

"Everything is Always Happening": Echoes of Faulkner and Warren in Anne Rice's *Blackwood Farm*

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Abstract

This project examines Anne Rice's Blackwood Farm as an addition to the Southern literary canon by considering aspects of the grotesque, as well as concerns with history, family, community, justice, religion, race, land ownership, and social class which proliferate in Southern literature in general. This essay analyses key events from Rice's text, and key works by William Faulkner and Robert Penn Warren in order to examine the extent to which Warren, Faulkner, and Rice share similar themes that reverberate throughout the Southern literary tradition. Finally, this paper argues that Quinn's quest for identity in Rice's Blackwood Farm echoes the journeys of Warren's and Faulkner's protagonists in The Sound and the Fury, Go Down, Moses, and All the King's Men.

Anne Rice's fiction has been labeled Gothic, Southern Gothic, postmodern, innovative, monstrous, and excessive, and while most scholars are quick to note her reliance on Southern settings, none have discussed her significance as a contributor to the Southern literary tradition. Rice herself, according to biographer Katherine Ramsland, "did not feel she could call herself a Southern writer like McCullers, Faulkner, or Eudora Welty" when she published her first novel, *Interview with the Vampire* in 1977 (190).¹ Rice, who grew up in the South, had lived in California for over a decade at that point, and although she still gravitated toward "issues that typically captured the attention of" Southern writers, it was not until her move to New Orleans in 1989 that she began to identify herself as a Southern author (Ramsland 190). Indeed, with the publication of *The Witching Hour* (1990), Rice's fiction began displaying the profound influence of other Southern writers, a trait Rice herself stated is part of being considered Southern (Ramsland 316). While this influence can be felt in many of her texts, it is perhaps nowhere more poignant than in *Blackwood Farm* (2002). With its central themes of history, family, community, justice, and race, *Blackwood Farm* and Anne Rice both deserve to be considered a part of the Southern literary tradition.

Placing Rice, or any writer, within a given tradition requires at least some outline of that tradition. Richard Gray states in *The Literature of Memory* that "the funereal mansion, the intimations of incest, violence, and miscegenation, the brooding over the past and the desperate attempt to recover some of its memories" are all common themes in Southern writing (260). Indeed, he laments their inherently Gothic nature, falling prey to the belief against which Gothic scholars continually struggle—that Gothic is somehow an inferior mode.² One must concede, however, that written in 1977, Gray's study did not have the benefit of more recent scholarship illustrating the profound cultural implications of the Gothic. The literature of the South, in its preoccupations with history and the memory of "horrible deeds" perpetrated on "innocent victims," savors strongly of the Gothic. As Charles L. Crow points out in *American Gothic*, the term "Southern Gothic" has been so much employed that the words have nearly become interchangeable (134). Southern literature, however, is not Gothic, but many of its themes can certainly be employed to Gothic effect. History, family, community, justice, religion, race, land ownership, and social class are all themes with which the Gothic has dealt since Horace Walpole's *Castle of Otranto* (1764). But, placed in a Southern context, they can be employed to almost any end.

To determine precisely where within the scope of the Southern literary tradition Rice's work fits, one must more closely examine her narrative style. Of course her work is Gothic; however, simply labeling her novels Gothic due to their reliance on the supernatural contradicts what actually constitutes the Gothic in America and especially the Southern Gothic. Defining the Gothic has never been a simple task, and delineating the varied strains of Gothic is even less so. In America at least, Crow asserts that "Gothic is no longer defined as a narrow tradition bound by certain props": the generic "clap-trap" of persecuted maidens, Byronic heroes, and hidden doors with which readers are so familiar no longer applies (2).³ Instead Crow states that "it is now seen as a tradition of oppositional

literature, presenting in disturbing, usually frightening ways, a sceptical [*sic*], ambiguous view of human nature and of history" (2). Crow's argument expands upon Teresa Goddu's earlier groundbreaking study in which she asserts that Gothic, usually classified as "an escapist form," actually "registers its culture's contradictions, presenting a distorted, not a disengaged, version of reality" (2-3). The Gothic in America, rather than fleeing from its cultural concerns, challenges and questions the American Dream and concludes that not only are individuals and society unlikely to attain that Dream, but also that its attainment would be detrimental.

Rice's fiction is Gothic not because of its vampires and witches, but because it "exposes the repressed, what is hidden, unspoken, deliberately forgotten" in American culture (Crow 2). Her fiction could contain no supernatural characters whatsoever and it would still be Gothic by way of its narrative structure. Bette Roberts states in her critical biography, *Anne Rice*, that:

the journey from innocence to experience caused by loss or change that forces Rice's characters' to confront nothingness, the liberation of self that comes through this awareness, and the construction of an individual morality that affirms a human capacity for goodness are what it means to realize the potential of being human. These are the themes in her life and her art. (8)

This journey and the subsequent realizations that arise from it are not dependent upon the character's being a vampire or a witch. Indeed, to suggest that the presence of a supernatural creature in a text automatically delineates that text as Gothic is akin to assuming that because a building has a turret, it must be a castle. Neither case is true. Rice's vampires fit a Southern and American Gothic mode not because they are supernatural, but because they grapple with the "senselessness of existence and serve as metaphors for human beings searching for truths to live by" (Roberts 23). This point is perhaps best proven in the fact that for the majority of Rice's *Blackwood Farm*, vampires are not even mentioned.

Rather than focus on the supernatural in Rice's *Blackwood Farm*, this project examines her novel as an exemplar of the grotesque to elucidate the extent to which Rice writes in the Southern tradition regardless of her supernatural characters. Flannery O'Connor jokes in her essay "The Grotesque in Southern Fiction" that "anything that comes out of the South is going to be called grotesque by the Northern reader, unless it is grotesque, in which case it is going to be called realistic" (40). For our purposes, Crow's description of the grotesque as "the strange, distorted or monstrous, usually as applied to human characters" works nicely (6). The grotesque in recent years has been hyperbolized to the point of ridiculousness, the word usually only being invoked to describe something horribly deformed or monstrous. But acknowledging that grotesque can simply mean "strange," and thereby recognizing its close ties with the uncanny and the numinous is imperative to identifying the characteristics of Southern literature and the Southern Gothic. By this definition, the events witnessed or described by characters such as William Faulkner's Quentin Compson and Ike McCaslin, and Robert Penn Warren's Jack Burden become grotesque in the same way that Flannery

O'Connor's fiction is grotesque. Furthermore, the similarity between Quentin's, Ike's, and Jack's quests for identity and that of Rice's Tarquin Blackwood (Quinn) of *Blackwood Farm* provides the basis upon which I assert that Rice is, indeed, "a Southern writer like McCullers, Faulkner, or Eudora Welty" (Ramsland 190).

While scholars have yet to affirm that Rice works within Southern literary traditions, the framework for such an argument was constructed long ago. Leslie Fiedler's seminal, though dated, *Love and Death in the American Novel* describes a mode of Gothic in which, rather than focusing on the persecuted maiden and her heroic, though ultimately ineffective hero, the narrative centers around the "Stranger," invariably "a disaffected child of the reigning race and class," who has "cut himself out of the community that bred him in a desire to embrace some alien shadow-figure symbolizing the instinctive life despised by his white, Anglo-Saxon parents and his fated white, Anglo-Saxon wife" (362). For Fiedler, this shadow-figure or "shadow-spouse" is usually a dark skinned male such as Melville's Queequeg (365). Fiedler suggests that the Stranger's shadow-spouse is "properly of another race, a race suppressed and denied" (365). In Faulkner's *Go Down, Moses* (1942), Fiedler proposes that Sam Fathers, with his "warriors' and chiefs' blood" as well as his mother's "blood of slaves" becomes Ike McCaslin's shadow-spouse (162). In fact, Fiedler provides a list of exemplary shadow-spouses all in the form of Native Americans, Pacific Islanders, or otherwise "non-white" men. However, by limiting his representative set to male pairs only, he overlooks two of the most "sinister relationships" in the literature available to him (363). In his assertion that the shadow-spouse is a "forbidden erotic object," Faulkner's Caddy in *The Sound and the Fury* (1929) and Warren's Willie Stark in *All the King's Men* (1946) both fit Fiedler's mold regardless the fact that neither of them is "non-white" and only one of them is male (365). When the racial and sexual restrictions inflicted by Fiedler's dated reading are removed, new influential relationships can be detected between otherwise unassociated authors and texts. Applying this "Stranger and Shadow" model, Rice's Goblin in *Blackwood Farm* also becomes a modern representation of Fiedler's shadow-spouse as Quinn becomes the Stranger.

Fiedler's model allows for a much closer examination of Rice's influences than has previously been conducted. While Rice herself has stated that she is "a terrible reader [. . .] I can write about five times faster than I read," Faulkner and Warren's influences have reached her pen, whether directly or not (Rice, *Called* 144). I do not suggest that Rice set out to write *Blackwood Farm* as a literary doppelgänger or even that she took any of the texts discussed here as models for her novel. Rather, I argue that echoes of Faulkner and Warren can be heard in Rice's writing as they can be heard in many other Southern writers' work as well. Instead of reproductions of already familiar scenes, Warren, Faulkner, and Rice share similar themes that reverberate throughout the Southern literary tradition. These thematic similarities show themselves most clearly in the revelations that occur during what becomes a symbolic "reading of the will" in the McCaslin ledgers in Faulkner's *Go Down, Moses*, Quentin's identity-destroying conversation with his father in Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*, Warren's "Cass Mastern" section of *All the King's Men*, and Rice's scenes in *Blackwood*

Farm in which Quinn discovers Rebecca Stanford's trunk and later hears the actual reading of his grandfather's will. Each of these scenes deal in memory, its persistence, and its ability to mar, irreparably, characters' perceptions of themselves and their ancestors. The thematic similarities between Rice's scenes and Faulkner's and Warren's provide evidence of Southern literature's influence on Rice's writing and serve to place her work within the Southern tradition.

Blackwood Farm opens with a letter from Quinn to the infamous Vampire Lestat, requesting his assistance with Goblin, Quinn's spirit doppelgänger, who has haunted him since he was a baby.⁴ Since becoming a vampire, Goblin has taken to attacking Quinn after he feeds in order to rob him of some of the blood. Lestat accompanies Quinn to his home, Blackwood Manor, and what follows is Quinn's retelling of his life story complete with psychological, sexual, and vampiric comings of age. Quinn, now 22, has been a vampire for one year, and has lived his entire life on Blackwood Farm raised by his grandmother and grandfather, Sweetheart and Pops, and his great Aunt Queen. Sprinkled throughout the narrative are the rest of his "family": Little Ida, Big Ramona, Lolly, Jasmine, Clem, and other members of the extended African American family who have lived with and worked for the Blackwoods since Manfred, Quinn's great-great-great grandfather, built the mansion in the 1880s. After hearing Quinn's tale, Lestat not only assists Quinn in ridding himself of his spirit, but he also offers to make Quinn's lover, Mona Mayfair, a vampire as well.

While it seems from this short synopsis that the novel is a "vampire tale," only fourteen of the fifty-two chapters actually feature a vampire protagonist. *Blackwood Farm*, according to Rice, "can be seen as two novels trying to break apart from each other: one about the real world of the South as I knew it, with its big families and its unique characters; and the other a supernatural novel about the old themes of being ripped out of the world of grace into the world of darkness against one's will" (Rice, *Called* 199). It is Rice's novel "about the real world of the South" with which this project is concerned. Quinn is mostly sheltered from this "real world" for the better part of his youth until a series of deaths on the farm—his bedfellow Little Ida dies in her sleep, his grandmother Sweetheart dies of cancer, and his beloved tutor Lynelle is killed in a car wreck—inspire in him a simultaneous fear and fascination with death. After his grandmother's funeral, Quinn relates that he "pictured going upstairs to Pops' bedroom, taking his pistol out of the drawer and putting it to my head and pulling the trigger. I thought: 'If you do that, this terror will end'" (Rice, *Blackwood* 146). These melancholy broodings worsen as Quinn wrestles with his fear of death and of being homosexual, and he tries to determine how and if his identity is entangled with that of Goblin, stating, "when I thought of putting the gun to my head, I wondered if one bullet would kill us both" (150). Quinn's preoccupation with sexuality and identity in *Blackwood Farm* reflects this same preoccupation in Faulkner's *Quentin Compson*. Indeed, Quentin's identity is so tied to his sister Caddy's honor—read virginity—that her loss of it literally kills him. Quentin has built his entire identity based on notions of Southern gentility and honor, and his crisis arises when he realizes that these notions are a sham. Quentin ties

his identity as a Southern gentleman to that of his sister as a Southern "Sacred Woman."⁵ When Caddy loses her virginity before she is married, Quentin wishes that it could be his virginity instead of hers that was lost, since, according to his father, Jason, "in the South," men are "ashamed of being a virgin. Boys. Men. They lie about it" (Faulkner, *TSF* 112). Quentin is appalled that Caddy's virginity and, by extension, her honor seem to mean nothing to his father: "But to believe it doesn't matter and he said, That's what's so sad about anything: not only virginity and I said, Why couldn't it have been me and not her who is unvirgin and he said, That's why that's sad too; nothing is even worth the changing of it" (Faulkner, *TSF* 50). Quentin's father believes that the notion of Caddy's honor is not even worth wishing for its return. Further complicating Quentin's crisis, his father suggests that, someday, Quentin will feel the same way:

you are not thinking of finitude you are contemplating an apotheosis
in which a temporary state of mind will become symmetrical above the
flesh and aware both of itself and of the flesh it will not quite discard you
will not even be dead and i temporary and he you cannot bear to think
that someday it will no longer hurt you like this. (Faulkner, *TSF* 112)

Quentin cannot bear the thought that he will eventually come to the belief that Caddy's honor means nothing because if this is true, then Southern gentility as a whole concept, which Quentin's father still upholds when he asserts that "no compson has ever disappointed a lady," is false (Faulkner, *TSF* 113). His identity destroyed, Quentin drowns himself.

Quinn, however, takes an active role in preventing his own suicide. Realizing that he has never explored the attic of Blackwood Manor, Quinn goes forth to seek the distraction that he hopes will save his life. His endeavor proves successful. Once in the attic, he discovers an old steamer trunk with a label in faded ink reading "Rebecca Stanford." A search of the trunk reveals several items, including a "small leather book with lots of pages of writing" (Rice, *Blackwood* 153). This, he discovers, is a book of poetry written by his great-grandmother Camille. Removing the book and several pieces of jewelry draws Rebecca's spirit, who then spurs Quinn on a quest to discover the location of Manfred Blackwood's Hermitage on Sugar Devil Island and thereby avenge her death. Rebecca orders Quinn to "find the island. Find what they did to me," and his search ultimately leads to the vampiric transformation that causes Goblin's violent behavior. When Quinn discovers his ancestor's Hermitage, he realizes that it "had been a house of torture" and that Rebecca and others were brutally murdered there (Rice, *Blackwood* 175). Quinn soon also discovers that from the Hermitage, the scene of so many torturous murders committed by Manfred Blackwood, he can see his own home, Blackwood Manor. The scene of past atrocities located in the very backyard of present life is a metaphor for the South itself, and Quinn's quest and the truths he learns about himself, his family, and his Southern legacy echoes the journeys of some of Southern literature's most famous characters: Warren's and Faulkner's protagonists in *All the King's Men*, *Go Down, Moses*, and *The Sound and the Fury*.

Although Jack Burden's quest does not begin at a ghost's behest, his desire to exhume the "ghosts of the past" drives him to learn the truth about Cass Mastern. Warren's "Cass

Mastern's Wedding Ring," included as the fourth chapter of *All the King's Men*, features Jack Burden describing himself as a younger man and his quest to find out who Cass Mastern was and by extension who he, Jack Burden, is. Readers will note that Rice's narrative structure in *Blackwood Farm* strongly resembles that of Warren's Cass Mastern episode.⁶ Jack reads Cass Mastern's story in Cass's journal; as Jack reads the journal, so does Warren's reader. Carol Le Cor suggests that if "Cass Mastern's journal is his way of coming to terms with the burden of Southern history," then Jack Burden's "narration parallels and reiterates that of his ancestor" (128). By telling this story to Jack and in Jack's retelling it to the reader, the "legacy of guilt" associated with the South and slavery is passed on to the reader. Decades later, Rice uses similar tactics to pass Manfred Blackwood's guilt to Quinn. In Quinn's discovery of the truth of his ancestry, the guilt associated with the Southern past is, once again, transferred to the reader.

In Cass's journal, Jack learns the story of Phebe, Annabelle Trice's slave. Annabelle's husband Duncan, after learning of Cass and Annabelle's affair, commits suicide, but he does so in such a way that people conclude that he accidentally shot himself while cleaning his gun. Phebe discovers the truth, so Annabelle sells her "down the river . . . in Paducah, to a man who was making up a coffle of Negroes for New Orleans" (Warren 264). Confused, Cass wonders why Annabelle did not free her instead. Annabelle responds:

She'd stay right here, she wouldn't go away, she would stay right here and look at me. Oh, no, she wouldn't go away, for she's the wife of a man the Motley's have, their coachman. Oh, she'd stay right here and look at me and tell, tell what she knows, and I'll not abide it. (Warren 265)

Annabelle cannot endure not only the tales Phebe might tell, but also, and perhaps especially, the accusing looks of a former slave. Feeling a sense of responsibility for Phebe's plight, Cass decides to track her down and free her. He finds himself at an "inspection," in which white men parade slave women before other white men to be purchased to fill their brothels. What he witnesses disgusts him, and he ends up fighting one of the other men. Cass is ultimately unable to find Phebe, and he comes to refer to himself as the "chief of sinners and a plague spot on the body of the human world.' He would have committed suicide except for fear of damnation for that act" (Warren 273). Cass believes that his actions have resulted not only in his friend's suicide, but also in the living damnation of Phebe, so he spends the remainder of his life in atonement. Cass returns home after the "inspection," and for the next two years "operated his plantation, read the Bible, prayed, and, strangely enough, prospered greatly, almost as though against his will" (Warren 273). He uses his profits to pay his debts and set his slaves free, but he refuses to go North, refuses to move, believing that his example "if it is good . . . is not lost. Nothing is ever lost" (Warren 274). But he soon realizes that he did not free his slaves because they deserved to be free; he freed them "to relieve my spirit of a burden, the burden of their misery and their eyes upon me" (Warren 275). Observing the meaninglessness of his action, he joins the Confederate army as a private, "marching with other men" in order to "partake with them of all bitterness" (Warren 279). Cass is shot and, dying slowly in a hospital after the

Civil War has ended, writes, “It is all over but the dying, which will yet go on” (Warren 281). Jack explains that, in his short life, Cass learned that “the world is like an enormous spider web and if you touch it, however lightly, at any point, the vibration” wakes the spider (Warren 283). Unable to understand, Jack “laid aside the journal and entered upon one of the periods of the Great Sleep” (Warren 284). Rather than live life and risk disturbing the web, Jack retreats. This retreat mirrors Cass’s behavior in the years following his altercation at the “inspection” in that he affects nothing. When Jack wakes from his “Great Sleep,” he turns his back on his own history and goes to work to ensure another man’s legacy, Willie Stark’s, rather than his own.

Just as Jack Burden’s behavior mirrors Cass Mastern’s, so it also reflects Ike McCaslin’s in Faulkner’s *Go Down, Moses*. The truth of Cass Mastern’s past comes to Jack in a manner similar to the way in which Ike McCaslin learns of the historical atrocities committed by his ancestors. Cass writes his journal in an old account book, but it is the actual account contained within Ike’s uncles’ ledgers that reveal his ancestral truths. Richard Godden argues that Ike learns through a series of ledger entries that his grandfather “first rapes the slave Eunice, and then rapes Tomasina, his own daughter by Eunice” (9). As Ike reads the entries describing Eunice’s suicide by drowning, which he believes occurred in response to her daughter’s incestuous rape, “the old frail pages seemed to turn of their own accord even while he thought *His own daughter His own daughter, No No Not even him*” (Faulkner, *GDM* 259). Upon discovering the travesties committed by his ancestors, Ike repudiates his claim on the family farm only to be later convinced by his wife to take it back. Years later, long after Ike believes the “family curse” of incest and miscegenation has been broken, he learns that his nephew’s pregnant mistress is a descendant of the offspring of the original incestuous union that spurred his initial repudiation of his farm. Ike then realizes that, in the South, history, memory, and family will not be denied, and can never be forgotten, no matter how hard one may try to flee.

Rice’s Quinn learns all too quickly Jack Burden’s and Ike McCaslin’s lessons regarding Southern memory’s persistence and insistence, though her treatment of this motif relies less on old books and written word than do Warren’s or Faulkner’s. The book of poems Quinn finds with the jewelry in Rebecca’s chest is a catalyst to allow Rebecca to appear and tell her own story, and Quinn becomes an active participant in Rebecca’s storytelling rather than simply a passive reader. Rice’s manipulation of the revelatory scene, however, rather than pulling her novel away from Southern literary traditions, actually serves further to reinforce its tie to them. In Rebecca’s retelling of her story, Quinn and the reader experience the same sense of “time out of time” felt in Warren’s and Faulkner’s texts discussed here. Just as Ike muses that his buck “still and forever leaps” (Faulkner, *GDM* 171), and Jack Burden asserts that “all times are one time” (Warren 342), Rebecca reminds Quinn that “everything is always happening all the time” (Rice, *Blackwood Farm* 157). Furthermore, just as Ike and Jack’s examinations of the past serve to destroy their notions of their own Southern histories, so Quinn’s detours with Rebecca nearly serve to destroy his ancestral home.

While Quinn learns of Rebecca and her fate from a series of supernatural journeys into the past, he learns of his more recent ancestor's transgressions from the reading of his grandfather Pops's will. After doling out inheritances, the Blackwood's attorney, Grady Breen, shares that before he died, Pops informed him that the infamous Terry Sue of Louisiana backwoods fame, fertile to a fault, "had a child by Pops about nine years ago" while his wife Sweetheart was still alive (Rice, *Blackwood* 284). Pops allowed this child to live in squalor, providing a pittance of an annuity to the single mother of six children in the amount of five hundred dollars a week. Quinn and his Aunt Queen agree with Breen that they should "equalize things" by ensuring that all the children are taken care of, but Aunt Queen requests a written report of the circumstances to set up the arrangement. Breen responds, "No, I wouldn't do it in writing, Miss Queen . . . I wouldn't put anything in writing at all" (Rice, *Blackwood* 285). By putting this incident down in writing, the Blackwoods would be perpetuating the cycle set in motion by the McCaslins and Masterns of old: ensuring a record of past atrocities which can then be brought to bear upon future generations; however, not putting it in writing—attempting to hide the truth of the situation from the world—is what has allowed a relatively harmless situation to become an atrocity. While conceiving a child out of wedlock or by an affair is certainly not on a level with slavery or incest, the manner in which Pops, a man with hundreds of millions of dollars at his disposal, allowed the child to live is atrocious. Additionally, Breen informs Quinn and Aunt Queen that Terry Sue's "new man" beats the children. Readers learn later that it is actually Terry Sue herself who beats them, but the fact that "Pops knew of this sort of thing and did nothing about it" causes "a gloom" and a "feeling of unrest" to fall over Quinn, and he wonders what his grandfather had wanted from life (Rice, *Blackwood* 286-7). Quinn realizes that he has to make his life "greater" than Pops's had been or he would lose his mind: "I felt pursued by the pressure of life itself. I felt frantic" (Rice, *Blackwood* 287). When Quinn learns that Pops named his son after himself, even as he otherwise attempted to hide him from the world:

My mood grew even darker. Who was I to judge Pops, I thought. Who was I to judge the man who had just left me so much wealth and who might have done otherwise? Who was I to judge him that he had left little Tommy Harrison in such a situation? But it weighed on me. And it weighed on me that Patsy's character had perhaps been shaped by her lifelong struggle against a man who did not believe in her. (Rice, *Blackwood* 287)

Quinn questions everything he used to believe about his grandfather and finds himself disillusioned. Quinn's "daze about the newfound uncle and Pops's wealth" is the same daze in which Ike McCaslin and Jack Burden find themselves and which lead to Ike's repudiation of his legacy and Jack's "Great Sleep." Just as the pages of the McCaslin ledgers "seemed to turn of their own accord" (Faulkner, *GDM* 259) and Jack "must tell about the first excursion into the enchantments of the past" (Warren 236), so Quinn is forced to hear his grandfather's legacy, which will forever change his worldview.

However, unlike Ike, Quinn does not repudiate his legacy, and unlike Jack, Quinn does not fall into a “Great Sleep.” When he returns from the reading of the will, Quinn sees Rebecca’s wicker furniture, a reminder of history’s insistence on not being forgotten, and he realizes that he cannot flee or hide from what he has learned. Quinn realizes that trying to keep the “family secret” will serve only to destroy the family it is meant to protect and determines to welcome Pop’s son, Tommy, into the Blackwood family and proclaim him to the world instead.

This acceptance and advertisement of family scandal is exactly the opposite of how Faulkner’s Quentin Compson chooses to deal with his sister Caddy’s loss of virginity before marriage. Unlike Quinn, Quentin tries “to isolate her [Caddy] out of the loud world so that it would have to flee us of necessity” by making a claim of incest to his father (Faulkner, *TSF* 112). Quentin believes that he can keep his sister’s honor intact by sacrificing his own, as a proper Southern gentleman should do. However, as his father disabuses him of the myth of Southern honor and gentility that Quentin has come to identify with, Quentin approaches a crisis not unlike those faced by Ike, Jack, and Quinn. However, as Gretchen Martin points out in her essay, “Quentin’s dilemma is fixed between a romantic ideal and the real, but rather than examine the real, he continuously attempts to recover, or at least find compensation for the ideal” (Martin 58). Quentin, rather than taking action based on the destruction of his notions of Southern gentility and honor, attempts, and fails repeatedly, to reconstruct them and with them his own identity. Because Quentin is never able to patch his emotional wounds by taking action, he reaches a “psychological impasse that ends in his suicide” (Martin 58).

Quinn’s formation of identity is equally as romantic as Quentin’s, especially in his conception of honor; however, because he responds to his crisis with action instead of inaction, affirmation rather than negation, he is able to move past the destruction of his genteel Southern ideals and construct an identity based in reality rather than idealism. Quinn guides Lestat, himself, and the reader through the legacy of pain, horror, beauty, and wonder that is the American South and illustrates that while the South and its inhabitants may never escape history, rather than attempting to flee, or hide from it, they can embrace it and in doing so, move forward. In Quinn’s struggles with history, memory, and family, Rice demonstrates that, Gothic or not, supernatural or not, her fiction is distinctly Southern.

Notes

- 1 Southern literature, or the Southern literary tradition, is usually defined as literature about the American South, written by writers from the region that typically includes North and South Carolina, Georgia, Alabama, Virginia, Tennessee, Mississippi, and Louisiana. Writers such as Carson McCullers, William Faulkner, and Eudora Welty as mentioned here are usually named to exemplify Southern writing.
- 2 Gothic literature has historically been considered an inferior mode due to its "popular" nature; however, scholars in the last two decades have offered compelling arguments for the genre that highlight Gothic's influence on canonical writing from the Romantic period to today. See for example David Punter's *A New Companion to the Gothic*, Fred Botting's *Gothic*, and the University of Wales ongoing *Gothic Literary Studies* series.
- 3 See especially Maggie Kilgour's *The Rise of the Gothic Novel*, Robert Miles' *Gothic Writing*, and Eve Kosofsky Sedgwick's *The Coherence of Gothic Conventions* for listings of recurrent Gothic tropes.
- 4 Rice introduced the Vampire Lestat in her first novel *Interview with the Vampire*, and he has since been the protagonist of all but a handful of her vampire chronicles.
- 5 Sacred Womanhood was an ideal held up throughout the US until the end of the nineteenth century and into the early twentieth; however, it was perhaps nowhere more strongly adhered to than in the South. The "ideal" woman was pious, pure, submissive, and domestic. Her job was to preside over her household and ensure her husband's contentment. See for example Barbara Welter's *The Cult of True Womanhood*.
- 6 Both Warren's Cass Mastern Episode and Rice's *Blackwood Farm* are constructed as frame narratives. The reader joins the protagonist in the present, and then accompanies him as he tells a story of the past, and finally returns with him, again, to the present and the conclusion of the narrative.

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