, many YAL dystopian texts have called into question our assumptions and dependence to master narratives of the U.S. South and adolescence(ts) that are bolstered by master narratives about race and raced forms of agency in general. In an attempt to break from racialized bodies and agencies, dystopian YAL subverts our notion of what constitutes the South and what it means to be recognized as an adolescent. Scholes and Ostenson along with Thomas' analysis raise an important question: what kinds of master narratives about the South do YAL dystopian novels produce?

Sherri Smith's 2013 novel *Orleans* questions how the durability of humanity is connected

to raced forms of agency and technology in hostile southern territories. As a narrative, Smith gives her readers a futuristic world, a virtual southern landscape in which she explores recurring images of a raced South in order to examine the biopolitics of Katrina disaster relief and the post-Katrina aftermath. In light of this, I use *Orleans* as a model for how teen dystopia about the South and about adolescence(ts) causes us to reimagine the role of race in YAL and southern literature more broadly. I choose to focus on *Orleans* as opposed to other YAL dystopias because it interrogates race as a centrally-shaping element of society and identity, and because it provides a dystopian landscape of the South for teens, a rare occurrence in much of YAL. If Scout Finch and Maycomb present us with the embodiment of southern adolescence(ts), then *Orleans* offers us a potential landscape to explore the dystopian implications when the "Maycombian" South, racial hierarchy and strict roles for adolescence(ts) disappear altogether.

Finally, *Orleans* provides the opportunity to extend this analysis to questions of adolescent agency.Smith juxtaposes the agency of her adolescent characters through the character Daniel and his relationship to the protagonist, Fen. By positioning these characters as alternatives to each other in the novels, Smith challenges the single-story of a raced and adult-normative agency for adolescence(ts). Ultimately, this chapter will argue that *Orleans'* characters and landscape become ways to reveal the limits to the multicultural push in YAL and dystopian YAL. In doing so, Smith and *Orleans* challenge assumptions about adolescent agency and its relationship to southern identity in the national imaginary.

The World of *Orleans*

Smith's *Orleans* traces the journey of Fen de la Guerre and Daniel as they traverse the storm-ravaged and wild terrain of Orleans, the annexed coastal region of the United States Gulf. Dividing the two regions within the nation-state by a border wall and quarantine due to disease,

Smith narrates through two perspectives: Daniel, the privileged outsider from the Outer States, and Fen, the Orleans native-resident and insider. Daniel's impetus for illegally crossing into Orleans is his desire to find a cure for the Delta Fever, the deadly virus that circulates in the blood of individuals. As an Orleans resident, Fen cannot cross over into the Outer States; however, when her tribe's chief dies during childbirth, Fen adopts Baby Girl, or Enola, as her ward and looks for a way to carry Enola safely over the wall and out of Orleans. Time is critical for Fen as it takes seven days before the Delta Fever settles into Enola's bloodstream and ruins her chances for a life in the Outer States.

Orleans is divided into tribes based on blood type as a way of stopping the Delta Fever from progressing faster. While in Orleans, Daniel is captured, along with Fen, by one of the blood tribes and taken to a harvesting ranch to have blood drawn. As Daniel and Fen wait for the medical team, they escape and strike a bargain in which Fen leads Daniel to the Institute of Post-Separation Studies and the remaining Delta Fever scientists. When their trip proves fruitless, Daniel and Fen decide to find a way to get Enola safely over the Wall before the end of the week. The novel ends with Daniel and Enola successfully escaping over the Wall as the border guards shoot Fen.

The Biopolitics of *Orleans*

In August of 2005, Hurricane Katrina made landfall in New Orleans, and the aftermath of the hurricane and the subsequent flooding caused one of the worst natural disasters in the region. Henry Giroux's analysis of the government and media's response to the number of dispossessed and deceased citizens demonstrates the state's systemic intent to "dismantle the welfare state" and to treat the marginalized in society as "dispensable populations made to be managed, criminalized and made to disappear" (175). Giroux connects the response of the state to those

affected by Katrina as a "new kind of politics*"* in which certain people groups or populations are seen as disposable or invisible due to social or racial status (174). As Giroux points out, Hurricane Katrina revealed that the post-disaster crisis was as much about class as it was about race (174).

Smith acknowledges that her motivation for writing *Orleans* was influenced by her family's experiences with Hurricane Katrina and the government's response to New Orleans' residents. "At the time, the idea was born out of two things: an article I read about street gangs protecting their neighborhoods when the cops had all fled, and race issues that seemed to be part of the whole Katrina catastrophe.   It made me wonder: what if race wasn't an issue? What differences would separate people then? What if it wasn't something you could see? I decided blood was an interesting answer" (Interview with Sherri L. Smith). As such, Smith reinscribes racism into the post-disaster, "post-racial" world of *Orleans* through a caste system based on blood type, essentially a strata of privilege based upon desirability of blood type.

Blood type becomes biopolitical and a symbol of status, power and agency for Orleans residents. Biopolitics "implies that a relationship exists between biological forces and government control. In other words, governments use biological phenomena as a way to organize and regulate society" (Connors and Trites 7). The biological phenomena may be used to group people into different categories. By extension, regulating society through biological phenomena allows the government to use those phenomena to determine and locate the value of those individuals. As Giroux notes, biopolitics determined what persons the state saw as of lesser value before, during and after Hurricane Katrina (175). Giroux extrapolates that the government's decision to cut welfare programs signals the government's attempt to regulate certain bodies as disposable and other bodies as valuable, for "certain groups have the power to protect themselves

from [racist] stereotypes and others do not" which produces for those stereotyped "deadly, material consequences" (176-177). While those consequences vary, the biopolitics at play between the state and the population and the state and the individual uncover how the biopolitical becomes a way to exert power and control over an individual.

Thus, Smith's attention to blood type is really a question of biopower, or "a type of power related to population control and demographics, appropriately termed because of its connection to human biological issues like reproductive, disease and racial categorizations" (Macaluso and McKenzie 110). Here, Macaluso and McKenzie draw on Michel Foucault's theory of biopower and biopolitics. As Foucault argues, biopower organizes itself around relationships at institutional and personal levels and creates hierarchies based upon biological qualities (262-263). Furthermore, this biopower places new "variables" on the body so that the body becomes viewed in terms of economic investments in utility, profitability and longevity (Foucault 279). In *Orleans,* this biological variable of the body is blood and blood type. Blood and blood type act as the currency and principle of social organization in the novel: Smith divides and categorizes Orleans into tribes based on blood type (16-17). However, Smith extends the use of biopower beyond what can be perceived as strictly pertaining to the human body.

While blood type is an aspect of the biopolitics in the novel, Smith uses more than just invisible classifications to display the structures of biopower between Orleans and the Outer States. For example, Smith frames the narrative with two official documents from the United States government and governmental agencies (FEMA and CDC). As agencies of the nation-state, FEMA and the CDC operate as institutions endowed with power by the Outer States. The first document, the "Declaration of Quarantine," acts to "seal off all storm-affected areas of the Gulf Coast region" and denies anyone from "cross[ing] the border without blood testing" (6).

The mobility of individuals to and from Orleans is contingent on the submission of their body to government-sanctioned regulations. While not necessarily a malicious action in itself, the document does serve to normalize the creation of a region separate from the Outer States by using language and terms recognized first by institutions of the nation-state. The language of the document defines the region in terms of its relationship to the Outer States so that the quarantine elevates the Outer States, and its blood-approved inhabitants, over that of Orleans.

Thus, quarantine begins the Outer States' configuration of Orleans around biopolitical power. The quarantine creates a tangible representation of separation that carves out a region from the nation. To enforce the quarantine, the Outer States erect a wall and establish forced residence for those on the south side of the wall, creating a barrier that represents the biopolitical power structures at work for characters inside and outside of Orleans. For those in the Outer States, the quarantine and the barrier represent an "epidemic" that manifests itself in the natural body, through the Delta Fever's infiltration of the blood, and in nature, through the destruction of the Gulf Coast landscape (6). For those within Orleans, the quarantine and barrier represent the subordinate position of Orleans to the nation-state since the Outer States use a wall to determine what does and does not constitute the infected region. As the "Document of Quarantine" states, the FEMA and CDC establish the quarantine for "the safety of the population at large" (6). Essentially, the quarantine and barrier define safe space (Outer States) and dangerous space (Orleans), causing the formation of two political states founded via biopower.

In the second document that frames the narrative, the "Declaration of Separation," Smith invokes the language of the Declaration of Independence: "The shape of our great nation has been altered irrevocably by Nature, and now Man must follow suit in order to protect the inalienable rights of the majority, those being the right to Life, Liberty and the Pursuit of

Happiness…" (7). Although the Declaration of Independence declares "Life, Liberty and the

Pursuit of Happiness" for all individuals, late 1700s society and law in the United States only

recognized white men as bearers of those "inalienable rights." Thus, the rights of the Declaration

of Independence only recognized those that conformed to its specifications of race and gender,

separating legally those that belonged to this group and those that did not. The Declaration of

Independence validated a form of biopolitical power. Likewise, the "Declaration of Separation"

invokes the language of the Declaration of Independence in order to reveal the biopower at work

through the document. The Outer States positions Orleans outsides the jurisdiction of the

"inalienable rights of the majority," and for this reason, the Outer States separates itself into two

regions: a region with political and legal rights and a region outside the jurisdiction of those

rights.

In fact, Orleans serves to parallel the U.S. South by being comprised of states

traditionally ascribed as southern, by being the site of social anxieties, and by being a separate

region geographically and environmentally distinct from the nation (5-7). By imposing

quarantine and building the wall, the Outer States physically separate themselves from Orleans,

sealing off knowledge from, interaction with or access to the region. The barrier contains and

excludes simultaneously. The barrier functions to determine who and what are dangerous and

unsafe. In dividing a line, the barrier makes a distinction between those who belong to Orleans,

and are therefore of lesser value, with those who belong to the Outer States and have a higher

value placed on their person. In doing so, the barrier creates an inherent regionalism and

exceptionalism within the nation at large. Regionalism then reproduces and sustains the

biopolitical structures of the nation because it subscribes to those structures.

Because its regionalism justifies a hierarchy that places higher and lesser value on certain

bodies, the relationship between Orleans and the Outer States reflects this hierarchy. The biopower of this type of hierarchy resembles the biopolitical structures of racial hierarchy that privileges certain people groups over others based on society's value of their skin. Connors and Trites further remark on how dystopian YAL often utilizes biopolitics to lead to "literal or metaphorical genocide," or a population that is disposable precisely because of its placement on this social or racial hierarchy (7). As Giroux proposes in his analysis of post-Katrina disaster relief, "This is what I call the *new politics of disposability:* the poor, especially people of color, not only have to fend for themselves in the face of life's tragedies but are also supposed to do it without being seen by the dominant society" (175). Thus, the biopolitics of disposability propose that certain people are expendable based on their identity and that their expendability should remain invisible to the nation-state.

Smith heightens the biopolitical power structure through the relationship between the nation and its region to the Wall. As Smith remarks in her interview with *BookMagnet Blog,* building a wall to preserve certain parts of New Orleans for posterity was considered after Hurricane Katrina: "Apparently, the rest of the city was considered a reasonable loss. I remember reading that in my grandparent's kitchen and thinking, 'But… that's us!'" For Smith, the threat of the Wall for New Orleans would be an extension of the biopolitics between New Orleans and the United States. It would also represent a parceling out between valuable areas of the city and disposable areas of the city, or areas of the city that "[relegate] entire populations to spaces of invisibility and disposability" (Giroux 181). As noted earlier, Smith attributes the value of that land to the race of the bodies that inhabit it and "the race issues that seemed to be a part of the whole Katrina catastrophe." Likewise, Giroux reminds us that post-disaster Katrina is a product of racial injustice that "suggest a link between an apartheid past and the present

intensification of its utter disregard for populations now considered disposable" (184). In other words, the biopolitics of disposability is about race as much as it is about other forms of biopower. The Wall would figure as a site of biopolitics between nation and region as well as a form of control through its creation of disposable sectors grounded in race-based divisions.

Cyborgs, Race and Agency

Smith extends the biopolitical implications of relationship between the region and the nation-state through the interactions between the *Orleans'* protagonists, Daniel and Fen. Through Daniel, Smith offers readers a pseudo-cyborg and a new way to view raced forms of agency and access in her novel. Here, I refer to Daniel's cyborg status as "pseudo" because his cyborg nature is artificially constructed (he can become a non-cyborg at any point), and because it only mimics the cyborg's fully integrated relationship between technology and humanity. For example, Daniel represents artificiality and the privileges of the nation-state in which Smith characterizes Daniel as a type of cyborg. She writes, "The encounter suit was essentially a hazmat membrane...the suit was the translucent yellowish color of an umbilical cord and acted like a placenta...putting it on was like trying to climb inside an uninflated party balloon" (*Orleans* 53). By describing Daniel's suit as a membrane, an umbilical cord and placenta, Smith unites the imagery of the human body with the artificial nature of a balloon. The hazmat suit is both natural and artificial, and it blurs the lines between biology and technology. In doing so, Smith suggests that Daniel's suit acts as an unnatural, or artificially constructed, type of birth into a pseudo-cyborg status.

The term cyborg used here refers to "hybrids of biology and technology. More specifically, a cyborg is a person whose interaction with or experience of the world is mediated by technology" (Ellis). For feminist theory, Hughes asserts that the cyborg represents "the

multiply located subject of the global order" ("Cyborg Standpoints"). Key to theorizing cyborgs as metaphors for feminist theory is Donna Haraway's 1990 "A Cyborg Manifesto," in which Haraway uses the figure of the cyborg to critique feminist theory, challenge Second Wave Feminism and build a case for a more integrated feminism and feminist theory. Likewise, Judith Tsouvalis extends the cultural significance of the cyborg beyond its direct implications for technology ("Cyborg Cultures"). She proposes that the figure of the cyborg acts as a metaphor for discussions about identities, such as race. Tsouvalis asserts that the cyborg "has provided an effective means for undermining and disrupting constructions of 'pure' and clearly bounded identities, including that of the 'self ' and the 'Other'" ("Cyborg Cultures"). In other words, the figure of the cyborg is used to draw comparisons between assumptions about identities, such as race, because of the cyborg's capacity to enact and undermine assumptions about race and agency on personal and societal levels.

Because of its nature as a blended being, a being in which humanity and technology operate in tandem, multiple identities and systems of classification converge within the cyborg. Cyborgs illustrate perspectives based in both the natural and the artificial, and these perspectives are mediated through the limits and accessibility of the cyborg's technology. Because technology and accessibility to technology enable those with technology to access knowledge, information and skills, technology signifies a form of privilege. When fused with the body, technology extends to the individual a privileged form of biopower. Through Daniel and Fen, Smith emphasizes the relationship between natural and artificial systems of identification, knowledge and access. Rather than being born out of the suit, Daniel encases himself within it, creating a barrier between his body and his environment. The hazmat suit looks natural, like an umbilical cord, and acts like a membrane, or protective skin. It mimics the natural and merges technology

with the human body. Daniel describes the suit as a type of skin; his voice sounds monotone and flat; and he even imbeds a computer chip ("datalink") upon his body (*Orleans* 51). Within his suit, Daniel recognizes his body and his humanity; however, those outside his suit only see the technological barrier between the environment and the body. In his hazmat suit, Daniel becomes associated with the technology encasing his body and becomes a pseudo-cyborg.

Yet, Daniel's artificial skin also sustains the relationship between his body and the privileged position of the nation-state. He puts on the suit while still outside of Orleans so that the final contact of his body is with the nation-state (*Orleans* 53). In doing so, Daniel preserves his relationship to the dominant nation and regulates all contact with Orleans through technology. His human body does not interact with Orleans; instead, it is mediated through the "skin" of the hazmat suit, enabling Daniel to regulate his interactions with the Orleans environment. In other words, Daniel has access to Orleans, but Orleans does not have access to Daniel. Not only does his cyborg capabilities stop the outside from getting in, but it also hinders his body from getting out. Because he is a pseudo-cyborg in Orleans, and because he has access to the technological capabilities to be a cyborg, Daniel exerts a form of biopower upon himself and upon others so that his sense of place and his agency are directly connected to his technologically advanced "skin."

Due to Daniel's existence as a pseudo-cyborg, Smith contrasts his agency with Fen's agency to reveal how race creates, defines and circumscribes agency within the novel. Due to his suit, Daniel can move within Orleans on his own terms and conditions. Fen even remarks that his "skin" gives him power over his situation: "Blood hunters won't burn a smuggler. And they don't hardly ever use them for farming, neither. They too valuable a resource, able to get across the Wall, provide things we ain't got here...He just gotta show that suit and he can make a deal to

walk" (*Orleans* 129). Here, Fen calls attention to two consequences of Daniel's status as hazmat-suit-cyborg. First, Daniel's suit makes him valuable. His body has worth that her body does not possess even though her blood makes her extremely valuable. In terms of consumerism, Fen's body is consumable and expendable; thus, her value decreases as her loss of blood decreases her life. On the other hand, Daniel's value increases as his ability to survive and smuggle goods increases. His value derives not from his consumability, but from his utility. Second, Daniel's suit gives him agency. Daniel has mobility of purpose so that he can "make a deal to walk," and this mobility exists within Orleans and "across the Wall." His agency also gives him access--he can use his capacity to smuggle goods as a way to express power in a situation.

Consequently, Daniel's status as smuggler, outsider and pseudo-cyborg gives him agency that Fen cannot access. If the cyborg acts as a metaphor for race, then Daniel's agency is also raced. Because his position as cyborg confers him a privileged subject-position, even as an outsider, his mobility and worth stem from his position of privilege. Though Smith never discloses Daniel's race to her readers, Daniel's privileged position as wealthy outsider with access to technology parallels the relationship between dominant-subject positions and white privilege within race discourse in the U.S. His hazmat suit, or his "skin," acts as an extension of his body and signals his identification with the power and access inherent to members of the Outer States. Daniel has access to information and safety via the technology of his hazmat suit, and this access is a result of his identity and membership to the Outer States. Daniel does not have to fear the repercussions of Delta Fever or the material consequences his time spent in Orleans because of the privilege that his hazmat suit and access to technology confer on him. In a similar way, white privilege prevents those who appear white from experiencing the full repercussions or consequences of a racialized society.

Whereas Smith connects Daniel with the technology and privileges of the nation-state, she associates Fen with the natural human body and the natural ecology of Orleans in order to contrast Fen's agency with Daniel's agency of privilege and access. In associating Fen with the body and the ecology of Orleans, Smith demonstrates how Fen's agency results from her relationship to her surroundings and her adaptability. In description of Fen Smith states, "I wanted something that conjured the swamps and bayous in the Delta. A fen is a type of wetland" (*Bookmagnet Blog)*. Not only does Fen's name remind the reader of Orleans' environment, but her description of herself also emphasizes the natural elements of her being. Fen first introduces herself to Daniel by stating her name and her blood type (*Orleans* 137). The scars on her forearms act as identifiable markers to smugglers and Mama Gentille (*Orleans* 17, 101). Indeed, Fen's quick to notice and articulate the natural elements of her surroundings, which is why the reader's first encounter with Fen is her study of the seagulls flying above the Market (*Orleans* 13). In these ways, Fen becomes an extension of her surroundings and the forms of identification that are tied to nature and the body.

While Smith does not offer as robust a portrait of Daniel's relationship to the surroundings of his home (since we only experience him through the protective layer of his hazmat suit in Orleans), she does make a point to show that Fen's description marks her as a product of Orleans. By contrasting Fen's natural representation with Daniel's artificial representation, Smith challenges the contrived nature of Daniel's technology-produced agency with an agency derived from the local surroundings. At the same time, Smith's juxtaposition highlights Fen and Daniel's similarities, as both characters are products of the biopolitics that regulate Orleans. Should Daniel remove his hazmat suit while in Orleans, he would lose his agency and, as a body, become just as disposable as Fen. Thus, the biopolitical nature of Daniel

and Fen's agency signals that biopolitcal power "remains a productive force, provides grounds

for resistance and domination, and registers culture, society and politics as a terrain of multiple

and diverse struggles waged by numerous groups in a wide range of sites" (Giroux 179). The

biopolitical implications of Daniel's pseudo-cyborg status, his privileged agency and its

relationship to race discourse continues to change as he interacts with Fen and Orleans. In

Daniel, Smith reveals what Giroux recognizes: as biopower changes, the biopolitics of

disposability and racialized forms of agency change in response.

Therefore, Fen's relationship to Orleans gives her a form of cultural knowledge and value

inaccessible to and different from Daniel's technology because it provides her the agency to

change and adapt. Smith characterizes Fen as valuable and ascribes value to her body. Fen's

chieftain describes her as "'known for her fierceness'" and positions Fen as her right hand side in

diplomatic meetings, a symbolic gesture that characterizes Fen someone who "got Lydia's back,

and her ear" (33). Fen gives herself a position of authority and intelligence that Smith illustrates

through Fen's body placement in relationship to other bodies. By having Lydia's back, Fen

offers ferocity and loyalty in her presence. In having Lydia's ear, Fen offers knowledge and

advice that Smith solidifies for the reader via Fen's first-person point of view.

Furthermore, Smith imputes value to Fen's body through the negotiations that occur for

and over her body. When Fen rescues Daniel for the perilous Rooftops, she makes a deal with a

scavenger. Though Fen offers treasure, the scavenger rejects it in favor of owning Fen's braided

hair: "We don't want no treasure from under below' the old lady say. But them braids of yours

be fine. Mighty fine'" (232). Since the scavenger values Fen's braids, and by extension Fen

herself, Smith transforms Fen's body and person into a site of negotiation and change. Fen

exchanges her braids with the old lady, and in this manner, Smith maps value onto Fen's body

and her ability to parcel out her body to save Daniel. Even Fen's blood type, O positive, represents her desirability within Orleans *(*137). When Smith locates value on and within Fen's body, she re-figures value and cultural knowledge so that Fen becomes the standard of agency and change in the novel. The ability to change becomes the valuable commodity underlying the exchange of hair. Fen offers an alternative form of privilege through her agency and adaptability. In Fen, Smith personifies and ascribes resistance to the privileged positions of biopower that Daniel exemplifies as a pseudo-cyborg.

While Daniel as a character becomes a way for the reader to interrogate their own-subject position, Daniel as a cyborg becomes a way to understand how systems of racialized oppression exist beyond the body. As such, Daniel's technological skin, and Fen's recognition of its inherent worth, accentuates the way that race impacts agency and access in Orleans. It is important to note that Smith subverts such a reading through Daniel's reliance upon Fen's local and geographical knowledge of Orleans. Whereas Daniel's technological skin provides outdated and inaccurate knowledge of Orleans, Fen's localized knowledge of the Delta and the environment give her authority and credibility over Daniel.

Because of his status as outsider, Daniel's knowledge of Orleans, accessed through his datalink, becomes obsolete and outdated (73-74, 223). Fen labels him a "tourist," suggesting that his interactions with Orleans are based in superficial knowledge and relationships to the Orleans' land and history (246). While Daniel's technology does signal his position of privilege and ascribe it to his body, Smith also works to subvert Daniel's privileged forms of access and agency in favor of Fen's local knowledge that leads to greater agency within Orleans. Fen's mobility and capacity to act upon her knowledge allows her to establish the terms of her relationship to Daniel and enact her own plans for Enola's safety (133). Furthermore, Fen's

localized knowledge presents the reader with an alternative story of Orleans destruction that is alternative to the brief and neatly packaged story from Daniel's datalink. As Daniel and Fen witness a Mardi Gras krewe nearby, Fen describes the history of Orleans as if it were an oral narrative and personifies each of the hurricanes as characters: Rita and Katrina eat the Delta like a piece of cake, Laura and Paloma dance around as if they were little girls knocking things over in their dance, and Jesus walks slowly up and down the Delta coast, chewing on it like a dog chews on a bone (171-173).

Not only does each of the hurricanes assume human qualities and characteristics, they also make the catastrophe of the hurricanes and the mismanagement by the government personal. As Fen recalls, "Jesus been way bigger, so the Government give up, say everybody evacuate. But can't everybody fit on a road out of town at the same time…The city been full of workers, immigrants who came here for jobs rebuilding…They stuck here, too, living in trailers and cheap housing, what the Government provide. And all them folks still here when Jesus come walking up the coast" (172). Fen's use of oral history gives her the freedom to personify the natural elements and contrast this personification with the response of the Government. While the hurricanes enact a natural form of destruction upon the Delta, the Government's lack of response and desertion of the region's people reveals a counter-narrative to the narrative given by Daniel's technology. This counter-narrative gives agency back to Fen and to the residents of Orleans because it recognizes their investment in connecting the Government's response to its use of biopolitics to determine the value the Delta's residents. In describing the housing as "cheap," Fen reveals how the Government's lack of response results from the type of value it ascribed to Delta residents. While the Government's views these residents as expendable, Fen's story shows their centrality to the history of Orleans. By naming these residents and describing their history, Fen

returns worth back to the residents of Orleans.

Though Fen's story does not change the biopolitics in the relationship between the Government and Orleans, the retelling of Orleans' history gives Orleans and its inhabitants the agency to preserve culture and rewrite value on its on terms. For this reason, the krewe rides occur throughout the Delta. As Fen explains, "So that what they be singing about. How we the Delta, how we still Orleans. That first year after Jesus, when it been looking like we dead, that when the first krewe start…'til they all be wading along, with they flashlights and torches and all kinds of things, and they start singing and dancing, 'cause 'this be New Orleans and that be what we do'" (173). The krewe celebrates the survival of Orleans and of its inhabitants. Interestingly, the krewe is birthed out of "when it been looking like we dead," and becomes symbolic as a type of re-birth and renewal for the Delta. Even the explanation for the krewe signals Orleans' agency. "Cause 'this be New Orleans and that be what we do'" ties Orleans to a past before quarantine, and in doing so, acts as a continuous reminder of the relationship between the region before and after the quarantine.

As Smith describes in her interview with *Bookmagnet Blog*, the original krewes were celebrations during Mardi Gras: "I liked the idea that this tradition would continue to evolve in Orleans, or rather devolve to its original state…The [krewe] is an act of defiance against nature, where people of all tribes come together anonymously." Thus, the krewe is significant in affixing Orleans to its history and traditions and is responsible for preserving its history in spite of government-sanctioned abandonment. While the krewe is an active response to the biopolitics of the government, it also breaks down the barriers of separation for the blood tribes. Without the enforced biologically-based division between the tribes, the krewe disrupts the biopower between tribes and the biopolitics of the Government toward the region. Even as Fen witnesses

the krewe and remembers Orleans' history, the krewe serves to remind and to give agency back to the region and its residents. Though the agency does not effect lasting change upon Orleans, the celebration does open up space for participants to cross biological barriers and become a community.

In *Orleans*, the Wall functions in a similar manner, but the biopolitical power enacted by the nation over the region are tied to the geographical body of Orleans so that the United States does more than regulate human bodies on both sides of the Wall. It also regulates the ecology of Orleans itself. As Mr. Go remarks to Daniel and Fen, "We are the offspring of our own making; the way a potato vine can self-propagate into a mirror image of itself, so have we done. That was New Orleans before the Wall, and that is Orleans and the Outer States now" (254). As Mr. Go emphasizes, the relationship between Orleans and the Outer States is based on two principles: one of self-propagation and one of mirroring, or doubling. If the land of Orleans is a type of geographical body, then the United States uses the Wall to order, define and limit that body. In the novel, Smith calls this the "Quarantine" that the Outer States impose on Orleans. Returning to Mr. Go's analogy, the hypothetical threat of the Wall for New Orleans mirrors the fictionalized reality of the Wall in *Orleans*. What makes this doubling interesting is Mr. Go's assertion that this relationship is a naturalized result of biopower. Self-propagation and mirroring imply a parent agent. For Orleans, its parent is the Outer States and "New Orleans before the Wall." What Mr. Go implies here is that Orleans was produced as a direct result of the race and class biopolitics that existed before and after Hurricane Katrina.

As readers, we witness the fruit of this self-propagation in the blood tribes, which Daniel likens to both "a new form of racism" and the racist experiments in syphilis treatments sanctioned by the Tuskegee Institute and the U.S. Department of Health (*Orleans* 207;

"Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment"). These institutions, the Tuskegee Institute and the U.S. Department of Health, pretended treatment on African American males in order to watch the progression of syphilis on the body, thus, condemning the men to painful deaths ("Tuskegee Syphilis Experiment"). Mr. Go's analogy of self-propagation connects the biopolitics of disposable bodies based on race and class to the biopolitics of the blood tribes, who are left disposable in that they are "consigned to fend for themselves" (Giroux 174). But the analogy of self-propagation goes one step further. The Outer States' decision to quarantine Orleans implies that the nation-state turned a blind eye to Orleans and its inhabitants. By acting with the biopolitics of disposability, the Outer States produced a region that would operate from those same politics. Though race does not create divisions in Orleans, blood type and blood tribes have filled its void and replicate racism's self-destructive tendencies.

However, Smith uses Mr. Go to ascribe agency back to Orleans and back to Fen. As Mr. Go remarks on Orleans' ecology, "A fragile ecosystem, but one that works. And bears fruit--not stale recycled urine and carbo gel...But outside, in the city, the same process is happening. Orleans is healing itself" (265). Similar to the way that Smith favors the natural agency Fen possesses over Daniel's technologically enabled agency, she also demonstrates the agency within the land to produce ("fruit") and to "[heal] itself." For Smith, this agency results from the natural capacity of the land for growth and sustainment rather than from its consumability. It is an agency that is precarious in its durability, but an agency that is derived from itself and its capacity for growth.

Returning to Adolescence(ts), YAL and the South

In terms of stereotypical conceptions of adolescence(ts), Smith presents two characters who act, think and emotionally process their conflicts as adults. Both Fen and Daniel assume

responsibility for Enola's protection and safe passage (315); Daniel recognizes the consequences of his failure to cure the Delta Fever along with his culpability in exposing Orleans to a deadlier strain of the virus that he brought into Orleans (315); Fen fights the leader of the O-Neg tribe for Enola's life and experiences betrayal at the hand of the Father John, a trusted adult in her life (285-287, 310). Neither Daniel nor Fen fall in love, and Smith does not assure readers of Fen's survival at the end of the novel (323). What this shows is that Smith presents readers with a YAL dystopia that does not conform to its genre conventions of survival or teen romance--basically Smith presents no clear resolution. In *Orleans*, Smith offers readers an alternative to YAL dystopia or adolescent characters that does not safely patch together a moral or satisfying closure. Instead, Smith leaves the ending open to the reader's interpretation of Fen's death and Daniel's escape.

Furthermore, Smith offers teen readers characters with which they can and cannot identify. While most teens may not identify with the internal conflict of cyborgs or a girl on the run from blood hunters, they can identify with the difficulties of navigating boundaries between two social categories. Like these characters' status as individuals, the status of adolescence(ts) is different from the child or the adult--it is a type of alternative status in fluctuation. What Smith's work does is to interrupt this way of defining adolescence(ts) in terms of reaching adulthood or escaping adulthood. Though Fen and Daniel meet adults along their journey, their interactions with those individuals are limited since the adults like Mr. Go are frequently confined to specific locations in Orleans, and as such, neither character can rely on an adult's input or guidance. Instead, Fen and Daniel determine and follow their own course of action within Orleans.

In thinking about single-stories of adolescence(ts), Smith offers the reader characters whose status as human are not easy to define in terms of their status as adults. These characters

help to re-figure adolescence(ts) as agents of change, mobility and authority in spite of the narratives that society creates about them. Furthermore, because the characterization of Daniel and Fen brings into question forms of raced agency and biopower, these texts offer teens an avenue for interrogating their own assumptions about identity in relation to race and place in the classroom. In thinking of these texts as offering interrogations on the various figured worlds of the South, Smith challenges our assumptions about what constitutes regionalism and southern identity. Smith presents dystopian images of the South so that the reader's assumptions of the region and, perhaps, their own exceptionalist notions about "southerness" are mirrored, re-written and challenged.

Coda

For all its popularity and commercial success, there is still a stigma associated with young adult literature (YAL) in academic and educational circles. Currently, public education relies on the standards established by Common Core State Standards (CCSS), which advocates for educators to incorporate texts in terms of "complexity, quality and range" ("Texts Illustrating the Complexity, Quality & Range of Student Reading 6-12"). Of the 35 text exemplars presented for grades 9-12, CCSS offers a single YAL text as one of its exemplars ("Appendix B: Text Exemplars and Sample Performance Texts"). Inadvertently, CCSS suggests that YAL somehow does not meet its standards for "complexity, quality and range." Recently, I had one of my composition students make a similar case. This student argued that a fundamental difference exists between "high" literature, like Faulkner or Dickens, and "low" literature, like YAL. They are just not on the same level, this student insisted. What this student means is that YAL has some sort of inherently lesser value when placed alongside "high" literature, or established literature.

While I disagree with the assumption and conclusion on which this argument rests, I do acknowledge the truth in the assertion that YAL, as a genre, is different from the traditional literary canon. It is why bookstores and libraries have special areas designated for these books. And because YAL is a different type of literature, it can accomplish a different type of purpose in the hand of a reader and in the hand of a teacher. I do not suggest that works of "the" literary canon should be eradicated from the classroom. Indeed, many of these texts provide rich opportunities for cultural and historical analysis and critique, and to shortchange these texts would be to shortchange the student's opportunity to learn from this cultural and historical heritage. Instead, I propose incorporating YAL into the classroom and reading it with the same

critical attention and consideration as is generally given to canonized literature.

Much research confirms the potential for YAL in secondary education classrooms. Amber Simmons demonstrates the potential for YAL to "re-sensitize" students to "current issues of violence and domination" through social justice projects and initiatives (23-24). Simmons demonstrates YAL's potential to remind students of the reality of violence and to take an active role in challenging its normativity through projects inside and outside the classroom (24). Likewise, Henry Jenkins advocates using YAL to perform cultural acupuncture, borrowing Andrew Slack's term to mean "a conscious rhetorical strategy mapping fictional content worlds onto real-world concerns" (59). In applying "fictional content worlds" to the realities of social injustice, Jenkins and Simmons display YAL's potential for encouraging social activism and critical analysis of contemporary society for students and educators.

Others have noted the importance of placing YAL in dialogue with novels from "the" literary canon as a way to bridge themes between two texts. Katie Rybakova and Ritta Roccanti argue that this makes learning student-centered and accessible for a larger group of students (34). On the other hand, Sean Connors notes how treating YAL as literature gives agency to the student to probe the depths of meaning and complexity within the text (70). Connors echoes Gerald Graff's admonition to get students used to reading all texts "'through academic eyes,'" or in a "reflective analytical way, one that sees them as microcosms of what is going on in the wider culture" (Graff 270). Far from relegating YAL to the realm of pop culture, these authors build a case for YAL as literature in its own right.

Building a Theoretical Lens

The texts considered within this project—*Mockingbird, Watchman, Mesquite, Kira-Kira, Inside Out & Back Again,* and *Orleans*—all demonstrate the complexity of issues and themes

that YAL presents its readers. When read through a theoretical framework or lens, these texts offer strong critiques to our conceptions about southern, racial and adolescent identities. My purpose here is to provide a practical tool for educators to use in implementing these theories and critiques within the classroom. I find it important to bring the theoretical into the classroom, and as Tara McPherson asserts about southern literary studies, it is important to engage with theory that "strives for less alienating prose" in order to "profit from an encounter with contemporary critical theory, particularly when one broaches the juncture where the regional meets the world beyond it, or where multiple versions of one region collide" (8-9). Through building a theoretical lens, educators invite students to critically engage with their own preconceptions about the South and the figure of the adolescent in literature.

Drawing on the three chapters of this project, I have built a theoretical framework (see Table 1) around theories that would provide educators and readers a broad lens with which to analyze and critique literary representations of the South and adolescenc(ts). The three lenses (southern exceptionalism, multiculturalism and biopolitics) are designed to challenge conventional readings of southern literature and adolescent literature; however, these lenses are not conclusive and can be critiqued themselves. Nor do these lenses provide the only way to read and interpret textual representations about the South or adolescence(ts). Relying only on these lenses could shortchange critical discussions about representations of privilege, class, gender or disability, to name a few. Next to each lens, I provide possible teaching points for educators to emphasize in using these lenses along with sample texts that would benefit from the theoretical critique that these lenses provide. Finally, this frame is not specific to YAL, meaning it can be applied to a wide range of texts from a wide range of disciplines. Texts such as movies, television series and episodes, magazines, print and media advertisements, speeches and music

are some of the possibilities that immediately come to mind. Below I outline the major tenets of each lens along with sample questions to guide educators in facilitating discussions about the South and adolescence.

Southern Exceptionalism

Much like regionalism, southern exceptionalism refers to the tendency of the South as a region to view itself as a unique place, distinct and different from the rest of the nation. As displayed in *Mockingbird*, southern exceptionalism becomes a master narrative for the South when it assumes applicability for all individuals within that region. Southern exceptionalism can be used to justify regional tropes, like the "southern gentlemen" or the "southern lady," but the South and the nation can also use it to justify and ignore racist ideology or legislation. As the nation would argue, "there goes the South, being backward and racist once again." As Leigh Anne Duck demonstrates, the U.S. nation-state deployed this kind of logic so that it could reject the South as a racist and backwards region while calling itself progressive and ignoring the racism in its own ideology (20). Texts that present a romanticized version of the South would be useful for engaging in a critique of racial hierarchy or regional identity.

Below is a list of questions to guide educators as they invite discussions within the classroom about southern exceptionalism:

1. How does the text position the South in relation to the nation-state? What kinds of assumptions does the text make about the South or about southerners in general?

2. How does the representation of the South justify stereotypes about itself? How does the text naturalize these stereotypes in its depictions of characters, conflict or setting?

3. What narrative does the text's representation of the South and southerners present about race? How might we challenge the text's assumptions about racial identity?

Multiculturalism

The lens of multiculturalism is useful in representing narratives of adolescence that account for racial, ethnic and linguistic differences within the South. Multiculturalism refers to the initiative to allow for narratives of multiple racial and ethnic identities within a region or nation. Often used to promote unity and intra-group difference, multiculturalism can also provide a critique when used to examine controlling narratives about race or even citizenship. As demonstrated in *Mesquite, Kira-Kira* and *Inside Out & Back Again,* multiculturalism is helpful in illustrating how multiple identity categories intersect to form a specific experience of oppression and resistance for adolescents. Though multiculturalism can lead to a form of exceptionalism, it offers the strongest critique for YAL as a genre.

Below is a list of questions to guide educators as they invite discussions within the classroom about multiculturalism in southern literature and YAL:

1. How does the text characterize the protagonists and the secondary characters? What stereotypes does the text reproduce about race or ethnicity within these characters?

2. How does the text's representation of the characters or their community challenge conventional assumptions about the South or what it means to be a teenager?

3. Where do you see multiple identities, like race and gender, working together to reveal a unique form of oppression for characters within the text?

4. How does the representation of the community challenge southern exceptionalism within the text?

Biopolitics

Biopolitics pertains to the regulation and management of biomatter and bodies via social and political institutions. While not all regulations are sinister (re: seatbelts), biopolitics can be used to reveal how society assigns value to biomatter and reinforces it through public policy and law. Segregation would be one such example. Because biopolitics is interested in power relationships, it is useful in analyzing expectations and representations about racial hierarchies and even teen agency. YAL texts like *Orleans* or *The House of the Scorpion* critique biopolitics through characters with unconventional identities. (*Scorpion* narrates the childhood and adolescence of a clone.) When used in conjunction with a text like *Orleans*, biopolitics is a useful lens for examining the biopolitical relationships within society and the nation at large.

Below is a list of questions to guide educators as they invite discussions within the classroom about structures of biopolitics in southern literature and YAL:

1.   How are bodies or matter regulated and managed in the text? What mechanisms for control do the characters, the community or the government employ over one another?

2.   How do characters or communities conform to, subvert or resist these mechanisms for control?

3.   What critique of racial hierarchy or adolescence might the text be presenting us? How does this critique apply to current events or issues within U.S.?

Application

When applied within the classroom, this framework can lead students to identify problematic representations about the South, race or adolescence within the text, which students can then apply in a critique to issues within their community. This framework also opens the

door for students to gain experience using and applying critical theory to texts inside and outside

the classroom. Finally, this framework allows the students to lead their discussion and

involvement in the text by making their own connections between the theories and the literature.

In doing so, students actively participate in destabilizing master narratives about the South and

about adolescence(ts).

Table 1: Theoretical Lens for Southern and Adolescent Literatures

Southern Exceptionalism - Region (re: the South) as exceptional or unique with respect to the nation or other nation-states.	- Race, racial hierarchy and race normativity - Regional and geographic identity	*To Kill a Mockingbird* (Lee 1960) *Go Set a Watchman* (Lee 2015) *The Adventures of Huckleberry Finn* (Twain 1884) *Gone with the Wind* (Mitchell 1936) *Where Things Come Back* (Whaley 2011) *Walk Two Moons* (Creech 1994)
Multiculturalism - A recognition of the multiple cultures and ethnicities within a region or nation-state, especially as it pertains to race, linguistic identity, and citizenship.	- Race, racial hierarchy and race normativity - Regional, national and global identity - Adolescent identity and expectations - Linguistic identity - Intersectional identities	*Under the Mesquite* (Garcia McCall 2011) *Kira-Kira* (Kadohata 2004) *Inside Out & Back Again* (Lai 2011) *Brown Girl Dreaming* (Woodson 2014) *Claudette Colvin: Twice Toward Justice* (Hoose 2009) *Outcasts United* (St. James 2009)
Biopolitics - The governance, regulation or control of biomatter through institutional or social means.	- Race, racial hierarchy and race normativity - Adolescent identity and expectations - Adolescent agency	*Orleans* (Smith 2013) *Shipbreaker* (Bacigalupi 2010) *The House of the Scorpion* (Farmer 2002) *Bayou* (Love 2009) *Bayou: vol. 2* (Love 2009)

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