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Shock and Awe: Deformities in Southern Gothic Short Stories of Flannery

O'Connor, Tennessee Williams and Truman Capote

Otřes a Úzkost: Deformity ve vybraných povídkách Flannery O'Connorové,
Trumana Capoteho a Tennesseeho Williamse

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DIPLOMOVÁ PRÁCE   **Vedoucí diplomové práce**

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Souhlasím se zapůjčením diplomové práce ke studijním účelům.

I have no objections to the MA thesis being borrowed and used for study purposes.

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Abstract

This thesis traces the phenomenon of American Southern Gothic literature in relation to its most integral part: the exaggerated monstrosity. Even though the prevalent distorted images are usually associated with aesthetic decadence, their moral symbolism should not be neglected. Furthermore, since the Gothic tradition is congruent with the unconscious and irrational, the absence of any psychological interest poses a major limitation in the Southern studies. Drawing on this approach, the following thesis investigates the role of deformities in connection to the individual's mind. Thus, aside from the literary historical concerns that arise within the context of the American South, the main aim of this thesis is to determine whether there is a link between the distortion and psychological trauma of the Southern past. The selected topic is approached from an interdisciplinary point of view; apart from literary history (E.A. Poe, W. Faulkner), Freudian definition of unconsciousness will be likewise employed. I hereby hope my findings may significantly broaden and contribute to the conceptualization of deformities in regards to the context of the American South, more specifically within the historical, literary and psychological field of Southern studies.

Key words: American, South, Gothic, Deformity, Freud, Capote, O'Connor, Williams

Abstrakt

Tato práce se zabývá zkoumáním fenoménu Americké jižanské literatury a její nedílné součásti: přehnané monstrozity. I když se často o znetvořených obrazech hovoří ve smyslu estetické dekadence, neměl by být opomíjen jejich morální symbolismus. Jelikož se gotická tradice rovněž váže k nevědomí a iracionalitě, neexistence psychologického aspektu výrazně limituje Jižanské studie. Diplomová práce na základě této teze zkoumá roli deformity i v rámci myšlení jednotlivce. Kromě literárních a historických souvislostí, které vyvstávají na povrch v kontextu Amerického jihu, tak hlavní cíl práce bude spočívat v předpokladu, zda existuje spojitost mezi deformitou a psychologickým traumatem jižanské minulosti. K vybranému tématu bude přistupováno interdisciplinárně; pojme jak literární historii (E.A. Poe, W. Faulkner), tak Freudovu definici o nevědomí. Doufám, že tímto způsobem moje práce rozšíří a obohatí obraz deformity v kontextu Amerického jihu, nejvíce pak v historické, literární a psychologické sféře Jižanských studií.

Klíčová slova: Americký, Jih, Gotika, Deformita, Freud, Capote, O'Connor, Williams

Table of Contents

Chapter 1: Introduction

1.1 Distorted Images in the American South

From the pioneering works of Edgar Allan Poe to those of William Faulkner, all Southern writers share a common bond; they are irrevocably marked by their birth and upbringing within the historically stigmatized American South. This phenomenon is perhaps best manifested in the Southern Gothic fiction, a subgenre of American Gothicism, whose fundamental themes of deformity and abuse proved most befitting for questioning the Southern standards of life. As Joseph M. Flora notes, with the fusion of dark romanticism, Southern humor and elements of literary naturalism, a new mode of social critique emerged, challenging both the Southern environment and its established conventions.[1]

This critical portrayal is achieved by means of an integral component for any Southern Gothic fiction: the exaggerated monstrosity. With the aid of striking physical fracture, often redolent of a somewhat blatant grotesqueness, Southern Gothic introduces such remarkably deformed individuals who represent rather unusual products of peculiar personalities variously interwoven in the morally-corrupted structure. Even though many critics, including John Aldridge and Irving Malin, fail to grasp this concept and perceive the Southern distorted images merely in terms of aesthetic decadence, Delma Eugene Presley argues that the use of each is moral in nature and supplies a larger view on their symbolic meaning.[2] While Presley's argument against aestheticism is essentially correct, she identifies deformities solely as a one-dimensional tool of morality, completely omitting their meaning in regards to their dark legacy and psychological level.

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[1] Joseph M. Flora, *The Companion to Southern Literature* (Louisiana: Louisiana State University Press, 2002) 314–15.
[2] Delma Eugene Presley, "The Moral Function of Distortion in Southern Grotesque," South Atlantic Bulletin 37.2 (1972) 40, JSTOR <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3197720>, 2.3.2019.

Such absence of psychological interest seems rather poignant, as it deprives the deformed Gothic characters of their elemental function: to evoke suspense and terror. Drawing on this approach, I intend to develop Presley's central argument of morality and determine the role of distortion also in connection to the irrational and an individual's mind. Thus, apart from the literary historical concerns, this thesis shall likewise investigate whether the distorted characters constitute a physical remnant of the antebellum South in which the haunted past, the psychological trauma and the notion of deformity are inseparable. Furthermore, by means of Freudian definition of unconsciousness, I will try to delineate how different Southern characters deal with the past trauma and anxiety, and how this past still affects their thinking about the Southern soil. I hereby hope my findings may significantly broaden and contribute to the conceptualization of deformities in relation to the context of the American South, more specifically within the historical, literary and psychological field of Southern studies.

In the short stories of Flannery O'Connor, a familial conflict between two polarized generations is often presented; the old, associated with the overtone of nostalgia, sharply contrasts with the advancing future-orientated youth. Her idiosyncratic, often physically crippled, young individuals, who are trying to liberate themselves from the constrictive past, are neither evil nor good; their cruelty and disrespect mostly reside in their helplessness and inability to control their own lives. As opposed to Capote or Williams, O'Connor ultimately grants her characters the opportunity to get rid of their burden, yet at a shockingly high price.

Tennessee Williams, on the other hand, is rather sparing with his liberations. His central clash between the past and the present seems similar to that of O'Connor. Yet, unlike her, Williams operates less on the grotesque than on the psychological level. His soft individuals, eternally warped in their past, are often juxtaposed against the clutches of the rough world within the slightly delusional but perfectly realistic framework; they are likewise debilitated, but not as much physically as mentally. Estranged and in quest of solace, they all display a

strong flair of fugitive nature, a high degree of guilt and impossibility to be free. For O'Connor, the static reaches, in a sense, a moment of grace but, for Williams, the static signifies death.

Truman Capote, the Southern enfant terrible, breaches the Southern tradition, as he sets his works both in the American South and in New York City. Even if this conspicuous relocation may seem haphazard, it changes nothing in the slightest. His characters are equally trapped within their sense of loneliness and aberration in the North as they are in the South; in the context of the the American South, any movement, social or physical, is doomed to fail. His fiction is steeped in various arresting images with daunting complexity but his characters all descend into the state of distorted consciousness, with the mere difference of what can be termed as "focal length."[3] His notion of grotesqueness is thus alike to O'Connor's, but his strong sense for psychological experience links his works to Williams. His setting is either realistic or it obtains magical and surreal features; his personae often gender ambiguous, illusionary and with child-like or precocious attributes. Capote's criticism is clear: he rebukes his characters for the inability to accept the uniqueness of the individual and the reality and love around them.

1.2 Aims and Methods

As the understanding and expansion of the original European Gothicism and its features prove crucial, the thesis will firstly discuss its origins and impact on the American literature before focusing on its subgenre, the American Southern Gothic literature. Hence, after providing a broader literary-historical introduction, with particular stress on the development and transformation through time, the thesis will center upon the works of the chosen authors

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[3] Harold Bloom, *Bloom's Modern Critical Views: Truman Capote*, New Edition (NY: Bloom's Literary Criticism, 2009) 4.

and specific traits of Southern Gothic will be traced. The principal part of the thesis will consist of detailed analysis of the following short stories: "The Angel in the Alcove," "The Mysteries of the Joy Rio," "The Field of Blue Children" and "Portrait of a Girl in Glass" by Tennessee Williams, "Good Country People," "A Good Man Is Hard to Find," "Everything That Rises Must Converge" and "A Late Encounter with the Enemy" by Flannery O'Connor, and "A Tree of Night," "Miriam," "The Headless Hawk" and "Shut a Final Door."

All the aforementioned texts were chosen based on their literary relevance and significance for the pre-selected topic, as well as due to their different and, in many respects, similar approaches towards the Southern Gothic phenomenon. Be it Williams' Tom, Myra, writer, Pablo; Capote's Mrs. Miller, Kay, Vincent, Walter; or O'Connor's Julian, Joy-Hulga, Misfit, the grandfather; the deformed characters, in all cases, display a selfish kind of self-love while they are simultaneously completely incapable of selflessly loving others; they disparage their families, as much as their forced confinement; and they all live their lives as in a dream.[4] Whereas O'Connor adopts the domestic Gothicism and openly criticizes by means of irony and violence, Williams and Capote trap their characters in vicious circles with no possibility of escape. Yet, while Williams bases his world on Southern and psychological framework, Capote's is rather illusionary. Therefore, in addition to the discussion of the general unifying themes, the undeniable difference in style and approach provides the opportunity of more exhaustive research within Southern studies. Although the core of the thesis will lie in the critical examination of the selected stories, other works and authors will be occasionally mentioned to reinforce the central argument. From such writers, Edgar Allan Poe and William Faulkner will be of chief importance. In terms of the methodology, Sigmund Freud's psychoanalysis will prove especially relevant pertaining to the characters' inner psyche, more particularly his definition of the uncanny and psychological defense mechanisms. Thus, apart

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[4] Dream understood in the Freudian sense, which shall be further explained in the following chapter.

from the obvious concerns that arise within the context of the American South, this thesis will concentrate on more intricate ideas, predominately those related to the indicated psychological conflict within the individual's mind.

Chapter 2: Defining the Context

2.1.1 Deformity and the Notion of Terror

At the beginning of high Gothic tradition, Edgar Allan Poe asserted that "words have no power to impress without the exquisite horror of their reality."[5] Such a horror reality, oftentimes foreign and entirely unfamiliar, can adopt various shapes and forms, largely affected by its geographical and temporal loci. The notion of terror thus unambiguously permeates all Gothic fiction, inasmuch as it constitutes the basic premise from which any Gothic work derives. This is clearly evident in the gradual spread of the genre across nations, as, regardless of their slight discrepancies, every Gothic branch pays homage to the fundamental European Gothicism from which it originated.[6]

Despite many features which are generally recognized as Gothic, including Wolfgang Kayser's definition of "coexistence of the beautiful, bizarre, ghastly and repulsive,"[7] two elemental constituents are required for the Gothic effect of terror to be produced: the perceptual uncertainty and, foremost, deformity. Since the objective of this thesis comprises primarily the analysis of deformity in selected Southern Gothic short stories, all discussion will be centered upon both primary and secondary texts merely in their connection to deformity henceforth. The following chapters will strive to elucidate how deformity operates as a cornerstone for Gothic fiction, which per se was viewed as a deviation from the standard literary norm.[8] Furthermore, this thesis will discuss deformity also as a means of social

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[5] Edgar Allan Poe, *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* (1838), eapoe.org, chapter 12, n.p.
<http://www.eapoe.org/works/tales/pymb12.htm> 17.2. 2019.
[6] The integral European Gothic notion of terror can be traced in American Gothic, American Southern Gothic, Canadian Gothic, Southern Ontario Gothic, Australian Gothic, Tasmanian Gothic, Post-Colonial Gothic, ecoGothic etc.
[7] Wolfgang Kayser, *The Grotesque in Art and Literature* (NY: McGraw-Hill, 1966) 79.
[8] A. J. Paul Hunter in *The Cambridge Companion to the Eighteenth-Century Novel* notes that the critical tradition in the eighteenth century was predominantly governed by the desire to "preserve literature from the incursion of popular culture." This applied also to Gothic novels which were degraded to "trash reading" on the

critique, subversion and, from a psychological standpoint, as an embodiment of human anxiety.

For the purpose of contrasting position, two Gothic works were chosen to display the different treatment of deformity in the European and American contexts: Anne Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolpho* (1794) and Charles Brockden Brown's *Wieland* (1798), respectively. There are obviously many other Gothic works which could be utilized[9] to draw this particular comparison; the choice of the aforementioned authors is chiefly based on their idiosyncratic use of deformity and overall relevance for the aim of this thesis.

2.1.2 Deformity in European Gothic

As was already suggested, the genre of Gothicism posed a stark contrast to the heavily propounded literature of reason at the end of eighteenth century. Not inherently moral, neither purely instructive; the Gothic works were believed to constitute a defunct and immoral fiction, whose abnormality and suspense were obviously irreconcilable with the didactic principles of the enlightened society.[10] In this manner, the Gothic mode irreversibly assumed the position of the literary minority; the 'other,' which not only opposed and undermined the major tendencies of the eighteenth century literary domain, but also the conservative social stratum and conventions which lurked behind them.

While Enlightment represented the socially acceptable, proper and the light, Gothic indulged in the savage, inexplicable and the dark. This binary opposition proves crucial for

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basis of their apparent lack of moral and didactic aspects; according to Fred Botting and his *Gothic*, "gothic novels were invariably considered to be of little artistic merit, crude foul and vulgar" since they invoked "ideas and objects of displeasure."

[9] From the European Gothic, let us mention at least a few of the following honorable works: Horace Walpole's *Castle of Otranto*, M.G. Lewis' *The Monk*, Marry Shelley's *Frankenstein*, Bram Stoker's *Dracula*; regarding the Southern American Gothic, the works of Eudora Welty, Carson McCullers, Erskine Caldwell and Elizabeth Spencer could prove extremely helpful.

[10] Fred Botting, *Gothic* (NY: Routledge, 2014) 25.

Fred Botting, who declared that Gothicism as a genre cannot be fully understood unless its intrinsic "invocations of the word gothic" are taken into consideration.[11] Two obvious conclusions could be extrapolated from Botting's proclamation: Gothicism and deformity are inherently inadvisable; anything Gothic is inherently deformed.

In European Gothicism, wherein the Gothic tradition firstly emerged, the element of deformity frequently springs from physical nature. This physical monstrosity can stretch from bodily defects and abject bodies (the monster in *Frankenstein)*, to ghastly and mysterious places (Count Dracula's castle), events (Dr. Jekyll's curious experiments) and, though only marginally, depths of defunct mind (the monk Ambrosio).[12]

On the literal level, deformity often translates into a fusion of human and non-human, mechanic and organic, or some combination thereof.[13] This results in a common Gothic topos of monsters and beasts, which due to their physical disability immediately induce the notion of terror. Deformity can gain significant prominence, Kayser further notes, also within the relationship between puppeteers (humans) and marionettes (i.e. those reduced, deformed, or fully dehumanized). This conjecture will be of vital importance especially in connection to American Gothic, namely Charles Brockden Brown's *Wieland*; however, the concept of control over (non)human body can be likewise traced already in European Gothic, for example in *Dracula* and *Frankenstein*.

As far as the symbolic deformity is concerned, the states of decay and dilapidation, mostly a metaphor for the "sinister and ominous,"[14] render ubiquitous in the Gothic fiction. That is to say, it either manifests itself clearly in the use of ghosts, monsters or some horror-inspired

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[11] To provide a few examples, Gothic, Botting notes, was generally regarded as "savage," "barbaric," "alien," "ambivalent," "monstrous," "distorted," "irrationally ungrounded" and "dehumanizing" at the end of eighteenth century.
[12] Kayser also mentions madness as an archetypal element for Gothic fiction.
[13] Kayser, 181-182.
[14] Kayser, 21.

phenomenon, or by means of archetypal Gothic locus. The latter seems predominantly prevalent in the Gothic domain, since an archetypal Gothic setting reflects, to echo Kayser, the amalgam of organic and mechanic, depriving the background of its relative normativity in the process.[15]

Be it murky medieval trapping exemplified by the *Castle of Otranto* (1764), desolated mansions akin to those in possession of Count Dracula or foreign landscapes depicted by Anne Radcliffe, every fundamental Gothic setting is distorted and to some degree human-like. Drawing on Kayser's definition of distortion, the mixture of human and artificial elements results in the notion that all Gothic settings are deformed by default. Although this type of deformity can be tied to the literal defects as well, i.e. *Wuthering Heights*,[16] the symbolic deformity delineates a far more complex image, which, in most cases, serves as a direct projection of one specific character.

In some Gothic works, the anthropomorphism can reach the level of total merge of the organic and mechanic: "whenever he [Count Dracula] spoke of his house, he always said we;"[17] other times, as E. J. Clery writes, the "gothic castle is the main protagonist."[18] Despite the suggestive title, none of these apply to Anne Radcliffe's *Mysteries of Udolpho*. Emily St. Aubert does not compete with the castle, as she constitutes the principal focus of *Mysteries*; similarly, she does not merge with Udolpho by any extension of the word. The Apennian Castle of Udolpho, on the other hand, firmly adheres to the archetypal Gothic setting due to

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[15] Kayser 181-182.

[16] The premises of Wuthering Heights are under the reign of Heathcliff described as a "shattered prison" based on their desolated and unforgiving atmosphere. The "gaunt thorns all stretching their limbs one way, as if craving alms of the sun," merely further contribute to the dark dilapidated image Wuthering Heights exude.

[17] Bram Stoker, *Dracula* (London: Penguin Popular Classics, 1994) 25.

[18] E. J. Clery in his introduction to Walpole's *Castle of Otranto* claims that the castle is "not only the main protagonist" but also the main orientation point which functions as an "extension of the mood evoked by the settting."

its "gothic greatness."[19] This directly corresponds with Kayserian fusion and the subsequent notion of terror it stimulates. Emily's reaction to the knowledge that "there [...] is Udolpho," (Radcliffe, chapter 5) is an especially telling example:

> "Emily gazed with melancholy awe upon the castle, which she understood to be Montoni's; for, though it was now lighted up by the setting sun, the gothic greatness of its features, and its mouldering walls of dark grey stone, rendered it a gloomy and sublime object. As she gazed, the light died away on its walls, leaving a melancholy purple tint, which spread deeper and deeper, as the thin vapour crept up the mountain, while the battlements above were still tipped with splendour. From those, too, the rays soon faded, and the whole edifice was invested with the solemn duskiness of evening. Silent, lonely, and sublime, it seemed to stand the sovereign of the scene, and to frown defiance on all, who dared to invade its solitary reign. As the twilight deepened, its features became more awful in obscurity, and [...] Emily's heart sunk, and she seemed, as if she was going into her prison; the gloomy court, into which she passed, served to confirm the idea, and her imagination, ever awake to circumstance, suggested even more terrors, than her reason could justify." (Radcliffe, chapter 5)

As this passage asserts, Udolpho is an epitome of Gothic locus; it combines all the necessary elements mentioned by Kayser and succeeds in planting "terrific images in her [Emily's] mind" (Radcliffe, chapter 5). Radcliffe hence illustrates Kayser's definition of deformity and, by implementing chiefly foreign landscapes in her work, also contributes to the Gothic genre and deformity in her idiosyncratic manner. Since *Mysteries* omits England and deals barely with French (château of Monsieur St. Aubert, estate of the marquis de Villerois) and Italian (Turin, Venice, Castle of Udolpho) locations, Radcliffe opposes the tradition of domestic settings, and allows for hybridization, and thereby deformity. Unsurprisingly, it is oftentimes precisely at the unfamiliar foreign places that most terror is generated. *Mysteries* thus function far less on literal (no monsters are incorporated) than on

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[19] Anne Radcliffe, *Mysteries of Udolpho*, Project Gutenberg, chapter 5, n.p. <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/3268/3268-0.txt>. 20.11. 2019. All future references for this work in this chapter will be henceforth in brackets.

symbolic level (Emily sees a ghost and an apparition; the menacing castle of Udolpho and by its extension, its owner Count Montoni).

All of the above cases clarified that the most critical criterion of European Gothic resides in physical, be it symbolic or literal, deformity. This deformity is likewise recurrent in Radcliffe, even if she does not pursue abhorrent pictures such as her contemporaries.[20] Emily as a female protagonist, though, also introduces a new mode of Gothic: a female Gothic, in which the chiefly female concerns and anxieties are confronted. "The terror of her mind" (Radcliffe, chapter 3) thus could be attributed as a reaction to the effect of Gothic deformity or, as feminist theories would put it, as a reaction to the terror of a female victim at the mercy of aggressive masculinity.

Gender inequality seemed commonly ascribed to the idea that women were considered less valuable and the gendered 'other' solely on the basis of her lower bodily stratum.[21] Emily, being a woman, is hence automatically deformed by her weaker gender in comparison to the strong male masculinity denoted by Count Morano and Montoni. Devoided of any male figure which she could complement (her father is dead and Valancourt often elsewhere), Emily lacks the protection and therefore appears as an easier target to victimize. Mary J. Russo, a feminist critic of the late twentieth century, reanalyzes Bakhtin's argument by exploring gender in regards to both the material body but also the social relationship attached to it.[22] In this way,

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[20] What is purposefully omitted in Radcliffe becomes explicit and transparent in the work of M.G. Lewis. Quite interestingly, what is painfully explained in Radcliffe (Botting terms her technique a "clear moral concluding") is never revealed in Lewis.

[21] Michail Mikhailovich Bakhtin, *Rabelais and His World* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1984) 240.

[22] Mary J. Russo in *The Female Grotesque: Risk, Excess and Modernity* argues that the binary opposition of gender is largely constructed upon the viewpoint of stereotypical gender roles of active masculinity and passive femininity. These gender roles are considered an immediate product of the heteronormative gender framework which dictates one's gender according to their biological sex. Woman's existence is thus indicated by its direct relation to a male figure, whose aggressive and dominant counterpart she is supposed to obey and complement. Any deviations from the consensus, including homosexuals, transgenders and anyone who defies in any sense the convention, are obviously heavily condemned. A woman without a male in her life is thus perceived as a "woman out of place" (read deformed) or astray within such heteronormative gender norms. For rejecting their 'inherent' gender roles, those opposing the system are usually portrayed as women prone to madness and/or sexual promiscuity or, in case of men, homosexuality.

Emily and Counts Morano and Montoni could be read as embodiments of the heteronormative gender stereotypes, with the passive female victim on one side, and the active male perpetrator of violence on the other.

Accordingly, when Emily succumbs to her indulgent imagination and "reverie" (Radcliffe, chapter 2), she does not necessarily fear the metaphorical ghosts, but the real threats impersonated by the "persecuting addresses of Count Morano and the unjust authority of Montoni" (Radcliffe, chapter 8). This seems a recurrent topos, as in chapter five, Emily "started up in terror, for Montoni and Count Morano instantly came to her mind" (Radcliffe, chapter 5). Emily's mind might be "clouded by anxiety" (Radcliffe, chapter 3) but only due to the "sullen haughtiness and dark watchful villany" represented by the counts and their stereotypical aggressive masculinity.

The notion of gendered violence and heteronormative gender framework is perhaps best manifested in Emily's musings in Turin in chapter 2:

> "Montoni's eyes lost their sullenness, and seemed instantaneously to gleam with fire; yet they still retained somewhat of a lurking cunning, and she sometimes thought that their fire partook more of the glare of malice than the brightness of valour, though the latter would well have harmonised with the high chivalric air of his figure, in which Cavigni, with all his gay and gallant manners, was his inferior." (Radcliffe, chapter 2)

Montoni here valorizes every stereotype of the male gender. On the surface, he is "chivalric" (Radcliffe, chapter 2) yet his aggressive masculinity indicated by his "glare of malice" (Radcliffe, chapter 2) renders him the full-fledged male dominator, as opposed to the gender-wise inadequate (read deformed) Cavigni. Unlike Cavigni, whose "gay and gallant manners" (Radcliffe, chapter 2) intersect with the stereotypical violent masculinity, Montoni retains his masculine aggression "together with all the dangers it seemed to threaten" Emily (Radcliffe, chapter 8). Another instance between the protected (Montoni), respectively

unprotected (Cavigni), gender roles ensues within the next paragraph, as both gentlemen are buying caps:

> "On entering the Milanese, the gentlemen exchanged their French hats for the Italian cap of scarlet cloth, embroidered; and Emily was somewhat surprised to observe, that Montoni added to his the military plume, while Cavigni retained only the feather: which was usually worn with such caps: but she at length concluded, that Montoni assumed this ensign of a soldier for convenience, as a means of passing with more safety through a country over-run with parties of the military." (Radcliffe, chapter 2)

Even though Emily believes the "ensign of the soldier" (Radcliffe, chapter 2) was chosen by Montoni merely due to the safety reasons and convenience, Montoni's gesture is far more gender determined: by doing so, he explicitly asserts his hyper-stereotypical masculinity. Cavigni's choice of the feather thus comes as a rather expected move, since his gender image is crippled and he is perceived as "inferior" (Radcliffe, chapter 2) not only to Montoni, but to all males. Cavigni, a gender astray, hence acquires the same kind of gender deformity, which Emily, on the basis of her being a woman, i.e. the gendered 'other,' has to deal with from the start.

As Anne Radcliffe's *Mysteries* hereby showed, the element of deformity can be derived from the metaphorical, literal and psychological sources. The psychological aspect of deformities will be further elaborated in the following chapters. However, it is important to note that it was already Radcliffe that introduced the human psyche into Gothic novels. Her female Gothic marks an interesting modification within the European Gothic tradition, as she incorporates not only the foreign settings, but also, and foremost, the female anxiety associated with the real life dangers cast upon a woman. For this reason, *Mysteries* should not be reduced to a plain surrealist prose as Emily's "over-sensitive imagination"[23] reflects in chief psychological concerns: the inner processes of a female's mind and the notion of terror

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[23] Botting, 64.

they can instigate. Consequently, Radcliffe's Gothic heroine is no more scared of monsters and ghostly apparitions; it is the "[male] tall figure" (Radcliffe, chapter 9) that gives "a thrill of horror to her heart" (Radcliffe, chapter 7).

2.1.3 Deformity in American Gothic

Whereas the element of deformity in European Gothic owes much to its monstrous physicality, American Gothicism reconfigures the Gothic patterns and introduces distortion that is at root derivative of deformed psyche. Irrationality, instability, hysteria and plurality of a mind comprise a few of many recurrent themes which are distilled to a sense of pure intimidating effect, i.e. the fundamental Gothic notion of terror. Edgar Allan Poe, undoubtedly the most famous and widely reprinted American Gothicist, best captures such distillation in his Gothic short stories. Recalling the notorious "William Wilson," "The Tell-tale Heart," "The Black Cat," "The Cask of Amontillado" or "The Fall of the House of Usher," Poe's characters, all hopelessly split and susceptible to madness, ratify the elemental ingredient for American Gothic fiction: an individual deeply marked by psychological disturbance. This mental defect functions as an irreversible crippling mechanism which cannot be altered; as a result, the protagonists either subdue to insanity or suffer the consequences of their actions.[24]

Oftentimes, the psychological distortion fluctuates on three distinct levels: partial acknowledgement (Roderick Usher), unawareness of their condition (William Wilson) or the total rejection of the defunct state of mind; the example of the latter is supplied by the following introduction of Poe's "Cat":

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[24] Most of the early American Gothic deformed characters follow a certain recurrent literary path: ultimately, they are exterminated (Poe's Roderick Usher and Madeleine Usher), institutionalized (Charlotte Perkins Gillman's "The Yellow Wallpaper," Washington Irving's "The Adventure of the German Student"), imprisoned (Charles Brockden Brown's Theodore Wieland) or executed (Poe's narrator of "The Black Cat").

> "FOR the most wild, yet most homely narrative which I am about to
> pen, I neither expect nor solicit belief. Mad indeed would I be to
> expect it, in a case where my very senses reject their own evidence.
> Yet, mad am I not—and very surely do I not dream. But to-morrow I
> die, and to-day I would unburthen my soul. My immediate purpose is
> to place before the world, plainly, succinctly, and without comment, a
> series of mere household events."[25]

The implications of deformed psyche are self-evident; despite his protests "mad indeed"[26] he is. Yet, this psychological disability is not a product of haunted castles, nor mysterious creatures. In the American Gothic discourse, it is "a series of mere household events"[27] that initiates horrifying confrontations and subsequent agony.[28]

According to Fred Botting, the edifice of American Gothicism is centered upon a family house populated by "gloomy and grotesquely ornamented repository of ghosts."[29] Contrary to the ghostly apparitions in *Mysteries of Udolpho*, the monsters in American Gothic thus become synonymous with the familial (and familiar) sphere.[30] They can be produced as an outcome of heightened imagination (read defunct mind), or serve as a mental projection of corporeal danger to an individual's body and inner psyche. In this manner, the intricate domestic relations presuppose the notion of terror which always emerges within a bizarre, deteriorating and dysfunctional family. Charles Brockden Brown closely explores this contagious relationship between distortion and domesticity in his pioneering work *Wieland; or The Transformation: An American Tale* (1798).

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[25] Edgar Allan Poe, *The Collected Works of Edgar Allan Poe* (London: Wordsworth Library Collection, 2009) 61.

[26] Ibid.

[27] Ibid.

[28] Diane Long Hoeveler in her essay "American Female Gothic" writes that the realms of domestic and psychological are de facto interconnected in American Gothic fiction. Diana Wallace goes as far as naming the American Gothic the "dark familial romance," in which a familial murder is a common Gothic trope.

[29] Botting, 118.

[30] The notion of familiarity, or unfamiliarity respectively, will be further developed in chapter 2.2.2.

In *Wieland*, first and one of the most frequently anthologized Gothic novels,[31] Brown attempts to present and warn against the material world in which excessive reliance on religious and Enlightenment values confuses and distorts one's senses. Such an effect is achieved by means of integral American Gothic element- psychological deformity - which haunts the whole lineage of Wielands in a similar fashion.

One fateful evening, when the old Wieland hears what appears to be God's voice commanding him to commit a suicide, he spirals the family's curse: the hereditary madness. This manifests in the fact that long after his death, the ghastly past and inheritance relentlessly linger over the house.[32] *Wieland* in this way laid down the foundation for American Gothicism which is imbued with supernatural elements, i.e. "a cloud impregnated with light"[33] and, more profusely, family matters. [34]

Unlike Radcliffe, who provides painstakingly detailed explanations, much remains undisclosed in Brown.[35] This is mostly due to Clara's deteriorating style of narration, embedded in the occasional ruptures of thoughts and pauses. The reader is thus presented with a traditional Gothic theme of unreliable narrator with the psychological outlet of attempted murder, anxiety, incest and gradual hysteria. Nevertheless, Brown's literary craft is highly

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[31] According to Faye Ringel, the beginning of American Gothicism is generally marked with the emergence of Charles Brockden Brown's works. However, in his essay "Early American Gothic (Puritan and New Republic)," Ringel admits that it is possible to regard as the first Gothic novel likewise *The Asylum: Or Alonso and Melissa. An American Tale* (1811) allegedly written by Isaac Mitchell.

[32] Gradually, every member of the Wieland family submits to some form of psychological disorder. Brown by this method introduces a cycle of inevitable past which keeps repeating itself. The issue of past, guilt and inheritance will be developed and explained in relation to Southern Gothic in the following chapter.

[33] Charles Brockden Brown, *Wieland; or The Transformation: An American Tale*, Project Gutenberg, chapter 3, n.p., <http://www.gutenberg.org/files/792/792-h/792-h.htm#link2HCH0003>, 20.11. 2019. All future references for this work in this chapter will be henceforth in brackets.

[34] Despite a slight decline in use, the supernatural still exists in American Gothic domain. For instance, Washington Irving's short stories "Adventure of the German Student" or "Rip Van Winkle," Nathaniel Hawthorne's "Rappaccini's Daughter" and "Young Goodman Brown," and later Ambrose Bierce's "John Mortonson´s Funeral" and Henry James' "The Ghostly Rental" or *The Turn of the Screw* all mark supernatural features.

[35] The supernatural event of spontaneous combustion exemplified by the mysterious death of old Wieland, the brutality of Lucy Conway's murder or Theodore Wieland's initial spur to commit murder is never fully accounted for.

idiosyncratic, as he mingles the layers of religious, rational and social with chiefly American, depicting The New World as a distorted land of anxiety[36] from the very beginning.

Though strictly marginalized, physical deformity can be still detected in some American Gothic fiction.[37] The decaying aristocratic mansions are, in most cases, superseded by rural and urban settings, nonetheless. Wieland, for example, allows for the physical literal distortion only in connection to the ancient temple. The nature of such distortion can transgress its original function:

> "The temple was no longer assigned to its ancient use. From an Italian adventurer, who erroneously imagined that he could find employment for his skill, and sale for his sculptures in America, my brother had purchased a bust of Cicero. He professed to have copied this piece from an antique dug up with his own hands in the environs of Modena. Of the truth of his assertions we were not qualified to judge; but the marble was pure and polished, and we were contented to admire the performance, without waiting for the sanction of connoisseurs. We hired the same artist to hew a suitable pedestal from a neighbouring quarry. This was placed in the temple, and the bust rested upon it. Opposite to this was a harpsichord, sheltered by a temporary roof from the weather. This was the place of resort in the evenings of summer. Here we sung, and talked, and read, and occasionally banqueted. Every joyous and tender scene most dear to my memory, is connected with this edifice. Here the performances of our musical and poetical ancestor were rehearsed. Here my brother's children received the rudiments of their education; here a thousand conversations, pregnant with delight and improvement, took place; and here the social affections were accustomed to expand, and the tear of delicious sympathy to be shed." (Brown, chapter 3)

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[36] Faye Ringel in his "Early American Gothic (Puritan and New Republic)" proclaims that America in the 1790s reflects "anxieties raised by the French Revolution." Botting further asserts that past transgressions, uncertain class origins, puritan consciousness, frontier dangers, and scientific discoveries also contribute to the increasingly anxious identity of the then America.

[37] The crumbling mansion of Roderick Usher, for instance, confirms Wolfgang Kayser's fusion of human and non-human features; its symbolic psychological link is, however, far more relevant in connection to an individual's inner experience and psychological deformity. Similarly, Usher's physical literal distortion represented by his "acute bodily illness," "cadaverousness of complexion" and "his malady" could be ascribed to E. J. Clery's merge with the deteriorating mansion, should it not originate solely in his dejected psyche. In later American Gothic stories, the motif of haunted mansion also reappears (Charlotte Perkins Gilman's "The Yellow Wallpaper," or Henry James' "The Jolly Corner").

The above example testifies to the concept of recurrent doubling in Brown's settings. Be it Clara Wieland's bedroom, the temple or the house of the final rendezvous with Theodore, Brown's premises frequently possess the Gothic dichotic quality of poly-identity. They can be gloomy and invoking fear by night, as well as "joyous and tender" (Brown, chapter 3) by day.[38] This doppelganger[39] characteristic operates on two basic principles. First, it generates ambiguity and uncertainty of the loci; secondly, it emphasizes the plurality and fragmentation of Wielands' mind. With no gothic mansions as its primary locus and no bodily deformity at its heart, Wieland had to accommodate other devices to generate the fundamental notion of terror. The lack of physical defects is thus negotiated for inexplicable acts of insanity presented as a repetitive pattern of mental perturbation.

The most conspicuous evidence of such deformity translates into the psychological instability with which all *Wieland*'s characters are inflicted. This is reflected in myriad ways, depending on the socio-cultural current in which the individual character is caught. In case of the old Wieland, the psychological disturbance rests primarily upon his exceeding devotion to God and puritan evangelism through which his insanity is medialized; his son, Theodore, inherits this trait yet, as his sister Clara aptly registers, with slight adjustments:

> "In his studies, he pursued an austerer and more arduous path. He was much conversant with the history of religious opinions, and took pains to ascertain their validity. He deemed it indispensable to examine the ground of his belief, to settle the relation between motives and actions, the criterion of merit, and the kinds and properties of evidence.
>
> There was an obvious resemblance between him and my father, in their conceptions of the importance of certain topics, and in the light in which the vicissitudes of human life were accustomed to be viewed. Their characters were similar, but the mind of the son was enriched by science, and embellished with literature." (Brown, chapter 3)

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[38] As Clara notes in chapter 8, despite the inexplicable events, "the temple was the principal scene of our social enjoyments."

[39] Doppelgangers and doubling will be discussed in more detail in chapter 2.2.3.

As this passage clarifies, Theodore portrays not only the detrimental effect of religious fanatism but also the limiting and ensnarling tendencies of the eighteenth century of reason. Regardless of him being "enriched by science and embellished with literature" (Brown, chapter 3), he succumbs to "some inexplicable and momentary phrenzy" (Brown, chapter 11) which bears "an obvious resemblance" (Brown, chapter 3) to that of his father's. The American Gothic domain hence provides a transition from the magical paradigm to strictly scientific field of discourse; what initially seems utterly rational eventually culminates into a "fatal illusion" (Brown, chapter 9).[40] Nonetheless, Theodore's deformity does not reside in the adherence to religion but rather his rejection of "all guidance but that of his [defunct] reason" (Brown, chapter 3). The Enlightment values are thereby constructed as "eternal foe[s]" (Brown, chapter 9) in *Wieland*, as they decapitate psychological insight of an individual's mind and let the character become "a victim of this imbecility" (Brown, chapter 9). A similar instance is mirrored in the persona of Clara Wieland.

Clara, akin to her brother Theodore, is deformed and "reduced to the condition of orphan." (Brown, chapter 3). It is the heightened imagination and constant belief in supernatural thoughts that distort her mental state and further complicate the narrative. Similar to Radcliffean heroines, Clara's "frantic conception" (Brown, chapter 6) constitutes a salient part in the novel. It not only generates ambiguity but also, Botting notes, provides a condition for a Gothic text to stimulate terror.[41] This renders manifold in *Wieland*: Clara's imagination can transform "some casual noise into the voice of a human creature" (Brown, chapter 6) leaving her "thoughts full of confusion and anxiety" (Brown, chapter 2); "in a state thus verging upon madness" (Brown, chapter 24), she perceives the external forces around her as ominous

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[40] In Brown's other novels, including *Edgar Huntly*, *Arthur Mervyn* and *Ormond*, the notion of terror is stimulated by what Brown himself names "the perils of the western wilderness." With the Native Americans as the monstrous equivalent to the antagonistic and inhuman 'other,' the dangers behind the frontier provide the vital source for cultural instability.

[41] Botting, 5-6.

monsters "surrounded by the deepest darkness" (Brown, chapter 7); she wonders "whether these were shapes and faces" (Brown, chapter 17) or creatures of her "fancy or air existence" (Brown, chapter 17). As a result, the fine line between the actual and the imagination is equivocal and blurred. Her paralyzing encounter with Carwin in chapter 6 merely solidifies this personal trait of hers. [42] Unsurprisingly, Clara denies her "destitute of tranquility" (Brown, chapter 1). Notwithstanding, she is conscious of how her mind is absorbed "in thoughts ominous and dreary" (Brown, chapter 6) after the moment Francis Carwin enters her life.

Carwin, a converted Roman Catholic, provides the supernatural element that animates *Wieland*. Due to his mysterious pedigree, he automatically epitomizes what Crevecour terms "a mongrel breed, half civilized, half savage."[43] He is racially marked and hence ostracized, Gothicized and deformed by default. On the symbolic level, he serves as a representation of dangers emanating from religious fanaticism and reason (Theodore) and overindulgent belief in the supernatural (Clara). Carwin's cunning skills link him to what Andrew Loman terms Gothic "confident artists," profoundly threating fraudulence of public identities.[44] As the plot unravels, it is evident that Carwin betrays symptoms of extreme power yet no restraint, nor responsibility. In this way, his relationship with Wielands illustrates the Kayserian fusion of human and non-human elements: by means of his ventriloquism, Carwin turns Wielands into his artificial marionettes, while simultaneously transforming those around him into Gothic villains. Additionally, in regards to Edmund Burke's *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin*

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[42] On one hand, Clara expresses repulsion and fear as an immediate reaction to Carwin's presence; on the other, her "heart is overflowed with sympathy and […] unbidden tears."

[43] Michel-Guillaume Jean de Crèvecoeur, "What Is an American?" *Letter III of Letters from an American Farmer*, Warwick University, National Humanities Center Resource Toolbox, n.p. <https://warwick.ac.uk/fac/arts/english/currentstudents/undergraduate/modules/fulllist/second/en213/term1/crevecoeur_what_is_an_american.pdf>, 10.2. 2020.

[44] As Andrew Loman in the *American Gothic Culture: An Edinburgh Companion* asserts, confidence artists and urban devils function as embodiments of anxieties the particular Gothic society is afflicted with. They are often polymorphous and draw upon the treasury of their victims almost to an unlimited extent. In connection to this, Bernard Rosenthal also stresses the role of conventional seduction story rather than a mere religious moral tale. Theodore Wieland, as well as Clara, was indeed seduced by Carwin's voice.

of Our Ideas of the Sublime and the Beautiful,[45] Carwin likewise denotes the sublime "object [...] [which is] dreaded or adored" (Brown, chapter 8). Clara, especially, is magnetized by Carwin's somewhat distorted aura. With his bizarre power of ventriloquism and isolation of character, Wielands find it hard to determine whether Carwin is up "to evil or to good" (Brown, chapter 8). He hence embodies an alien, a marked individual, whose transgressive body and mind is feared as it defies the social norms and society.

Finally, the gender deformity translates into Brown's conspicuous mixing of gender roles and stereotypes in *Wieland.* The extreme opposition of heteronormative gender framework is exemplified only in two supporting characters: Catherine Wieland (neé Pleyel) and her brother Henry Pleyel. Henry, as the stereotypical representative of active masculinity, is granted the free motion and power across the public sphere. On the contrary, Catherine, "devoid of any imperfection" (Brown, chapter 13), is confined to her passive femininity and entrapped within the domestic sphere. Being a woman, Catherine is automatically regarded as the deformed and dangerous "other,"[46] with no possibility to break out of the cage. As opposed to Clara and Theodore, nor Catherine, neither Pleyel fall victim to any "adventurous and lawless fancy" (Brown, chapter 9). Their gender roles, as well as sanity, render intact. By contrast, Wielands' mental health and gender boundaries prove always haphazard and in question.

Regarding Clara's persona, she displays a variety of gender deviations which transmutes her character into a 'gender astray.' Unmarried and in full possession of her mobility and own will, Clara "is not sorry for being left alone" (Brown, chapter 7). She signifies what Diana

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[45] In his work, Burke recognizes a sublime emotion as "a frisson of delight and horror, tranquility and terror" which translates into an encounter with one's own limitations.

[46] Anne Williams in *The Cambridge Companion to the Eighteenth-Century Novel* declares that "the female other" is constructed by patriarchal system as an unstable, irrational, dark and evil force.

Wallace names "a recovered female,"[47] who rises above the gender stratification and male victimization. In the light of this theory, Clara's hysteria could be ascribed to symbolic anxiety from the masculine aggression towards "every female heart" (Brown, chapter 6). Her irrational fear that "her brother was within [her closet]" (Brown, chapter 6); the "hateful and degrading impulses" (Brown, chapter 9) she experiences whenever she has males present in her life; the human "machinations of this man (Carwin)" (Brown, chapter 10) and of all male perpetrators, barely mirror the committed crimes on a women's body and mind. The male is therefore primarily portrayed as a "devil" (Brown, chapter 22) in *Wieland* who threatens woman's purity and likewise psyche.

Theodore's defunct mind emerges as a result of gender intersection as well. Even though he professes the active violent masculinity, he often seems "to be struggling with his rage" (Brown, chapter 13). His self-doubt and philosophical tendencies prevent him from professing the confidence and arrogance Montoni and Morano transpire. This ultimately questions his gender role and its overall validity. Incapable of associating his "mind with that of superior power" (Brown, chapter 5), the gender protection does not shelter Theodore from madness and prosecution. His ultimate suicide thus represents an unsuccessful grapple with the pressures upon an individual deriving from the prescribed gender roles and an example of personal failure thereof. The mental instability demonstrated by both Theodore and Clara could be thereby read as a psychological but also gender deformity; or, more specifically, as a manifestation of intersection with the constrictive gender framework in the then eighteenth century American society.[48]

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[47] Diana Wallace in *Women and the Gothic the Edinburgh Companion* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2016) 87.

[48] Contrary to his contemporaries, Brown, Faye notes, denounces the current form of the institution of marriage "in favor for equal friendship and separate dwelling." His novels and, especially *Alcuin,* thus not only comprise the first attempt for advocating woman's rights on American soil but also the first representation of American Gothic writing with the elements of female Gothic.

Highly indebted to William Godwin's philosophy,[49] Wieland defines the subcomponents of archetypal American Gothic, from which all later Gothicists[50] heavily drew. By incorporation of the inner psychological processes disordered by passion, religion and irrationality, Brown announces the importance of explicitly political, social and domestic dimensions in the eighteenth century America. Accordingly, the deformity of social structure is effectively rendered with various facets of tensions deriving from science, biloquism, mesmerism and, as Faye Ringel argues, republicanism and political philosophy.[51] The foreign entity, such as Carwin, is hence automatically regarded as a dark alien influence nonconforming to the stultifying effect of Enlightment. The inability to rationally understand, map and manage Carwin's ventriloquism only further exemplifies how shortsighted and deteriorating Enlightment values were; and, additionally, what a tremendous effect they could exert on the human mind.

These limitations seem prescient in *Wieland*, inasmuch as they depict boundaries which propound and endorse the social order. In this manner, *Wieland* portrays the decline of the Wieland family as a response to the "immesurable evils that flow from an erronerous or imperfect discipline[s]" (Brown, chapter 1). The evil proposed in *Wieland* springs from inherently human origins; despite their distortions, old Wieland, Theodore and even Carwin are all humans, indeed. Brown's villains are thus no "denizens of malefic other world"[52] but rather the disembodied projections of the deformed human psyche and the complex socio-cultural system in which they are embedded.

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[49] Brown was an enthusiastic and avid consumer of William Godwin. Godwin's "Political Science" provided an especially potent influence upon all Brown's works.

[50] Malcolm Bradbury in *From Puritanism to Modernism: A History of American Literature* notes that Brown's prominent influence reflected not only within the Gothic genre but also other American fiction. For instance, the American Renaissance, a group of American authors including such towering literary figures as Nathaniel Hawthorne, Washington Irving, Herman Melville and Edgar Allan Poe, all display marks of Brown's Gothicism.

[51] Faye Ringel in *The Cambridge Companion to American Gothic* (NY: Cambridge University Press, 2017) 24.

[52] Diane Long Hoeveler in *The Cambridge Companion to American Gothic*, 101.

2.1.4 Deformity in Southern Gothic

As previously discussed, contrary to European Gothicism, American Gothic has a scant interest in distorted bodily images. In effect, the horror in the latter derives less from the external than the internal perspective. This is primarily indicated by the various Gothic tropes ranging from deep familial conflicts to severe mental defects affecting the inner psyche. In Southern Gothic, a subgenre of American Gothicism, the yawning gulf between the European and American distortion becomes yoked. If *Wieland* and *Mysteries of Udolpho* confirm the nebulous resemblance and the potential deceptiveness of one's senses, Southern Gothic reworks the element of deformity and produces an oddly specific set of literary craft which abounds in the "tortuously ambivalent"[53] amalgamation of both. What was thus initially shielded away from appears to be a belated supplement treated in conjoint in Southern Gothic.

Flannery O'Connor once declared that anything Southern[54] must be called "grotesque by the Northern readers."[55] Such a proclamation defines a great starting point for the intricate relationship between deformity, South and Southern Gothic literature. To begin with, all the terms can be in most cases interchangeable.[56] Southern Gothic literature is always fraught with grotesque deformity; deformity is prevalent in connection to American South; Southern Gothic literature betrays marks of Southern upbringing. The terms Southern Gothic and South

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[53] Botting, 82.

[54] As the American South is examined and presented as a culturally and historically specific region, the initial letter shall be hereby capitalized. Should there be a word referring to the South written as "south" or "southern," it is only for the purpose of retaining the original quotation.

[55] Presley, 38.

[56] Once perceived also as the defunct and peripheral "literary other," there was a time when Southern Gothic stood in stark opposition to the literary majority personified by American literature published in the North. Similarly, the Southern diaspora perceived itself as the American defeated "Other." This concept predominantly stems from the bitter loss during the Civil war era, which dissociated South from the American "land of victory." However, the Southern 'otherness' also pertains to the origins of Southern exceptionalism, which harks far back to the emergence of first Southern colonies. According to Orville Vernon Burton, all these examples of various (mis)perceptions of American South continue to distinguish the Southerners from Yankees to the present day.

are thus unavoidably interspersed with the connotations of deterioration, grotesquerie, bizarre exceptionalism and Southern "otherness."[57]

One can discern that the origins of Southern Gothic, or Southern literature respectively, coincide with the publication of Edgar Allan Poe's *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym of Nantucket* (1838). In this revolutionary work, Poe examines the Southern Gothic's particular appropriation of signifiers of blackness. Whereas the white members of the society are elevated, the 'negroes' are commodified and Gothicized. Similarly to the vessel in chapter 10, the racially deformed character is treated as "a large hermaphrodite [...] painted black, with a tawdry gilt figurehead"[58] in *Pym*. Even though the narration traces a few examples of "brilliant black"[59] (ships, sands, peaks of mountains or animals), the color plays a decisive role when it reaches a human body. The black tribe Pym encounters is depicted as violent, cruel and inferior precisely for being "completely black."[60] This racial bigotry is clearly demonstrated in the following contemplation in chapter 21:

> "I firmly believe that no incident ever occurring in the course of human events is more adapted to inspire the supremeness of mental and bodily distress than a case like our own, of living inhumation. The blackness of darkness which envelops the victim, the terrific oppression of lungs, the stifling fumes from the damp earth, unite with the ghastly considerations that we are beyond the remotest confines of hope, and that such is the allotted portion of *the dead*, to carry into the human heart a degree of appalling awe and horror not to be tolerated—never to be conceived."[61]

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[57] Primarily denoting the geographical division between the colonies of New England and the southern ones, the term 'Southern' adopted a far more prominent meaning in the social sphere at the end of the colonial era. Despite the fact that both the Southern demographics and the Southern cultural distinctiveness are all rather a matter of personal perspective, various intricacies, including Marquis de Chastellux's cavalier thesis and Thomas Jefferson's concept of different climates, began to resurface which gave rise to the notion of Southern exceptionalism. This exceptionalism, however, was, in practice, primarily derived from racial violations and complex realities of Southern life.
[58] Poe, *The Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym*, chapter 10.
[59] Ibid, chapter 14.
[60] Ibid, chapter 13.
[61] Ibid, chapter 21.

As the extract above shows, "the blackness of darkness"[62] assumes the role of dangerous, inhuman and racially deformed 'other' "beyond the remotest confines of hope."[63] In this sense, the 'negroes' conform to Kayser's "supernatural and extra human" form of dehumanizing violence.[64] Like the malformed "black albatross"[65] which "among these [other white] birds [...] [succumbs to] a state of entire domestication,"[66] so must the racially deformed individual endure the horrors of slavery. With the idealized norm represented strictly by white Southern society, the 'negroes,' in contrast, symbolize the social deviation which requires punishment (lynching) as a form of retaliation for its threating subversive potential. This is the first and recurrent instance of racial boundaries dispersed across the Southern Gothic discourse. Often concerned with the presence of the problematic antebellum legacy,[67] the genre of Southern Gothic thus proves to serve a particularly apt format for the portrayal of the horrendous crimes of slavery and numerous hypocrisies it fueled.[68]

Fred Botting in his *Gothic* astutely registers that it is extremely rare to find the staple of European Gothic literature in terms of magical creatures, ghosts and places in the context of the American South.[69] This denotes a crucial difference of reality Southern Gothicists enact. Their fictional basis does not spring from imagined, exotic or foreign influences; Southern

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[62] Ibid.

[63] Ibid.

[64] According to Kayser, "the monstrous bodies, pieced together of the most diverse members, without distinct form, in which order and proportions are left to chance," are automatically considered deformed by default. The lack of this 'ablebodiedness' prevents the disabled individual from being perceived as a human entity. As a consequence, the marginalized character is subjected to suffer from various kinds of abuse, which only endorses the particular social and cultural system.

[65] Ibid, chapter 19.

[66] Ibid.

[67] As "antebellum" is considered everything which refers to the American South before the end of the Civil war.

[68] The most obvious misconception relies in the idolization and effemination of the American South. This notion primarily derives from the perception of South as the feminine, genteel 'other.' Botting writes that words such as "chivalry," "gallantry," "aristocracy," "piety," "honor," "splendor" represent a few of many invocations of the collocation antebellum South. The common social practice of racial violence, corruption, crushing poverty and sexual promiscuity executed upon the marginalized (read deformed) individuals often went largely unpunished though. This was accounted by the fact that any violence against these cases was not considered a breach of the heteronormative white social code. In such a society, the figures of "unappealing monsters" hence stand as the visual totem to indictment of Southern intolerance, hypocrisy and concealment of the hidden crimes exerted by the American South.

[69] Botting, 158-159.

writing mirrors the actual, though distorted, world around which the anxious narrative revolves. The result thereof translates into a different treatment of Gothic tropes in Southern Gothic fiction. Familial romance, murder, incest, (inter)sex[70], race, necrophilia, lost limbs and mental diseases frequently figure as the repetitive dark forces that haunt the narration. The strange and brutal events also emerge under fairly ordinary communal activities.[71]

Similar to its inhabitants, the archetypal Southern Gothic setting is invariably presented as an isolated, alienated and primarily physically deformed locus with a bizarre conceptualization of time and livability.[72] Such a concept is amplified by the presence of "freaks"[73] who are, akin to their surroundings, marked by the distorted, and distorting, Southern past. In this manner, the element of deformity pervades every Southern Gothic character with no exception. Some reflect a singular instance of distortion; other times, the element of deformity simultaneously works on more levels: the protagonist can be bodily deformed (Tennessee William's Oliver Winemiller), mentally deformed (William Faulkner's Quentin Compson), gender confined (Faulkner's Dewey Dell or Cady Compson), racially marked (Faulkner's Dilsey)[74] or suffer from some 'strange' combination of the aforementioned (Faulkner's Thomas Sutpen, Williams's Pablo). In this sense, the Gothic monstrosity, once restricted solely to abandoned castles and ruins, loses and fuses its original narrow meaning of solely physical or psychological properties and investigates the complexities of Southern realities through a more befitting lens.

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[70] An abbreviation for interracial sex

[71] Tennessee Williams's Anthony Burns is dismembered during his massage. Miriam's alter ego appears during her visit to the cinema. The Bailey family is murdered during their drive to Florida.

[72] In many cases, the setting displays a certain resistance to change despite outer circumstances. For example, in William Faulkner's "Rose for Emily" this resistance is exhibited by Emily's old house which towers in the city as the last symbol of the antebellum South.

[73] Presley, 37.

[74] Racial markedness and exoticity was already introduced in Brown's novels (Carwin and Native Americans are, according to Ringel, always portrayed as the potential dark threat based on their primary physical otherness and "foreign manners"); English Gothic figures which already feature devilish foreign origins include Heathcliff from *Wuthering Heights* and Bertha Mason/Mrs. Rochester from *Jane Eyre*. It was not until Edgar Allan Poe's *Narrative of Arthur Gordon Pym* that race, and especially that of black people, was Gothicized and reduced to the point of racially deformed 'other' though.

By means of physical literal distortion, Southern Gothic verifies Kayser's fusion of human and non-human features.[75] A great example of such mixing is fostered by William Faulkner's dialogue between Darl and Vardaman Bundren in *As I Lay Dying* (1930). Vardaman, due to his young age, cannot differentiate between not-mom and "not-fish."[76] His older brother Darl, on the other hand, displays no particular trouble with such distinction:

> "'Jewel's mother is a horse,' Darl said.
>
> 'Then mine can be a fish, can't it, Darl?' I said.
>
> [...] 'Why?' Darl said. 'If pa is your pa, why does your ma have to be a horse just because Jewel's is?'"[77]

Within the post-bellum context, in which "all stable things become shadowy paradoxical,"[78] the old codes of the Southern aristocratic society[79] prove inapplicable. Quentin Compson's monologue in *The Sound and the Fury* perfectly exemplifies this moral dilemma; his growing hopelessness and disillusion with the antebellum South reach its peak upon learning of Cady's promiscuity: a symbolic marker for the dissolution of Southern morality. In a moment of such displacement, the deformed individual is usually overtaken by some curious compulsion to kill (Quentin commits suicide) or exhibits a horrid, sometimes even perverse, fascination for the deformed subject matters.[80] The dejected state of an individual's mind in this way serves as a mental projection and internalization of the external forces coming from the historically stigmatized past. Consequently, the past and present in Southern

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[75] For instance, Faulkner's Cash Bundren's leg is covered in cement, Flannery O'Connor's Hulga Hopewell has an artificial leg; similarly, machines can acquire human properties, while animals and humans become synonymous.

[76] William Faulkner, *As I Lay Dying* (NY: Knopf Doubleday Publishing Group, 2011) 50.

[77] Ibid.

[78] William Faulkner, *The Sound and the Fury* (NY: Vintage Books, 1946) 88.

[79] As Faye Ringel writes, American Southern society prized above all the legend of chivalry which was (accurately or not) linked to the English aristocracy.

[80] Both Manley Pointer and Mrs. Freeman display a deep interest in Hulga's artificial leg; Quentin Compson obsesses about his sister Cady's virginity; Emily arguably indulges in necrophilia.

Gothic renders indivisible. As Maria Haar notes, the principal focus of Southern Gothic narrative is:

> " [...] the deformed and warped character, placed in an unmistakably Southern setting, whose physical and mental make-up or behavior is such that it creates a sustained tension in both work and response."[81]

This tension is predominantly reified by the impossibility to exist barren of the racial, historical and social dimensions in the context of the American South. Be it Faulkner's Darl from *As I Lay Dying* or Benjy and Quentin Compson from *The Sound and the Fury*, the characters with no exception suffer the painful consequence (read deformity) of the dark ancestral crimes. Their frustration is manifested as an inner conflict and anxiety, which ultimately escalate into family deterioration, with the only potential survivors being the malformed idiots like Benjy.

The presence of the distorted individuals thereby constitutes a central requirement for any Southern Gothic work. They not only operate as visual[82] moral mirrors through which the hypocrisy, past trauma of the institution of the slavery and immorality are filtered and unmasked; apart from the complexities of social and racial tensions, the deformed Southern Gothic images also ponder the implication of the old South in the present time. This basic motif largely contributes to the overall claustrophobic feeling of anxiety for a world whose existence disappeared and whose resurrection is bemoaned, contemplated or feared.

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[81] Maria Haar, *The Phenomenon of the Grotesque in Modern Southern Fiction: Some Aspects of Its Form and Function* (Stockholm: Almqvist-Wiksell, 1983) 210.

[82] The deformed members of the society were only rarely institutionalized. Instead, they often found themselves in the care of their families. Unsurprisingly, they depicted, in most cases, victims subjected to manipulations of those around them. However, their presence was considered almost ordinary in the every day life events and they were always visible to the eye.

The first wave of the Southern Renaissance,[83] a generation of William Faulkner, fully explores this deep connection. With nostalgia and partial admiration for the antebellum South on one hand, while already doubting its conflicting credos and existence on the other, their Southern Gothic works delineate "human beings…as the ultimate sources of horror."[84] The use of "foundational trauma" in later Southern Gothic, Elizabeth M. Kerr believes, thus proves that the prevalent deformity reflects "a sign that the conflict is still undecided."[85] With the upcoming modernity and World War Two, Eudora Welty, Truman Capote, Flannery O'Connor, Tennessee Williams, Elizabeth Spencer, Erskine Caldwell and Carson McCullers do not occupy themselves with the image of possible resurrection and desire for the antebellum South. Their understanding of the past translates into the continuous historical burden which cripples and terrifies every generation throughout their lives.

2.2.1 Unconsciousness and Freudian Division of Human Psyche

Since this thesis predominantly concentrates upon contribution to the literary field, the following subchapter strives to discuss the psychological terminology only briefly and with its direct connection to the selected aim. Further specification and concrete defense mechanisms will be addressed in detail during the upcoming separate literary analyses.

In his precocious work "The Interpretations of Dreams" (1900), Sigmund Freud distinguishes between three fundamental spheres of human psyche: the conscious, the preconscious and the unconscious mind.[86] This division proves essential, as each of the layers is associated with a different function. Whereas the conscious and preconscious mind

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[83] The term Southern Renaissance refers predominantly to authors including Katherine Anne Porter, Allen Tate, Thomas Wolfe and William Faulkner. All the works of the aforementioned represent a pinnacle of Southern Gothic fiction.

[84] Peggy Dunn Bailey, "Female Gothic Fiction, Grotesque Realities, and Bastard out of Carolina: Dorothy Allison Revises the Southern Gothic," Mississippi Quarterly 63.1.2 (2010) 269.

[85] Elizabeth M. Kerr, *William Faulkner's Gothic Domain* (New York: Kennikat Press, 1979) 13.

[86] Sigmund Freud, "The Interpretation of Dreams" (1900), Psychclassics, p.110, n.p. <https://psychclassics.yorku.ca/Freud/Dreams/dreams.pdf>, 18.2. 2020.

primarily serve as a reservoir for an individual's pleasant and easily recoverable data, the unconsciousness embodies a 'Pandora box' wherein the unacceptable ideas, memories and desires are stored. Accordingly, the sexual and aggressive instincts, often summarized under Freud's Id,[87] are suppressed and controlled from entering the conscious awareness of inner mind processes.

Freud argues that by discovering, uncovering and dealing with this unconscious material, the psychoanalysis can supplement a broader understanding of an individual's psychological disorder. For this purpose, free association, slips of the tongue, and dream interpretations are deployed as the basic "three windows"[88] into the unconsciousness. Additionally, Freud's psychoanalytic theory also involves the concept of defense mechanisms which will prove integral for the principal focus of this thesis.

2.2.2 The Defense Mechanisms

According to Freud's definition, the defense mechanisms operate as a key instrument of motivated expressions of unconsciousness.[89] They not only reveal the aspects of the unconscious mind and secret wishes but also regulate and censor the unacceptable thoughts. To achieve this desired effect, various types of defense mechanisms come into force. While some reflect positively upon an individual's psyche and behavior (compensation, sublimation and humor), others personify the continuous unresolvable conflict between the conscious and the unconscious mind (repression, regression, projection, reaction formation, displacement and undoing). The concept of defense mechanisms will be analyzed primarily in relation to

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[87] [87] 'Id' in regards to Freud's psychoanalysis comprises the most primitive structure of human mind, i.e. the source of instinctual drives; it is characterized by "primary process thinking" which operates on the "pleasure principle."

[88] Freud, 142.

[89] Sigmund Freud, "A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis" (1916-17), PDFBooksWorld, p. 209, n.p. <https://eduardolbm.files.wordpress.com/2014/10/a-general-introduction-to-psychoanalysis-sigmund-freud.pdf>, 18.2.2020.

the Southern past acts of racial violation as a distinct source for abiding anxiety in American South.

2.2.3 The Uncanny and the Double

The term 'uncanny' usually refers to the strong psychological sensation in which the repressed underside of unconsciousness is exposed.[90] This applies to human and non-human entities with no distinction, as all humans, objects, settings and even events can possess the uncanny quality. Similarly, the double (doppelganger) is likewise a product of the motivated unconsciousness which emerges as an emblematic reflection of child's narcissism during childhood. When the double is encountered later in life, its presence evokes the effect of the uncanny. Freud in his essay "Uncanny" (1919) propounds that this phenomenon can assume also the form of superego,[91] upon which wishes, utopian aspirations and negative thoughts are projected. In this sense, the double calls forth the repressed content and presents a limit that cannot be overcome. This manifests into its direct representation of an internal and irreparable division in the individual's psyche. During an uncanny encounter, an individual's rationality is suspended by instinct while the personal identity is confused due to the sudden shock, terror and temporal madness.[92] Drawing on this approach, this thesis will scrutinize the American South as an inherently uncanny space haunted by the horrors of antebellum society.

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[90] The two opposing notions of the German words heimlich (familiar, concealed) and unheimlich (unfamiliar, revealed) are often juxtaposed in order to provide the full scope of connotations of what Freud's term uncanny entails.

[91] 'Superego' in Freudian sense represents the moral structure of human mind; the "judicial branch" which operates on "morality principle" responsible for internalization of "taboos and moral values of society."

[92] In many ways, Sigmund Freud's uncanny forms a complementary theory to Edmund Burke's definition of the sublime, as already discussed. According to Bottings's *Gothic*, in both concepts, the individual's rationality is temporarily substituted by the notion of immediate terror. However, their respective perspectives differ in terms of the initial trigger. Whereas Freud stresses the importance of trauma and past negative experience, for Burke the sensation is induced by a "mixture of delight […] pleasure and horror."

Chapter 3: Flannery O'Connor

3.1 The Moralist

Many critics bemoan Flannery O'Connor's tales for their notorious brutality and callousness.[93] These conjectures are partially justifiable, as O'Connor indeed portrays a modern Southern environment without the customary blinders of American patriotism or equally sentimental mourning for the antebellum South. Her fiction marks a shift from the Faulknerian generation, as it no longer merely discovers the limitations but also strives to destroy them. In fact, most of O'Connor's short stories attest to her constant preoccupation with society's melioration. To achieve such aim, "the darkness of loss,"[94] as Tony Magistrale terms it, must emerge to shock the protagonists out of their hypocritical self-delusions. The element of deformity serves as a foundation for this particular action by which O'Connor ultimately terrorizes into immobility, docility and, only occasionally, possible rehabilitation.

As Delma Eugene Presley argues, the moral function of distortion operates as the sine qua non for O'Connor's Southern Gothic mode. Not only does it account for the unprecedented quantity of "sensational cardboard figures,"[95] but it likewise explicates their specific relationship with the context of the American South. While many attempts to explain deformity in Southern Gothic relied predominantly on decaying cultural or philosophical tendencies,[96] O'Connorian fiction encompasses more than "a penchant for [...] freaks."[97] Such oversimplifications prove detrimental to the critical value of O'Connor's stories, since they

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[93] See Michel Gresset, "Le Petit Monde de Flannery O'Connor," *Mercure de France*, 1203 (1964), 141-43; Melvin J. Friedman, "Introduction," in *The Added Dimension*, 12; Robert O. Bowen, "Hope and Despair in the New Gothic Novel," Renascence, 13 (1961), pp. 149-150.

[94] Tony Magistrale, "'I'm Alien to a Great Deal': Flannery O'Connor and the Modernist Ethic." *Journal of American Studies*, vol. 24, no. 1, (1990) 97, JSTOR <www.jstor.org/stable/27555269>, 16 Mar. 2020.

[95] Presley, 38.

[96] William Van O'Connor in his *Grotesque* regards "the old agricultural system" as the main reason for the "economically unstable and emotionally underdeveloped society;" Lewis A. Lawson also blames the "agrarian heritage" but perceives "the provincial, insular and conservative culture" as an "unavoidable absurdity." For John Aldridge, deformity constitutes "poetry of disorder;" Irving Malin preoccupies himself with "aesthetically displeasing" images which reflect distorted love and radical narcissism.

[97] Flannery O'Connor, *Mystery and Manners* (FSG Classics: New York, 1969) 44.

rob her malformed individuals off of their central focus. As O'Connor clarifies in her *Mystery and Manners*:

> "Whenever I'm asked why Southern writers particularly have a penchant for writing about freaks, I say it is because we are still able to recognize one. To be able to recognize a freak, you have to have conception of the whole man, and in the South the general conception of man is still, in the main theological."[98]

The above passage illuminates the intricate link between deformity and O'Connorian fiction. Contrary to Irving Malin's belief, O'Connor does not utilize literal defects in characters as a means of confining surface characteristics. Even if her fiction manifests in an old agricultural system accentuated by abnormality, she does not invest herself into the motif of William Van O'Connor's individual cultural dislocation either. What O'Connor does is surprisingly simple; her "grotesque menagerie"[99] personifies a social purveyor and a mirror device which indicates how far the American South has drifted. Despite the recurrent irrelevancies about decadence, each of O'Connor's distorted images reflects the moral nature of what remained of 'man' and the surrounding world around him. Any type of deformity is then understood as a physical embodiment and atemporal symbolic representation of what is, what once was and again what could be. This is primarily demonstrated by O'Connor's "unpleasant collection of unrelated and distorted parts of the human body"[100] but not necessarily restricted to its physical dimensions.

Physicality is, nevertheless, the main source of deformity O'Connor employs. Apart from the obvious visual instances of bodily disabilities,[101] O'Connor's fictional realms often feature

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[98] Ibid.
[99] Presley, 41.
[100] Ibid, 38-39.
[101] For example, Lucynell Crater is a deaf-mute; Mr. Shiftlet lacks an arm; Hulga has an artificial leg; General George Poker Sash is an invalid; O.E. Parker's body is deformed by tattooes; the elderly characters are distorted by their progressive age.

a family crisis, wherein strong masculine figures are conspicuously lacking.[102] Should there be a male figure present, with the exception of Mr. Head and his grandson Nelson, or Francis Tarwater and the Greenleaf family, the polarized conflict among generations culminates in the very same ending: the *mors improvis*, a sudden death of one or both characters. The mere concept of dying renders insufficient for O'Connor's literary statement though. For her, "the horror of the sight"[103] is absolutely critical to deliver the moral effectiveness in her writing. Furthermore, the presence of mutilations and dismemberment are deemed imperative in order to reform and endorse the new social transformations. In some cases, this process of incapacitation, be it physical or mental, becomes more foregrounded than in others.[104] All of O'Connor's stories are oriented towards the identical aim nevertheless: the critique of American South and the restoration of its unbroken image.

As Presley aptly notes, O'Connor does not glorify nor sentimentalize the past; instead, her fiction constitutes a broken imperfect mirror whose creator must simultaneously emulate and judge.[105] This judgement is primarily derived from the shared bond of the marginalized deformed individual and the majority represented by Southern society. In this manner, deformity is viewed "as a kind of convention,"[106] which is due to its abnormal figure rejected as a social aberration. Unsurprisingly, O'Connorian outcasts find themselves almost exclusively on the verge of a social spectrum, depicting the unfit pieces of symbolic cracks to O'Connor's glass metaphor. Such a contention bears a certain paradox.[107] The inner-

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[102] Tony Magistrale in his essay "Flannery O'Connor's Fractured Families" writes that O'Connor relies on a variety of recurring patterns and themes; among these the presence of a single parent or the only child can be often found. With the exception of Rayber, Mr. Head and Sheppard, all these single parents often tend to be "widowed mothers with one child."

[103] Craig Thompson Friend, *Death and the American South* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2014) 15.

[104] Hulga is deprived of her "leg" and "attitude"; The Misfit destroys the grandmother's false illusion of "a good man;" the old General George Poker Sash suffers from a growing "hole" in his body; Julian dismantles his mother's life on the basis of shock; Mrs's Turpin concept of social classification is disassembled.

[105] Presley, 39.

[106] Alan Spiegel, "A Theory pf the Grotesque in Southern Fiction," The Georgia Review. Vol. 26.4 (Winter 1972) 428, JSTOR <https://www.jstor.org/stable/41396901>, 15 March 2020.

[107] By classifying the distorted images as a deviation from the norm or the marginalized 'other,' the Southern society propounds its standard of normality and authority based on social intolerance. The deformed individual,

contradiction within which the distorted individual is firmly rooted, dictates a social double standard which produces and, at the same time, confines their persona. To break free and reinstall the unbroken image O'Connorian protagonists must be first exposed to the hypocrisy of the Southern myth. This "revelatory experience," Magistrale believes, comes at a shocking price though; it leaves her characters displaced, stunned and, more often than not, deceased.[108]

According to Magistrale, the moral barometer in O'Connor cannot be considered trustworthy.[109] If anything, O'Connorian morality is measured on her own premises. Many instances reify this notion as the initially morally credible character, often a "godsend"[110] from the outside world, transforms into an evil villain.[111] At the expense of his victims, such a protagonist assumes the role of Loman's con artist and Kayser's puppeteer, revealing the ubiquitous decay of Southern values with sheer atrocity. Conversely, O'Connor's antagonists often "tend to be less bad than they seem."[112] Their eventual fall signifies either the insatiable thirst to reenact the past, or their futile strive to rid themselves thereof, respectively. For the most part, O'Connor's characters, particularly Rufus Johnson and The Misfit, impersonate a maimed and twisted attempt to deal with the unescapable Southern trauma. This is predominantly apposite for understanding O'Connor's stories in regards to an individual's psyche, which shall be further discussed in the following paragraphs.

Similar to Faulkner, O'Connor also appropriates physical deformity in terms of Kayserian fusion. This is especially possible as a result of her frequent mixing of the mechanical with

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mostly scorned, feared and victimized, is accordingly laid to the gaze of Southern audience as an object and target of power. In many O'Connor's stories, the victimizers easily become the victims themselves (Julian, Mrs. May, Mrs. Turpin). Ironically, the defected protagonists impersonate the salutary quality of" knowledge of human possibilities." To echo Presley, they embody the direct mirror images of "what man is not and what he ought to be." Due to these particular reasons, deformity was generally publicly mocked based on its ability to directly confront individual as well as social shortcomings.

[108] Magistrale, 1.
[109] Ibid, 94.
[110] Flannery O'Connor, *Complete Stories* (London: Faber and Faber, 2009) 272. All future references to this work in this chapter will be henceforth in brackets.
[111] To provide some specific examples, see the characters of Mr. Shiftlet, The Misfit, Mrs. Freeman or Manley Pointer.
[112] Magistrale, 94.

the animalistic and purely human.[113] The bizarre symbolic representation of the Old South is then oftentimes exemplified in a form of (in)animate entity. Recurrently, an ordinary object is used to fulfill such objective.[114] Akin to "the chained monkey," so are O'Connor's 'anti-heroes' indisputably tied to Southern legacy; the lost world they once inhabited might be "gone with the wind," but its crimes never cease to haunt its survivors. Such eternal burden of culpability principally affects all O'Connorian characters.[115] Nonetheless, the concealed psychological disturbance can be fully inferred only through its relation to deformity. This conjecture primarily springs from O'Connor's idiosyncratic juxtaposition of life and death. Through the medium of undisguised bodily mutilations, O'Connor effectively dismantles and reduces one's comprehension of reality and character integrity. Her distorted "living spectre[s]," alive and already decomposing, thereby constitute merely an apparition of their former living selves.[116] In reality, they "remain perfectly still" (O'Connor, 24) in the realm of upcoming modernity. While Presley's discourse would address this distortion solely on the basis of its symbolic meaning, O'Connor seems far too complex to be divested of her psychological level. By advancing Presley's central argument of morality, two obvious hypotheses could be extrapolated: O'Connor's deformity not only criticizes; it also supplies a container wherein the foundational trauma is "buried alive" (O'Connor, 130).

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[113] In "A Good Man Is Hard to Find," for instance, the protagonists are frequently referred as to have "rabbit's ears," head like "a parched old turkey hen" or that "of hippopotamus;" in addition, they can bear a resemblance to a "pig." Conversely, Good Country People primarily blends the animate with the artificial. Hulga has "a wooden leg," Manley's eyes are like "two steel spikes," Mrs. Freeman's facial mimics remind the narrator of "a heavy truck," Hulga's name insinuates the association with "the ugly sweating Vulcan" and "a broad blank hull of a battleship."

[114] More specifically, the parrot shirt and the hat in "A Good Man Is Hard to Find;" Hulga's artificial leg and Manley's hat in "Good Country People;" the mother's hat in "Everything That Rises Must Converge"; the collard greens in "A Stroke of Good Fortune" and the umbrella in "Enoch and the Gorilla" are all used for their symbolic purposes. Additionally, in(animate) objects can likewise signify the new South, i.e. the magazines and June Star's tap routine in "A Good Man Is Hard to Find" or the Coca-Cola machine in "A Late Encounter with the Enemy." In most of these examples, E.J. Cleary's merge can be likewise detected.

[115] Whereas O'Connorian young generation strives to forcefully wreak themselves from the antebellum South, the older tries their utmost best to recapture it. Both of these actions are doomed futile and only perceived as extremely stultifying in their character development.

[116] Friend, 18.

According to Craig Thompson Friend, there is "an intermediary stage between living and dead: dying."[117] This phenomenon predominates in O'Connor's fiction, as all her distorted images possess the bizarre quality of being "deadly dull."[118] They are not depicted as sources of life, nor animation; by contrast, they embody the relics of the dead world, which could be only objectified and commodified.[119] From a biological standpoint, the actual act of dying represents a natural process of decomposition: "While the individual's identities remained, the skin began to sag, distorting the faces."[120] This is not the case of deformity presented in O'Connor, quite the contrary. O'Connor's proclivity for mutable identities forms a requisite ingredient in her stories. These problematics are externalized upon several compositional layers. First, O'Connor's gender identity is ordinarily questionable since her "man's world [...] is essentially manless." Instead of chiefly masculine or feminine gender roles, O'Connor draws parallels between sterile, androgynous femininity (Mrs. May, Hulga, Mrs. Turpin, Sally Poker Sash) and emasculated male figures (Julian, Mr. Turpin, Mr. Fortune, O.E. Parker).

To continue, O'Connor's disconnection between past and present is illustrated by the dual identity associated either with the Old or New South. This "cultural confusion,"[121] as Malin puts it, often emerges in a form of distorted narcissism, which evolves into fatal familial disaffection. Nevertheless, Malin's superficial interpretation offers only limited criticism. O'Connor's characters are, in a sense, distorted by the truncated state of their families. Their primary concern, however, revolves, or rather dissolves, around their non-existent individual

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[117] Friend, 17.

[118] Libby Bagno-Simon, "The Liberty Belle: Reversed Gender Roles, Skewed Faith, and the Breakdown of Southern Myths in Flannery O'Connor's Patriarchal World," *Literary Refractions*, No.1 – Year 5, 12/2014 , 4, sic-journal <https://www.sic-journal.org/ArticleView.aspx?lang=en&aid=290>, 15 March 2020.

[119] And commodify, they did. Manley Pointer, Mr. Shiftlet, Sally Poker Sash, The Misfit or Mrs. Freeman exploit the agenda of "good country people" or the honorable old South for personal gains.

[120] Friend differentiates between three subsequent phases of death in his essay "Mutilated Bodies, Living Spectres: Scalpings and Beheadings in the Early South": the fresh decay, bloating and putrefaction.

[121] Oftentimes the roles of character identity are swapped in O'Connor. Bailey becomes The Misfit; Hulga blends with her mother, Mrs. Hopewell; Mrs. Turpin is a human and a hog and Mr. Fortune and his granddaughter Mary fuse into one "face." The same applies to the changes in the names: Hulga mutates into Joy; Timmy grows into Timothy; Jacob changes into Israel; O.E. Parker ultimately reveals himself as Obadiah Elihue Parker.

identities within such a stipulated social construction. In such a predetermined social framework, O'Connorian protagonists can adopt consciously manipulated identification (Julian's mother, Bailey's (grand)mother, General George Poker Sash) or draw from one's convoluted self which is essentially devoid of identity identity-less (Julian, The Misfit, Sally Poker Sash).[122]

Richard Kane writes that "O'Connor's stories are often poised between two worlds: one with various rational answers [...] the other composed of mystery and the irrational." The latter, predominantly, plays a vital role in O'Connor's writing. When the irrational realm of the human mind temporarily animates and reconstructs the inner projection of the antebellum South, O'Connor's character is forced to leave their "mental bubble" (O'Connor, 411) and entertain the existence of excruciating self-delusion. This deliberate vivisection clearly testifies to the transmutable image of the idealized and simultaneously detested and feared past. It is only upon the direct encounter of the disturbing reality (i.e. the exposure to the Southern trauma) that the individual comes to terms with their own identity and gains the deeper insight and clarity. O'Connor's "Everything That Rises Must Converge" dramatizes such an instance of self-realization in an especially enticing fashion:

> "Her eyes, shadowed and confused, finally settled on his face [...] she leaned forward [...] trying to determine his identity. Then, as if she found nothing familiar about him, she started off with a headlong movement in the wrong direction [...] her hair had come undone on one side. She dropped her pocketbook and took no notice. He stooped and picked it up and handed it to her but she did not take it. 'You needn't act as if the world had come to an end,' he said, 'because it hasn't. From now on you've got to live in a new world and face a few realities for a change. Buck up,' he said, 'it won't kill you.' [...] 'Home,' she said thickly [...] he looked into her face and caught his breath. He was looking into a face he had never seen before. 'Tell Grandpa to come get me," [...] 'Tell Caroline to come get me,' she

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[122] Such a psychological imbalance of one's identity is a repetitive tool in O'Connor. When Julian's mother, for instance, proclaims that she most definitely knows who she is, she consciously manipulates her identity to be able to survive in her "fantasy." This obviously clashes with Julian's despair of his own identity loss, "knowing [that] who you are is good for one generation only." No sooner than the uncanny encounter emerges, can they finally grasp and "recognize one's existence" though.

said [...] A tide of darkness seemed to be sweeping her from him [...] Crumpling, she fell to the pavement. He dashed forward and fell at her side, crying, 'Mamma, Mamma!' He turned her over. Her face was fiercely distorted. One eye, large and staring, moved slightly to the left as if it had become unmoored. The other remained fixed on him, raked his face again, found nothing and closed." (O'Connor, 419-420)

As this extract shows, the psychological intensity of the uncanny (irrational) encounter might briefly anthropomorphize Julian's mother from her stage of 'putrefaction,' only to immediately return her as a product of 'fresh decay' a moment later. The deformed relic of the antebellum past, the mother,[123] thus ultimately draws her self-actualization from "a volatile realm of bewilderment and radical insight;" unfortunately, in exchange for her own life. The character of Julian too might be superficially free of the constant reminder of the foundational trauma interconnected with his family. Notwithstanding, he knows that his "entry into the world of guilt and sorrow" (O'Connor, 420) is inevitable. O'Connor in this way conveys how deeply embedded the horror of the Southern past is in every individual's psyche and what measures must be taken in order to unconceal[124] it. For this purpose, the element of deformity always comprises an integral part in O'Connor's stories. Finally, O'Connor's overt preference for exterminating the deformed character, and by extension the Old South, is self-explanatory.[125] The personae of the mother, Julian and all O'Connorian distorted protagonists clearly denote that there is no place for the hypocrisies and social practices of the antebellum times in O'Connor's New South. By punishing individuals,[126] O'Connor lays down the cornerstone for her social critique, which, as Magistrale writes, does not concern merely individual shortcomings; her rehabilitation rests upon the criticism of the system as a whole.

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[123] Julian's mother is depicted as an "old" lady with the necessity to "lose twenty pounds on account of her blood pressure." Additionally, her "less comical than jaunty and pathetic" image is supplemented by the "hideous hat" on her head, which, she believes, restores her to her "class." She is a heavy proponent of antebellum culture which is reflected as much through her "heart" as through her narrow-minded, racially marked, comments.
[124] Freud often uses the term concealed and unconcealed material in relation to his phenomenon of the uncanny
[125] In some stories, including "The Artificial Nigger" or the "Greenleaf," O'Connor grants the opportunity of freeing oneself of the burden of the past. For most part, nevertheless, her writings entail a tragic ending.
[126] Tony Magistrale observes that O'Connor considered essential to battle personal demons first in order to improve the moral standard of society.

3.2 Repression, Regression and Displacement

To access the individual's mind and their unconsciousness, Sigmund Freud often utilizes the prescribed set of coping mechanisms through which the undesired material is filtered and consequently blocked. In O'Connor's short stories, the protagonists primarily operate on the basis of repression, regression and displacement. Whereas the former deals mainly with providing a mental barrier behind which the distorted images hide, regression and displacement emerge as an active verbal expression of motivated unconsciousness.

During repression, one of Freud's most frequent inner mind defenses, the painful experiences or unacceptable thoughts are refined and separated from the realm of conscious psyche. According to Freud's psychic apparatus, "they can retain their energy but there would be no memory of them left."[127] This notion is heavily manifested in numerous O'Connor's characters. In fact, the act of repression seems to be the basic defense mechanism employed. In some stories, repression reaches almost divine quality.[128] Others depict repression as a necessary means of survival and maintenance of some degree of self-identity. Hulga, for instance, adopts repression as easily as her "blindness by an act of will" (O'Connor, 273), only to negate the threating material impersonated by her wooden leg and Mrs. Hopewell, her mother. For the sake of his good reputation, Mr. Fortune too manipulates the past by means of repressive defense mechanisms. Julian and his mother, as discussed in the previous subchapter, exploit repression for the identical purpose: to sustain one's self-imposed identity in a world constructed upon their respective distorting artificial reveries.

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[127] Freud, *A General Introduction*, 259.

[128] The Misfit for instance does not remember why he ended in a penitentiary, nor what crime he actually committed; the grandmother still perceives herself and behaves as a Southern Belle, so that in case of an "accident, anyone seeing her dead […] would know […] she was a lady." Similarly, Julian's mother lives in a world "according to her own fantasy" and the old General George Poker Sash believes that he is "getting younger every day… [his] hair is just now fixing to turn black." All of these cases mark a great degree of repression by which the protagonists shortly forget their pasts but deprive themselves of their future as a result.

Freud further writes that "from this unconscious system it (the blocked material, here the Southern trauma) can under certain conditions go over into the system of the conscious."[129] An uncanny encounter, a product of motivated unconsciousness, can function as a trigger to release the repressed material directly from the unconscious mind. When O'Connor's characters are faced with a greater external difficulty and cannot reach the aim which will satisfy their needs, regression comes into force. Regression as described in Freud's terms is "the second danger of development" in which "any progress may readily turn backward to these earlier stages."[130] In reality, the characters thus abandon their adult selves and transform their psyche and behavior into that of an infant. This is usually adopted in a form of reduced verbal questions and commands or some similarly reduced means of communication in a child's early stage of development. Both the mother and Julian are forced to employ regression upon their confrontation of disturbing reality. Whereas Julian's speech is limited to desperate cries for "Mama" (O'Connor, 420), his mother voices in her one-word replies her impossible desire to return "home" (O'Connor, 273) and reunite with her ancestors. Hulga's blatant fear is also transmitted into her mother's incessant babble, but only when her self-identity feels endangered and impaired. The grandmother can upon her rendezvous with The Misfit only "pray" (O'Connor, 132).[131]

Some O'Connorian protagonists, nevertheless, display anxiety which cannot be negated only by repression, nor regression. When the character unleashes their repressed anger and authority upon the weaker individuals, Freud then speaks of the defense mechanism of displacement. According to *A General Introduction to Psychoanalysis*, "displacement is a fulfillment, a satisfaction after the manner of the infantile [...] [which] can be compressed into

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[129] Freud, *A General Introduction*, 259.
[130] Freud, *A General Introduction*, 229.
[131] Freud believes that "the stronger the fixation, the more readily will regression appear." This might account for the numerous instances of regression that O'Connorian fragmented families must endure. In each of these cases, a distorted narcissistic love is almost always exhibited. Such a notion directly confirms the relationship between Southern trauma and individual suffering, deeply embedded in family affairs. Hulga returns to her childhood self and "feels dependent" and vulnerable without her leg, as much as the grandmother upon the loss of her family.

a single sensation or innervation, or [...] restricted to a tiny element of the entire libidinous complex."[132] When Manley Pointer and The Misfit physically abuse Hulga (a physically disabled female) and the grandmother, they gain immediate satisfaction from the suddenly assumed power over their helpless victims.[133] This is a continuous process which describes their distorted inner psyche.[134] Displacement, however, does not have to materialize in the form of physical violence only; Julian's dialogue with his mother illustrates a great example of its verbal use. Throughout the story, Julian is described as a "hopeless, irritated" (O'Connor, 407) and "saturated in depression" (O'Connor, 408) individual, with "mixed feelings" (O'Connor, 408) and "a vile sense of humor" (O'Connor, 409). His tendency for displacement is indicated in his various remarks.[135] To see injustice would de facto give "him a certain satisfaction" (O'Connor, 408). This proclamation directly correlates with Freud's definition of displacement. The moment Julian verbally rids himself of his burden, i.e. the unescapable past, he feels relieved; as the ending suggests, this state is only temporary.

O'Connor's readings in terms of Freud's defense mechanisms oftentimes correlate with the internal conflict among her nuclear families. This could suggest that the foundational trauma is not simply a matter of the individual mind, but rather a subject of communal guilt and Southern thinking. The psychological burden of the antebellum South thus personifies the social fears, which O'Connorian protagonists try to deflect through repression, regression and displacement.

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[132] Freud, *A General Introduction*, 322.

[133] For more information about the relation between deformity and violence, see the note 15 in the previous subchapter.

[134] At the climax of "Good Country People," Pointer claims that he has a fascination for the deformed, uses "a different name" and stays "nowhere long." The Misfit too reveals a repetitive nature of his criminal activities. Mr. Fortune engages in a one-time physical combat with his granddaughter Mary solely for her rejection of his materialism. Mr. Shiftlet abandons Lucynell only to become the target of a verbal displacement of the hitchhiker later.

[135] As O'Connor writes, he constantly feels "an evil urge to break her [his mother's] spirit" and to "teach her a lesson."

Chapter 4: Tennessee Williams

4.1 The Nostalgist

Although much has been made of Tennessee Williams' prolific career, his stories celebrate merely a minimal literary merit. To Gore Vidal, such neglect appears deeply ironic, since the "preliminary sketches" comprise the "true memoir of Tennessee Williams."[136] Vidal's conjecture proves accurate, as all the essential Williamsian themes are already present in his precocious stories. That is to say, they deliver Williams' archetypal "reveries"[137] in the most authentic and raw manner. In his fictional realm based on Southern and psychological framework, Williams's use of deformity is invariably linked with the index of non-detachable bondage to the antebellum past. Despite its deleterious effect upon an individual's mind, Williams's innate compulsion to romanticize history results in a multitude of "dim figure[s]"[138] incongruent with the post-bellum era. As opposed to O'Connor, Williams does not find solace in stern social rebuke. His sympathies lie within the deformed characters, who, similarly to the Old South, find themselves "in dying condition" (Williams, 140) in modernity.

According to Glenn Loney, Williams represents one of the few authors wherein the nostalgia for the antebellum greatness still exists.[139] Nevertheless, none of his stories fully propound the social values and practices of the American South. In fact, his deformed

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[136] Vidal in his Introduction to Williams' *Collected Stories* goes as far as comparing Williams's literary "genius" to Mark Twain on the basis of his equally compelling narrative voice. The nature of Willimsian stories might be "complicated," but depriving them of their literary quality seems to Vidal erroneous. As he further asserts, "what is real or imagined [in Williams] is here [in these stories]."

[137] Ibid.

[138] Tennessee Williams, *Collected Stories* (London: Vintage Classics, 2012) 121. All future references to this work will be henceforth in brackets in this chapter.

[139] Glenn Loney in his essay "Tennessee Williams: The Catastrophe of Success" opts for understanding Williams' writing in terms of fiction which endorses the "artificial romance and prettiness," usually associated with the Southern past.

individuals serve the role of semi-transparent social warnings into which "mendacity"[140] and chaos of the previous tradition are compressed.[141] Akin to O'Connor, Williams's deformity is thus likewise predominantly "moral in nature;"[142] his need of critique seems far less emphatic though. In principle, Williams does not preoccupy himself with any kind of social reformation. His major aim resides, as Loney further notes, barely in providing a "painful spectacle" by transmuting the disturbing realities of the oppressive, banal Southern routines into "waning" bodies of his characters.[143] Such a spectacle usually entails a deformed "poetic loser"[144] whose detailed, yet imperfect, recall of life and personal experience symbolically mirrors the fate of the defeated Old South. While Van O'Connor would perceive such deformity in the light of decadent displacement, Williams' deliberate ugliness and character disposal are far more profound. They constitute the pivotal symbolism which motivates the majority of Williamsian stories.

As discussed in previous chapters, the Southern Gothic mode primarily presents an image of man's incompleteness and what he ought to be.[145] If O'Connor's depiction of the Southern environment derives from the broken mirror metaphor, Williams' world revolves around the "artifice of mirrors"[146] whose distorted collection of "baffling bits" and "assorted images" (Williams, 340) form the mandatory paraphernalia for his social game.[147] The "baffling bit," a Williamsian prototypical deformed individual, always inhabits the "confusing, quicksilver

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[140] Tennessee Williams, *The Theatre of Tennessee Williams Volume 3* (NY: New Directions, 1972) 59.
[141] In "The Field of Blue Children," for instance, Williams explicitly shows that the deformed character assumes the position of "almost sightless existence," yet visible enough to spare one from "making awkward mistakes." In the "Angel in the Alcove," the artist too is viewed as a "transparent figure" denoting nothing but a "public nuisance" for the social norm of "healthy people."
[142] Presley, 40.
[143] Glenn Loney, "Tennessee Williams: The Catastrophe of Success," Performing Arts Journal, Inc. *Performing Arts Journal* 7.2 (1983) 76, JSTOR <http://www.jstor.org/stable/3245324 >, 15 June 2015.
[144] Ibid, 80.
[145] Presley, 40.
[146] Albert Devlin, *Conversations with Tennessee Williams* (Jackson, MS: University Press of Mississippi, 1986) 19.
[147] Though in different symbolic terms, this basic idea of fragmented society seems largely synonymous in Williams' stories. For Brick Pollitt, this social spectrum equals the game of croquet; for Laura the glass animals; for Homer "the sheaf of his poems," and for Billy and Clara Foxworth the tent worms.

world that exists outside of regularities" (Williams, 110). The "assorted image," by contrast, constitutes the modern South, in which deformity is viewed as an undesired yet "permanent guest."[148] Annette J. Saddik notes that Williams' distorted characters are drifters who:

> " [...] crave stability of a fixed identity and a return to origins (here Old South), the inevitable contradiction is that they ultimately realize that freedom is possible only through fluidity, instability, movement. They must, therefore, remain fugitives and surge forward, never resting, despite their desperate, romantic need to cling to an unattainable idea, a core of Truth."[149]

The above passage contends that Williams' deformed individuals exist only within a state of eternal limbo. This absence of locatable origins is crucial for Williams' stories. It not only deprives his personae of stable identity but also unavoidably cripples them in the process.[150] Never are the "wanderers" able to move "forward," nor return.[151] Their "frozen attitude," (Williams, 79) a symbolic representation of the lost past, merely corresponds with what Saddik terms as "pathos of rootless existence."[152] Additionally, the constant preoccupation with the notion that something is "missing" (Williams, 78) marks their continuous struggle to obtain the unattainable "perfect fullness" (Williams, 78).[153] Unanimously warped within their

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[148] Annette J. Saddik, "'You Just Forge Ahead': Image, Authenticity, and Freedom in the Plays of Tennessee Williams and Sam Shepard" in *South Atlantic Review* 70.4 (2005) 82, JSTOR
<http://www.jstor.org/stable/20064688>, 15 June 2015.
[149] Ibid, 77.
[150] Williams' world is unanimously infected with the nostalgia for the antebellum greatness which supplies both the protection, as well as deformation, for the distorted characters in the Southern modernity. Laura for instance, cannot make any "positive motion towards the world" because she is "too much cold to move." The glass barrier which she consciously builds around herself hence deflects reality but also immobilizes her movement. The artist from the "Angel and the Alcove" likewise displays "no trying association with the world" on the basis of his "awful condition" in the New South.

[151] Saddik, 81.
[152] Ibid, 74.
[153] The concept of incompletion or fragmentation is a one of the chief motives developed in Williams. As David Savran in his "By Coming Suddenly into a Room That I Thought Was Empty" writes, Williams insistently "destabilizes and ruptures the coherence of the self-identical subject" that his characters seem "so radically fragmented…as to be barely recognizable as human." This theme of dehumanization can translate into various forms of identity crises in Williams. His individuals can embody the pathetic relics of Old South with non-locatable origins; the containers of Southern trauma; the "skinny cadaver" or "ghastly figures" with "muted radiance;" the mental projections of unconsciousness (Mr. Kroger's "old wise voice," dismembered identity in a

harmful environments, the distorted character thus signifies a "stiff puppet,"[154] which is, in the Kayserian sense, subjected to their innermost desires.

As Henry Popkin writes, Williams's fugitive characters seem distorted by default.[155] This notion is primarily reflected within the nature of their deformity. First, deformity in Williams is unchangeable. All of his individuals are portrayed as "intolerably burdened" (Williams, 113) with the Southern legacy, which can be, in some cases, disposed of only upon death. Moreover, Williams' deformity appears to be hereditary.[156] Even if the element of deformity can take various shapes and forms, the distorted individual is always easily identifiable and scorned. Williams' distortion therefore produces grotesque creations with benign possibilities in the environment of the constricted New South. To find momentary consolation in such an "arid country,"[157] alcohol (Oliver Winemiller), drugs (Brick Pollitt), sex (Emiel Kroger), abandonment (Tom Wingfield) or death (Anthony Burns) serve as the redemptive means with the potential to fill the void deformity insinuates.[158] Excluding the latter, these desires solicit merely a temporarily surrogate though. In spite of the fact that the characters manage to

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shape of a swarm of ants ("The Angel in the Alcove"), or invisible teammates ("Three Players of a Summer Game"). In some cases, the character can be reduced to a single identifiable object, i.e. the "bare white of bones," as is the case of Anthony Burns; the chinaware and worn-out records (father from "Portrait of a Girl in Glass"); other times the identity is further dissected into a miscellaneous objects, i.e. the blue flowers ("The Field of Blue Children"), croquet paraphernalia ("Three Players of a Summer Game"), 'birds' ("Hard Candy"), tent worms ("Tent Worms") or a collection of glass animals ("Portrait of a Girl in Glass"). Some human identities can also be erased or commodified (Anthony Burns, Oliver Winemiller, Pablo Gonzales, Krupper's 'birds' in "Hard Candy"). Conversely, some personae adopt character duplicity (Pablo is Mr. Gonzales; Laura is the Wingfield girl; Tom is both Tom and Slim, Mary Louise Gray is a child and simultaneously and adult, Oliver's double identity is expressed through first being a boxer and then a hustler. Henry Popkin further observes that foreign names (such as Katz, Kroger, Krupper, Gonzales, Myra) also supply an extra dimension in regards to one's identity, mainly in relation to mystery and vigor.)

[154] Presley, 40.

[155] Henry Popkin, "The Plays of Tennessee Williams," in *The Tulane Drama Review* 4.3 (Mar., 1960) 52, JSTOR <http://www.jstor.org/stable/1124844>, 15 June 2015.

[156] For example, Laura is as much tied to the Southern Belle faded tradition as is her mother. Pablo too begins to "accumulate fat," physically resemble his mentor and suffer from the identical disease that ended Kroger's life.

[157] Southern society in Williams' stories is always depicted as "hostile" or "indifferent." Additionally, terms such as "Death Valley," an "uneventful desert," a "gloomy vault," "a locked arena," "perpetual twilight" or "avenue of [no] escape" are often used in connection to the descriptions of Southern settings.

[158] Apart from sex, which is viewed as chiefly life-affirming and "the only key [...] to their personal prison," David Savran also mentions writing as a means of alleviating one's pain in Williams. Most of Williams' deformity is nonetheless associated practically with every device and fashion of carnality.

locally anaesthetize the pain, their insatiable "hunger" and "drunkenness" (Williams, 85) for compassion and love ultimately devour them.[159]

In principle, Williams' use of deformity usually unfolds on multiple various levels: bodily distortion, psychological distortion, gender confinement, sexual deviation and racial markedness. Even though psychological distortion assumes the dominant role in his narratives, numerous instances of bodily deformity can, likewise, be traced.[160] His loci,[161] as much as his characters, often exhibit Kayserian fusion of animate and inanimate;[162] Clery's merge too receives a rather deep prominence.[163] Apart from the pathos of rootless existence, Williamsian deformed character also frequently suffers from different bodily illnesses.[164] In

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[159] According to Saddik, Williams characters acknowledge the power of love, but in a "world so hospitable to selflessness" see it distorted. This conjecture is congruent with Presley's concept of "salutary nature of human love" professed in her essay "The Moral Function of Distortion." Both of these cases convey that Malin's notion of distorted narcissism trivializes the issue of love presented in Southern Gothic and should be thereby considered invalid and unbound criticism.

[160] Mary Louise Gray is a "plump" and "fat monster;" Mr. Kroger is a "very strange and fat man;" Pablo demonstrates "sallow plumpness," Homer is a "short, stocky and dark" character with "large and bony" feet; Hertha is a "weedy, tall girl," with "thick-lensed glasses" who is "one foot taller" than Homer; Anthony Burns looks like a "child;" Oliver and Freckles have only one arm; Brick Pollitt is "deprived of his balls."

[161] The "third-rate cinema" from "The Mysteries of the Joy Rio" is equipped with "broken-legged chairs," "shreds of old hangings," "greasy and rotting […] old velvet rope;" the light-switch is "broken," and the bulbs "missing." In "Portrait of a Girl in Glass," Tom views his home as "a mousetrap of a room" with "dingy, ivory furniture" and "worn-out records." The writer's room in "The Angel in the Alcove" is "lightless," with "a ragged curtain" instead of a "door." By contrast, the "dome of administration building" from "The Field of Blue Children" is "like a snowy peak."

[162] In "The Mysteries of the Joy Rio," Pablo's face is "as round as the moon" and he scuffs out as "quickly as a cockroach;" Hertha from "The Field of Blue Children" is "animated by an electric wire," and people around Myra have "balloon-like heads;" in "Portrait of a Girl in Glass," Laura's thoughts are kindred to "startled birds," Jim is referred to as a "lamb-like Irishman" and Tom is treated as "an oddly fashioned dog." The landlady from "The Angel in the Alcove" has "pin-sharp eyes" and the artist leaves a "bloody track like a chicken that runs with its head off." Oliver is viewed as a "Greek statue" and "a golden panther" in "One Arm."

[163] Donald merges with the vine in "Vine;" the dancing blue flowers and poems represent Homer and Myra's failed relationship; Pablo merges with Kroger as one of his "incalculably precious birds;" Richard and the coffin become one in "The Resemblance between a Violin Case and a Coffin;" for Brick Pollitt and the Greys, the objects of "electric automobile" and the "enormous translucent glass bell" constitute the process of merge; Laura fuses herself with Freckles and her collection of glass animals; the iguana from "The Night of the Iguana" represents the animalistic kind of merging.

[164] Williams' deformed characters often portray maladjusted victims who are prisoners of their physical ailment. The artist, for example, suffers from tuberculosis; Laura exhibits symptoms of influenza, Mary Louise Grey is frequently bitten by mosquitos and her mother has a headache; Krupper, Kroger and Pablo are prone to problems with regular bowels, Richard dies of pneumonia. All of these cases are really symbolic in their role of the defeated 'other' in the New South.

addition, racial markedness operates as a reliable source of distortion as well.[165] Furthermore, the treatment of gender and sexual deviation in terms of deformity is almost pretentious in Williams. Females in his stories represent either feminine girls (Laura, Myra) or the "womanly woman"[166] (Tom's mother, Margaret Pollitt) with no signs of flexibility; the men, conversely, personify a "mistake of gender" (Williams, 115), i.e. emasculated masculinity (the artist, Brick Pollitt, Tom, Pablo, Homer, Anthony Burns).[167] Regarding Williams' sexuality, any kind of deviation from the standard heteronormative model is considered a disease-like mental deformation in his stories.

Recurrently, Williams' frequent invocations of deviant passions and social taboos emerge through the medium of an individual's defunct mind. His characters repeatedly testify to some abnormal desire, sexuality or non-conforming wishes, all of which are denounced as acts of "perversions" (Williams, 138) by society.[168] As a result, Williams' deformed individuals often acquire the status of being mentally "sick," a "degenerate" or the "rotten half-breed" (Williams, 139) based on their "anomalous character" (Williams, 123).[169] They are irrevocably assigned the role of social 'other' which can result in two specific sub-forms: the distorted protagonist is subjected to forced marginalization, or they voluntarily retreat into

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[165] As Myra notes, "nobody of her social milieu […] paid him (Homer) any attention." Based on such a deviating exoticism derived from "lustrous dark grace," Homer and Pablo are both unavoidably ostracized by the Southern white society.

[166] Leonard J. Leff, "Transfer to Cemetery: The Streetcar Named Desire," University of California Press. *Film Quarterly* 55.3 (Spring 2002) 32, JSTOR <http://www.jstor.org/stable/10.1525/fq.2002.55.3.29>, 15 May 2015.

[167] Anthony Burns is even referred to as being "small-boned and womanish," whereas Margaret Pollitt is described as having "a firm and rough-textured sort of handsomeness." These instances prove that gender roles in Williams are indeed perplexing. Another peculiar feature which pervades his stories comprises the bizarre configuration of a big woman/man with a small male figure. For more details see, "The Field of Blue Children," "Desire and the Black Masseur," "Twenty-seven Wagons Full of Cotton," "Gift of an Apple" or "In Memory of an Aristocrat."

[168] Williams' stories betray various hints of sexual deviations, more specifically: zoophilia ("One Arm"), cannibalism ("Desire and the Black Masseur"), homosexuality ("The Mysteries of the Joy Rio," "The Angel in the Alcove"), incest ("Portrait of a Girl in Glass"), sadomasochism ("Desire and the Black Masseur," "Twenty-seven Wagons Full of Cotton"), omnisexuality ("One Arm") or polyamory ("Two on a Party").

[169] This instance of social intolerance leads William Sharp in his essay "An Unfashionable View of Tennessee Williams" to believe that the uniqueness of an individual being in Williams is factually non-existent.

their "darker regions," respectively.[170] This social division stemming from the irrational sexual behavior is imperative in Williams, as well as the existence of his "morphodite[s]" (Williams, 112) who preserve the "dark glory" (Williams, 115) of the past.

In the vein of O'Connor, Williams employs deformity also as tool for compressing and storing the Southern trauma. The distorted image is then presented to the society as a peculiar object of "horror and pity" whose sole objective is to "provoke disturbance" and deal "some rather profound psychotic wound" (Williams, 137). This action is usually conducted upon an encounter between the "arrested image," the New South individual, and the "baffling fit," the deformed character of the antebellum past. After the phase of "principal enticement" or "sensual delirium" (Williams, 115), the personae, both in the literal and symbolic sense, find themselves in a state of hypnotic calm (Williams, 125). Such basic calmness is oftentimes kindred to a dream,[171] which enables the deformed individual to breathe the "guilty soul of his past into the ears and brain and the blood of the youth (Williams, 113)." In some cases, the protagonist can undergo a mental transformation during this exchange.[172] The following excerpt provides an excellent example of such identity rupture evoked by the uncanny effect:

> "His voice was shrill as a jungle bird's, shouting this word 'morphodite.' Mr Gonzales kept backing away from him, with the lightness and grace of his youth, he kept stepping backwards from the livid face and threatening fists of the usher, all the time murmuring

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[170] Laura, for instance, depicts a shy, fragile and strangely beautiful girl; her wholly impractical approach to life, however, stands in stark opposition to the "cordial warmth" and power of Jim Delaney. Even if her mother "push[es] her," Laura flees to her much preferred sanctuary - the little world of glass. The artist in the "Angel of the Alcove" and Homer, on the other hand, emblematize the enforced quarantine, to which society confines the deformed individuals based on their respective 'otherness.' In this way, Williams brings into focus the numerous taboos the Southern society invented and endorsed. His notion of deformity could be hence read as "a protest against the cruelty of human beings."

[171] During such a slip into another "state of being," the uncanny moment is often characterized by some heightened mental or physical reaction (Myra suffers from "restlessness" and trembles; the artist undergoes a fit of "fury," Laura is paralyzed by her suffocating anxiety). In the later stage, all the characters, by contrast, convey feelings of being "drowsy," in possession of some "drunkenness" and "dreamy excursion," looking "dazed" and moving "with no conscious direction."

[172] Mr. Gonzales becomes Pablo once again; Jim Delaney transmutes into Freckles in Laura's mind; the angel appears in the alcove as a mental image of the artist; Mr. Kroger is revived.

> No, no, no, no, no. The youth stood between him and the stairs below so it was toward the upper staircase that Mr Gonzales took flight…at the very top of the staircase he was intercepted. He half turned back when he saw the dim figure waiting above, he almost turned and scrambled back down the grand marble staircase, when the name of his youth was called to him [...] Pablo, said Mr Kroger, come up here, Pablo." (Williams, 120-21)

As soon as Pablo/Mr. Gonzales is confronted about his sexual deviation and loses "possession of oneself" (Williams, 87), he is immediately provided with an unconscious mental image of Mr. Kroger and the antebellum South. This incident signifies his deep carnal desires to reunite with Kroger, as well as to return to the glorious past. When the uncanny effect concludes, Pablo's inability to reconstruct his vision forces him to surrender and consequently die. The deformed characters might hence briefly capture the moment of "personal transcendence,"[173] but are impotent to stretch it into any meaningful relationship, or a way of life. This realization suggests that Williams' Old South is still intertwined with deep feelings of nostalgia but never resurrected, nor fully revered. Additionally, the distorted individuals might occasionally succumb to their innermost cravings, but more often than not,[174] they continue living as the ghastly "counterfeit beings" (Williams, 115). Accordingly, they denote the "religion of endurance"[175] by which Williams incessantly reminds the New Southern society of the non-detachable burden of the antebellum past.

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[173] Presley, 42.

[174] Anthony Burns, Mr. Kroger, Mr. Krupper, Oliver, Pablo and presumably the artist form some of the exceptions who all die due to the uncanny effect.

[175] Williamsian survivors always vibrate simultaneously with sadness and violence, as they once again embark on their futile search for the complete and satisfactory identity in the New South. See the endings of "Portrait of a Girl in Glass" and "The Field of Blue Children."

4.2 Humor and Sublimation

Apart from the few instances of regression ("Three Players of a Summer Game" and "The Mysteries of the Joy Rio") and displacement ("One Arm," "Desire and the Black Masseur" and "The Mysteries of the Joy Rio"),[176] Williams' stories show a strong inclination to repression, humor and sublimation.

As far as humor is concerned, Freud describes this defense mechanism as "a moment of unconscious manipulation" from which pre-consciousness produces "a dream joke."[177] As he further claims, the " 'dream joke' seems a poor joke [...] [as] it does not make us laugh [...] (but) it leaves us cold."[178] Such an instance is evident in Myra's behavior. Despite her "restlessness" (Williams, 78) concerning her obvious misery, she would "laugh rather sharply" (Williams, 78) whenever someone ventures to ask her about her well-being. Similarly, Myra's telling of "the anecdotes of the evening" is likewise underscored by her exaggerated "laughing" and conspicuously showing "far more humor [...] than they warranted" (Williams, 78). The character of Hertha also displays an "outlandishly shrill laughter; laughter that could be heard for blocks and yet did not sound like real laughter" (Williams, 81). The same applies to Homer, an equally ostracized and deformed individual. Humor might be in this sense read as an unconscious reaction to the forced marginalization based on one's physical 'otherness." Brick Pollitt, "a drinker who has not yet completely fallen under the savage axe of [...] liquor" (Williams, 341), also utilizes humor to comment upon his rather diminishing state of life. His constant "ha ha" is meant to evoke solidarity

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[176] Isabel Grey reduces her speech after her husband's death to a one-word reply "God," while Pablo denies his homosexuality by a simple repetition of "no, no, no." Displacement is evident in the character of the usher of the Joy Rio; during the massage, the Negro expresses his hatred towards the white supremacy by dismembering and subsequently eating Anthony Burns; Oliver kills his wealthy patron as a reaction to his own suppressed homosexuality.

[177] Freud, *A General Introduction*, 209.

[178] Ibid.

among the construction workers, yet that does not seem to be the case. In the same fashion, his humor operates as a mask to suppress his sorrow and mental breakdown.

If "the goal of desire [...] adopts another aim, genetically related to the abandoned one," Freud then perceives such an unconscious process as sublimation.[179] By means of this particular defense mechanism, the sexual desire is replaced by a socially acceptable activity, which leads Freud to believe in the "relation of sexual to non-sexual."[180] In Williams' stories, this is predominantly manifested by the concept of writing.[181] The writer, Tom, as well as Homer, all depict deformed characters who try to oppose the Southern trauma through the medium of "sorrowful poems" (Williams, 125). While they unambiguously suffer from the socially restricted position and, by extension, the Southern legacy, they channel their energy into the non-sexual field of poetry. Myra too contends that "it helped her a little to scribble things down on paper" (Williams, 79). As she notes, "Single lines or couplets, sometimes whole stanzas, leapt into her with the instant sensation" (Williams, 79) of happiness. Accordingly, Myra fulfills her sexual aspirations to be one with Homer by writing and reading his poems, a fairly appropriate substitution for her carnal interest.

Another transfer of sexual into non-sexual pursuit is depicted by reading and movies. For Laura, her glass animals and the book *Freckles* represent the sole activities through which she filters her personal misfortunes. For Mr. Kroger, Krupper and Pablo, the relief comes in the form of frequenting the "third rate cinema" with "cowboy pictures" (Williams, 112), though a largely prefabricated pretext for gay sex. Other instances of sublimation can materialize in the world of music ("Portrait of a Girl in Glass," "The Resemblance between a Violin Case and a

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[179] Freud, *A General Introduction*, 304.
[180] Freud, *A General Introduction*, 305.
[181] Writing, as discussed in the previous subchapter, is in Williamsian world always connected with sex, more specifically homosexuality. See note 18.

Coffin"), a croquet game ("Three Players of a Summer Game") or painting ("In Memory of an Aristocrat").

Repression, as defined in the previous chapter, nonetheless forms the basic defense mechanism professed in Williams' stories. The characters live within their own realities, to which they resort whenever the world appears "too close to endure" (Williams, 131). Consequently, their unconsciousness blocks any threatening material, i.e. mortal disease ("The Angel in the Alcove") or sexual deviation ("The Mysteries of the Joy Rio"), and they remain sheltered in their "hypnotic state" of living, incapable of "letting anyone" (Williams, 125) enter their secret reveries. In "Portrait of a Girl in Glass," this stance is manifested by Laura's closed shutters, which do not allow reality into her room, but also by her collection of glass animals through which she blocks the outside world.[182] Myra too suffers from a "choking emotion" and constant "crying" (Williams, 78). Her repression seems omnipresent since she cannot even detect the roots of her dismay; only later is she acquainted with the painful reality in the shape of Homer and the dancing flowers of the blue field. In the case of the artist in "The Angel in the Alcove," he rejects reality to the point of ascribing his progressive state of tuberculosis to the blood of smashed ant. As these incidents clearly show, Williams' repression is an integral defense mechanism which is ubiquitously employed in his various stories. Furthermore, his primary concern with shared identities and interpersonal relationships deserves further examination, as it could significantly contribute to the notion of individuals' psyche irrevocably imbued with the communal guilt and legacy of the Old South.

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[182] As Tom notes, "there was always this soft, transparent radiance [...] which came from the glass absorbing [...] arching particles of reality from her mind."

Chapter 5: Truman Capote

5.1 The Enfant Terrible

Truman Capote engraved himself as a Southern writer who is indisputably "unlike the others."[183] Except the overt panache and iterative chain of public scandals, Capote's writing displays a distinct kind of "apartness,"[184] which is shared by many of his characters.[185] Suffused with somewhat dream-like distorting dimensions, his early horror stories have a gift to fascinate and capture the eerie sense of abandonment and loneliness in an unendurable self-isolation. Such a state is usually pervaded by a descent into undulating consciousness and individual subconscious fears. Capote's sharply observed realism thus echoes the works of O'Connor, but his particularly striking atmosphere of irrationality and frightening elements within one's mind links him to Williams. The key impulse professed in his stories is not derivative of social rebuke, nor forced segregation; Capote merely emphasizes the inability to accept reality, love and abnormality of oneself.

As Robert Emmet Longman asserts, Capote's nocturnal stories represent "a dark fiction" dominated by failure, captivity and terror.[186] This definition seems quite accurate, inasmuch terror plays a decisive role in Capote's fictional torso. By means thereof, Capote not only psychologically debilitates his characters but also captivates their inner personae steeped in abnormality and visual otherness. As soon as his prototypical psychologically deformed protagonist encounters the grotesque phenomenon, their failure to denounce the slighting classifications of a hetero-normative model results in their subsequent rejection of oneself.[187]

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[183] Robert Emmet Long, *Enfant Terrible* (NY: The Continuum International Publishing Group, 2008) 1.
[184] Ibid, 2.
[185] The sense of ultimate 'place-lessness' and 'otherness' can be best traced in Capote's later character of Holly Golightly, who seems always "travelling." Some earlier hints of this quality are already present in Capote's early stories nevertheless.
[186] Be it New York City or New Orleans, a Capotean environment always evokes the sensation of a somewhat "shrouded and terrifying place."
[187] In Capote, the world is always dissected into a normal and freakishly deformed part. The latter, as Thomas Fahy writes in his "Some Unheard-of Thing: Freaks, Families and Coming of Age in Carson McCullers and Truman Capote," is then perceived as "a threat to the family and democracy," or "a dangerous validation of non-

This rejection instead of acceptance proves manifold in Capote. As opposed to O'Connor, Capote's distorted characters refuse the possibility of releasing their burden;[188] similarly, their denial of absolute love heavily clashes with the romantic nature of Williamsian fugitives. Since their life renders vastly prefabricated, they are constantly engulfed by an omnipotent "sense of unreality."[189] "Round and round"[190] with no clear direction or ending, each of the stories concludes in a climactic self-realization; a Capotean character rejects anything but their fearfully living in the solitude of darkness, whose trajectory is depicted "as a funeral parlor" (Capote, 49).

Despite this substantially different treatment of deformity, Capote's deformed characters still correspond with Van O'Connor's dislocated person and, more predominantly, Malin's concept of distorting narcissism.[191] Nonetheless, their lack of affection does not constitute an overt character defect, as Malin's diagnosis of theme and image suggests, quite the opposite. They represent the denizens "from a joylessly unfeeling [old] world,"[192] whose "directionless" (Capote, 98) leaves them in despair in the course of modernity. The following introduction to "The Headless Hawk" captures in a capsule form the specificities Capote's individuals frequently encompass:

> "They are of those that rebel against the lights (New South); they
> know not the ways thereof, nor abide in the past thereof. In the dark

heterosexual desire and behavior." Additionally, Capote's deformity could be also read as a symbol of political and social noncomformity.

[188] This particular stance regarding the antebellum trauma is extremely interesting in Capote's stories, inasmuch his characters fully acknowledge their fate. Vincent, for instance, knows he is "going to be murdered." He, in this sense, impersonates a passive "victim" who merely awaits their ordeal. The same applies to Walter, who is fully aware of his "helplessness," as well as "the intensified feeling of having traveled to the end."

[189] William L. Nance in *Bloom's Modern Critical Views: Truman Capote*, 9.

[190] Truman Capote, *The Complete Stories* (London: Penguin Classics, 2004) 126.

[191] Indeed, Capote's stories seem remarkably astute in capturing the non-existence of self-less love; in fact, his characters crave genuine affection although they appear continuously at odds with their own agency on that matter. Walter Ranney and Vincent Waters illustrate this concept of ambiguous love par excellence. Both extremely narcissistic and proud, Vincent, as well as Walter, cannot express affection on any meaningful level. Instead of affiliation and honesty, they often resort to violent outbursts (Vincent) or muteness (Walter), which is often accompanied by a change of a partner. Though they believe themselves to be lovers "incapable of loving," the problem of love never ceases to concern them. This is evident especially when they become fully "conscious of being unloved."

[192] Long, 29

> they dig through houses, which they had marked for themselves in the daytime: they know not the light. For the morning is to them as the shadow of death: if one know them, they are in the terrors of the shadow of death." (Capote, 91)

Not unlike light and dark, Capote's protagonists struggle with their inherent issue of distorting duplicity. Although they appear firmly anchored in the context of the New South[193], their compulsive dreaming and drifting[194] to the past transform them into the damaged "exiles"[195] entrapped within the symbolic constraints of antebellum identity and deteriorating psychology. They might long for the disappearance of the lurking "terror of the shadow" (Capote, 108), a symbolic representation of the Old South, but simultaneously crave bringing back its horror-like "recapitulation" (Capote, 85). This futile attempt to overcome such a divisive stance reaches the momentum upon their psychological disintegration, or more specifically, with the emergence of their double. As Long adds, Capote is especially partial to creating the doppelgangers in order to reveal a moral "decay."[196] Surmising that, the understanding of Capote's Southern Gothic domain could be likened to a thunder-cracked mirror "distorted wavy by the double glass" (Capote, 93).

In Capote's stories, the duplicity, deformity and fragmentation constitute the integral components of his fictional provenance. First, Capote's settings always display some variety of distortion. Apart from Kayserian fusion,[197] the Capotean locus always involves strange but perfectly realistic features. The line between realism and fantasy, according to Nance, is

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[193] Contrary to Williams or O'Connor, Capote's deformed individuals are considered members of Southern society. They have normal jobs (Vincent works for a Garland Gallery, Walter is a journalist) and can move across the social sphere quite freely. In most cases, it is their "malice" and inability to respond properly to reality that hold them backward.

[194] Long, 22. O'Reilly from "Master Misery" even terms this persistent action "travelling in the blue."

[195] Long, 28.

[196] Ibid, 17.

[197] Although Capote is not that fond of Kayserian blending of animate and inanimate, there are still some indications of such mixture in his settings. In "A Tree of Night," for instance, icicles hang "like some crystal monster's vicious teeth," the interior of the coach features "ancient red-plush seats and peeling iodine-colored woodwork," as well as "an old-time copper lamp" and "dingy lights." The yard in "The Headless Hawk" is decorated with "dead tulips" and "old weather-worn chairs."

definitely crossed. Prototypically, the narrative emerges within a specific spatial confinement,[198] whose limited appearance is further reduced by a wall of trees and artificial dusk ("A Tree of Night"), paper rose and a frost flower ("Miriam"), or unused garden ("The Headless Hawk").[199] In some cases, the setting remains within the bounds of credibility, as opposed to the distorted consciousness of the protagonist whose isolation translates into various degrees of drowsiness or insobriety.[200] Other times, the weather condition determines the level of distortion.[201] Additionally, it is during the snowstorms and darkness, the moments of most severe character desolation, that Capote's individuals encounter their doppelgangers.

As far as bodily deformity is concerned, Capote's world capitalizes on arresting grotesquerie; the body of almost every image is de facto marked and deformed in some manner.[202] Some incidents likewise mirror a parody on Southern Belles and their respective behavior.[203] It is not an uncommon practice for the characters to undergo Clery's merge.[204]

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[198] Kay travels by train, while she sits "in an isolated alcove." Miriam is constricted by the walls of her "remodeled brownstone." Walter locks himself in a hotel room and Vincent feels as if he walks "below the sea."

[199] Reductionism seems particularly apposite in Capote's stories. A character can be limited to "a slap of sandals," or "reflection" to capitalized initials, i.e. D.J., K.K., Mr./Mrs. H.T. Miller; oftentimes the protagonists also lack surnames (Miriam, Kay) or are nameless altogether (the woman and the man on the train, Kay's uncle). Names can be also changed in order to acquire a new identity: Lily Jane Bobbit becomes Miss Bobbit in order to seem an adult; Mr. Destronelli, Mr. Whoozits, the tattooed man and Eyetalian guy represent the same vague idea and identity mutability as D.J., Dorothy Jordan and Delilah Johnson.

[200] Frequently, the character helps themselves to a "finger of Four Roses," or a cigarette to induce the "drug drunk sensation" before they experience the "slow relaxing of tension" or "warm laziness," as they began to "move in a dream."

[201] Snow, rain or heat respectively, usually function as the main trigger for character confusion. Whereas snow is associated with "frost" and "netherworld," Walter regards the summer "heat" as "hell." All of these cases prove that weather changes have a prominent effect in Capote's stories

[202] Mrs. Miller has iron-gray hair, as she is sixty-one. Miriam, by contrast, seems "thin and fragilely constructed" with "silver-white" strange hair and glass eyes; Kay is depicted as a "rather tall" girl whose face is "too thin and narrow;" though "undersized" the woman on the train has "big sheep eyes" and an "enormous, really huge head" with "fat corkscrew curls" and "sagging" face. The man, conversely, is "afflicted: deaf and dumb," with "hairless face" and eyes like "blue marbles;" D.J. has a "boy haircut" and "narrow, hollow cheeked face" with eyes "like loose marbles," Connie Silver is a "deaf girl;" Irving has "baby cheeks" and "doll-like" legs which are "too short," the woman Walter encounters is "a cripple" with "a monstrous black shoe," Anna Stimson is "almost six feet tall."

[203] The garish woman from "A Tree of Night" perfectly illustrates an example thereof. In contrast, Kay with her utmost politeness still bears resemblance to the Belledom, purity and antebellum tradition.

[204] Kay's uncle, for instance, enters the narrative only in a form of a memory and the object of green guitar; Miss Hall from "The Headless Hawk" is referred to only through a photograph, Mr. H.T. Miller is physically represented by means of a cameo brooch; Vincent embodies D.J.'s painting, as well as the headless hawk.

Furthermore, some of the protagonists also suffer from various types of bodily illnesses.[205] Through the visual extravagance, Capote often juxtaposes the young against the older generation. While the outer appearance[206] often seems to be misleading, the initial reactions the character feels,[207] by contrast, never prove to be impertinent or unbound. Regarding gender roles and sexuality, the majority of Capote's individuals seems largely ambiguous. Recurrently, their gender identification is questionable.[208] This inability to assemble the personae properly under the respective heteronormative gender framework, Thomas Fahy writes, makes Capotean characters "freaks" who pose a challenging threat to society.[209] The same concept is reified by Capote's subtle hints of homosexuality; any same-sex pursuit is regarded as a mental disease. Though only "Shut a Final Door" and "The Headless Hawk" provide a few brief glimpses into homosexual relationship,[210] other stories depict sex strictly in heterosexual terms. Principally, sex in Capote is viewed as threating (Kay, Mrs. Miller), lacking any purpose (Vincent) or a means of consolation (Walter). It could be thus extrapolated that many of Capote's characters seem to exhibit marks of omnisexuality, or sexual ambiguity, which are often congruent with their visually intersected gender roles.

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[205] Mrs. Miller is "feverishly agitated;" the man on the train is "deaf;" Vincent has to take "four aspirins" to battle his fever; Walter has a problem with "vomiting" and "digestion."

[206] Capote is especially prone to creating doubles, whose roles are often reversed. For instance, Miriam, though visibly a child, assumes the adult behavior, while Mrs. Miller behaves like a terrified infant. Similarly, the "elfin waiflike girl" D.J. proves to Vincent that her mature composure and thinking dominates his extremely childish persona. Additionally, nothing in Capote is "what it seems;" this artificiality is predominantly derived from distorted consciousness and false appearances, as much as from the still palpable commodification of Old South, i.e. the mock burial the couple on the train perform and their subsequent theft against Kay.

[207] Oftentimes, fright, shock, discomfort, squeamishness and apprehension can be found among such initial reactions.

[208] Gender deviations in Capote are extremely frequent. The man on the train sports a "Mickey Mouse watch." D.J. dresses as "a freak," since she wears a man's shirt and her hair is "fawn-colored and cut lie a boy's." Walter depicts "a man in only one respect," as he is identified as an "adolescent female" who "takes female pride in his headquarters." Margaret intersects with her gender, as she "dresses as a child of ten," Irving looks like "a little boy" with "kind of sad, ersatz toughness." Anna Stimson wears "black suits," affects a monocle and "a walking cane."

[209] Thomas Fahy in *Bloom's Modern Critical Views: Truman Capote*, 152.

[210] Walter's inability to engage in sex with the deformed woman could be examined as a latent manifestation of his suppressed homosexuality. Vincent's sexual encounters include both women and men.

The most profound deformity Capote adopts resides in the psychological distortion of a fragmented mind. As Long writes, Capote's characters are all "seriously schizophrenic."[211] That is to say, they are essentially alone and suffer from "strangely familiar" (Capote, 87) strangers whose unpredictable appearances in their lives are perceived as both sinister and welcoming. This notion is largely consistent with Capote's sense of duplicity by which his stories become connected with the realm of unconsciousness. Moreover, there is always some unnamed subconscious "dread"[212] present, which produces self-hypnosis or another similar kind of induced hallucination. This is primarily manifested in the burden of unescapable guilt with which all protagonists are afflicted. In Capote, such a burden cannot be "dislodge[d]" (Capote, 108), or rejected. Accordingly, Capotean individuals are always "saddled with malevolent semblances of themselves" (Capote, 108), i.e. the dark ancestral crimes. By means of Vincent's slip into his own unconsciousness, Capote renders such culpability explicitly evident:

> "Here is a hall without exit, a tunnel without end [...] Before him is an old man [...] Vincent recognizes Vincent. Go away, screams Vincent, they young and handsome, but Vincent, the old and horrid, creeps forward on all fours, and climbs spider-like onto his back. Threats, pleas, blows, nothing will dislodge him. And so he races with his shadow [...] and all at once the tunnel seethes with men [...] He notices then that many are also saddled with malevolent semblances of themselves [...] the walls widen, the ceiling grows tall [...] the host releases his hawk, sending it soaring. Vincent thinks, no matter, it is a blind thing and the wicked are safe among the blind. But the hawk wheels above him, swoops down, claws foremost; at last he knows there us to be no freedom." (Capote, 108-109)

As the excerpt denotes, a Capotean "night character" (Capote, 99) always embodies "a broken image" (Capote, 110) which appears irrevocably "numb from the weight" (Capote, 103) of the antebellum past. Vincent supplies a perfect example of a "headless figure" since his life lacks

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[211] Long, 16.
[212] Ibid, 22.

direction, conviction, as well as "freedom" (Capote, 109). Trapped within the walls of his defunct mind, he, as many other Capote's characters, lives "in a trance" almost "like a sleepwalker" who "is still inside" (Capote, 93).[213] This brings into focus Capote's symptomatic use of doubling and masks.

Even if Capote's individuals scarcely portray the "disparity between public and private life," their unconsciousness always operates as what Stephen Farber calls "a labyrinth of confusing appearances."[214] Given this archetypal duplicity, the former identity, often a fastidious exterior of the self, marks the principal character whose whole equilibrium is later overthrown by some impish being or object.[215] Such entity, which serves as a mental projection of their inner persona, is highly indicative of uncanny potential. Many times, it emerges and begins to take hold of the overall identity whenever the depth of the repressed trauma becomes unbearable. Consequently, the unconcealed fears either submerge into a different character (the man in "A Tree of Night," the woman in "Shut a Final Door), a vague notion (the wizard man, Mr. Destronelli, Master Misery), an object (the impersonal voice on the telephone line in "Shut a Final Door") or take the form of an alter-ego (Miriam, D.J.) upon which the horror is superimposed. In cases of the former, the encounter is usually repeated only once. Its deep and brief realization corresponds with a temporal erasure of one's identity. On the occasion that the character encounters their alter ego (or object respectively), their individual identity becomes systematically "blurred" (Capote, 46), as they find themselves unable to validate their view of reality. The longer the relationship is maintained, the more

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[213] In spite of living in a multicultural global city as New York City or New Orleans, a Capotean character is "never quite in contact, never sure whether a step would take […] him backward or forward, up or down." This is an instance of Capote's "trapped psychology" which cripples his characters to the point of being "trance-eyed undisturbed relics of decaying interior."

[214] Stephen Farber,"New American Gothic," *Film Quarterly*, Vol. 20 No. 1 (1966) 24, JSTOR <https://www.jstor.org/stable/1211159>, 20.2. 2020.

[215] This motif is recurrent in Capote's stories. Mrs. Miller undergoes a shock due to Miriam; Kay is confronted during her train ride; Vincent upon his meeting of D.J.; Walter by any failure of a human relationship.

"persistent buzz" (Capote, 40) assaults their inner psyche. At last, they are either subdued to their "unwholesome fancies" (Capote, 44) or remain tormented for life.

Contrary to Williams or O'Connor, Capote hence does not solicit a single instance of uncanny phenomenon; his characters are confronted with regular uncanny encounters, until the irrational but gripping fear of the antebellum South dissolves their own identities.[216] This usually involves a continuous process, wherein the former character becomes the "shadow" (Capote, 108) of his former self. Although some partial strive to be free of guilt can still be detected in Capote, his characters know that such an endeavor is extremely hypocritical and in vain. Self-negating way out of their untenable situation does not seem an option in Capote's stories. If anything, it only further confirms Capote's notion of the inescapable Southern past. Through his blurred identification often redolent of deformity, Capote thereby promotes inclusion of individual abnormality, instead of its condemnation or utter rejection.

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[216] Vincent keeps seeing "fragments," in his "comalike state of "nameless disorder." Accordingly, "not one, but all, a multiple person," reminds him of the "shadow in the street […] following and followed;" Mrs. Miller loses "her identity" to Miriam, as the room begins to lose shape and "the walls tremble;" Kay becomes a victim robbed of her purse, consciousness and mental composure; Walter "pushes his face into the pillow," striving to "think of nothing" in vain.

5.2. Projection and Reaction Formation

Capote's short stories employ various types of Freud's defense mechanisms: regression ("Miriam," "Shut a Final Door"), displacement ("The Headless Hawk"), humor ("Shut a Final Door"), sublimation ("Miriam," "Shut a Final Door"), repression (all selected stories) and projection and reaction formation.

Projection is regarded as a process of "mirror-image" which fulfills the function of attributing one's unacceptable action or impulse to another.[217] As Freud further notes, such "projection of peril from the libido" does not seem very long-lasting or successful.[218] This notion is aptly reflected within the character of Walter Ranney, whose constant tendency to project results in his state of being friendless and "alone" (Capote, 119). Unable to admit his own faults, Walter blames others for the continuous "malice" (Capote, 117) and lack of "connection" (Capote, 99) he experiences. When Walter tells Kuhnhardt "a lot of lies about Margaret" (Capote, 44), or gossip about Anna Stimson, he appears not quite aware of the fact that he projects his own shortcomings upon the women. In fact, all the "peculiar thing[s]"[219] Walter does are perceived as unconscious "circumstances beyond his control" (Capote, 118). A similar instance is then reiterated by his brief affair with Rosa Cooper, and, ultimately through the "bellboy" upon whom Walter projects his own sexual desires by supplementing him with "queer eyes" (Capote, 118).

Vincent too displays numerous marks of projection. This is evident from his interaction with D.J., whom, he thinks, has faults which are inherently incongruent with his character. This is extremely hypocritical, as it becomes later clear that D.J. constitutes the other half of Vincent's self. In this sense, projection is likewise present in every Capotean story, which features a doppelganger. One's unacceptable wishes, "intense longing" (Capote, 96) or

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[217] Freud, *A General Introduction*, 224.
[218] Ibid.
[219] Long, 17.

thoughts are then projected upon the alter ego, which creates the double.[220] Miriam, for instance, is a projection of Mrs. Miller, as she represents the bold devious personality, which Mrs. Miller so obviously lacks. As for Kay, her encounter with the deformed couple could be also read as an instance of projection; furthermore, the "undefinably obscene manner" (Capote, 86) with which the male holds the seed could account for Kay's own repressed sexuality.

Another defense mechanism, which is frequently used in Capote, is reaction formation. In *A General Introduction*, Freud describes reaction formation as "the counter-siege directed against the claims of the instincts, of which we have spoken in connection with hysteria."[221] The aim of reaction formation is thereby to "control the clinical picture"[222] by expressing the exact opposite. Walter's persona supplies an especially telling example; he never fully conveys what he wants, nor articulates what he despises. Love, for him, equals hatred and, instead of genuine affection, he prefers "kidding" (Capote, 44). When confronted, Walter deflects reality and it is only upon his dream that his motivated unconsciousness becomes "transparent" (Capote, 92). Mrs. Miller also conceals her innermost wishes. Whenever she tells Miriam to "go away" (Capote, 47) it is evident she longs for the child to stay. Her loneliness thus might be overtly concealed, but each of Miriam's visits provides a deeper understanding of Mrs. Miller's inner psyche.

In "A Tree of Night," Kay's behavior likewise displays reaction formation. This is manifested in her easily submissive personality, which only initially rejects the liquor. She is elevated by the fact that the compartment is "occupied" (Capote, 78), as she can finally engage in some social activity, for example talking. Similarly, her disgust and "loathing"

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[220] As was already noted in the introductory chapter, super egos can form also as a product of excessive narcissism. Such a concept intertwines Freud's unconsciousness and Capote's writing, since the quality of being narcissistic is exhibited by all his protagonists.
[221] Freud, *A General Introduction*, 330.
[222] Ibid.

(Capote, 81) at the man on the train and his appearance could be ascribed to her respective admiration and bizarre affinity towards his persona.

Repression, as discussed in chapter 3 and 4, is ubiquitous in all Capote's stories. Mrs. Miller believes Miriam is a real girl who stalks and torments her. Vincent too is convinced that he is "below the sea" (Capote, 91) with buses floating above him. Kay represses the childhood trauma of her "wizard man" (Capote, 89); Walter's sexuality and failures seem to have been painfully removed from his conscious psyche. All of these cases demonstrate that individual isolation exacerbates the mental state of Capote's character, since it results in a psychological split. Such a split is heavily emblematic, as it denotes not only the psychological clash between the (un)conscious processes, but also the jar to one's identity derived from the legacy of antebellum South. The dark trauma thus continues to haunt and terrorize in Capote, which once again leads to a conclusion of the shared Southern past with terrifying inexorable effect.

Chapter 6: Conclusion

6.1 What Remained of the Antebellum South

In conclusion, this thesis has strived to investigate the function of distortion in the selected Southern Gothic short stories of Flannery O'Connor, Tennessee Williams and Truman Capote by means of Joseph M. Flora's conceptualization of Southern Gothicism, which first elucidated the reasons Southern Gothic themes of abuse and deformity proved most fitting for the critical portrayal of the Southern standards of life. With the key characteristics of American South thus mapped, it was then illustrated how deformity, often in the form of remarkably malformed individuals, serves as the sine qua non for any Southern Gothic work. Despite various literary criticism, wherein distortion primarily derives from decaying and philosophical tendencies,[223] Delma Eugene Presley in her essay aptly entitled "The Moral Function of Distortion in Southern Grotesque" examines deformity as predominantly moral in nature. This contention proved especially relevant for my research, inasmuch it constituted the core of the conducted analyses. Drawing on Presley's central argument of morality, this thesis discussed deformity in the selected short stories "The Angel in the Alcove," "The Mysteries of the Joy Rio," "The Field of Blue Children" and "Portrait of a Girl in Glass" by Tennessee Williams, "Good Country People," "A Good Man Is Hard to Find," "Everything That Rises Must Converge" and "A Late Encounter with the Enemy" by Flannery O'Connor, and "A Tree of Night," "Miriam," "The Headless Hawk" and "Shut a Final Door" as a metaphorical moral mirror of what remained of the Southern 'man' and the surrounding world around him.

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[223] These included namely William Van O'Connor's notion of "old agricultural system" as the main reason for the "economically unstable and emotionally underdeveloped [Southern] society;" Lewis A. Lawson's "agrarian heritage" with "the provincial, insular and conservative culture" as an "unavoidable" result thereof; John Aldridge's "poetry of disorder," as well as Irving Malin's "aesthetically displeasing" literal defects confined to surface characteristics.

As the principal part of this thesis comprised three different authors, each of the separate analyses provided a distinct understanding of what deformity in Southern Gothic could entail. Therefore, in addition to the discussion of the general unifying themes,[224] the undeniable difference in style and approach[225] provided the opportunity of more exhaustive research within Southern studies. First, Flannery O'Connor showed how distortion can depict a broken imperfect mirror whose creator must simultaneously emulate and judge the world. In her stories, deformity hence presented a kind of convention, which is due to its abnormal figure rejected as a social aberration. This incident is exemplified in O'Connor as a matter of social reformation which can be reinstalled only through personal rebuke. Though psychological defects can be detected also within some of her stories, bodily distortion functions as the main source of deformity O'Connor employs.

Williams, by contrast, delineated how his psychological framework revolves around the "artifice of mirrors" whose distorted collection form the mandatory paraphernalia for his social game. As was made evident, a Williamsian archetypal character always embodies a "painful spectacle," which marks both expulsion, as well as psychological distortion; additionally, sexual deviation and gender constraints can be likewise breached in Williams' stories.

Based on his preference for doppelgangers as bearers of moral "decay," Capote's Southern Gothic domain could be likened to a thunder-cracked mirror "distorted wavy by the double

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[224] Within the context of Southern society, all O'Connor, Williams and likewise Capote represented, similarly to their characters, social "outsiders." Whereas O'Connor's 'otherness' sprang from her body affliction (lupus), Capote and Williams were homosexuals. This aspect of social marginalization based on the lack of "ablebodidness" or gender intersection translated into the Southern Gothic fiction wherein it accordingly corresponds with the real life anxieties of women and homosexuals in the American South.

[225] Regardless of the difference in terms of gender, sex or style, all the selected short stories featured the identical use of Kayserian fusion of animate and inanimate, as well as E.J. Clery's merge. As these phenomena permeate the majority of their other stories (Williams' "One Arm," "Three Players of a Summer Game," "Desire and the Black Masseur;" O'Connor's "The Life You Save May Be Your Own," "The Artificial Nigger" and Capote's "Master Misery" and "Children On Their Birthdays), the results of this thesis could also be applied to the overall short story creation of O'Connor, Capote and Williams. Compare notes 101, 104, 113, 114, 160-163, 167-168, 170-174, 197, 202, 204, 208.

glass." As opposed to O'Connor or Williams, the concept of distorting duplicity represents the most internal struggle for a Capotean individual. Deformed in regards to their mind, body, sexuality and likewise gender, Capote's damaged "exiles" emphasize the inability to accept reality, love and abnormality of oneself.

Be it Williams' Tom, Myra, writer, Pablo; Capote's Mrs. Miller, Kay, Vincent, Walter; or O'Connor's Julian, Joy-Hulga, the Misfit, the grandfather; the deformed characters, in all cases, displayed a similar stance regarding the Southern motifs of love, familial conflict and their confinement. Even if certain stories exhibited some nuances[226] in terms of the fictional settings and reactions towards the Old South in the modern Southern era, their central themes, as well as conclusions, denoted the same final trajectory. All the distorted individuals have thereby been confirmed not only as the key requirement for any Southern Gothic work but also as a symbolic relic of the fading, hypocritical and amoral antebellum past.

Since the Gothic tradition is nevertheless likewise heavily steeped in the unconscious and irrational, Presley's neglect of any psychological interest in her argument posed a major constraint for my research and, by extension, for the Southern studies. To regard the distorted characters only as a one dimensional tool of symbolic morality proved deficient, inasmuch it deprived the deformed individuals of their dark legacy, as well as the elemental Gothic function: to evoke suspense and terror. Apart from the obvious literary and historical concerns that arise within the context of the American South, this thesis thus also concentrated on the element of deformity in regards to the irrational and an individual's mind.

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[226] For instance, O'Connor adopts the domestic Gothicism and openly criticizes by means of irony and violence with only occasional possible rehabilitation. Williams and Capote's vicious circles, in contrast, provide no hope, nor salvation for the distorted individuals. Additionally, while Williams based his world on Southern and psychological framework, Capote's rendered rather illusionary. The role of the distorted images in all the aforementioned authors is synonymous; all of the cases are symbolic in their role of the defeated 'other' in the New South.

Accordingly, the distorted characters were addressed as the possible containers of the psychological burden wherein the foundational trauma of the antebellum past was compressed and "buried alive." Using the Freudian definition of unconsciousness, more specifically his defense mechanisms and the uncanny, it was then delineated how Southern individuals deal with the psychological terrors of the antebellum South and how this past still affects their thinking about the Southern soil. This was principally denoted by the remarkable difference in use of the individual defense mechanisms, wherewith the aforementioned authors operated. While O'Connor's personae largely comprised regression (the grandmother, Hulga, the grandfather and the mother) and displacement (Julian, Misfit), for Williams, humor (Homer, Myra, Hertha and Brick) and sublimation (Pablo, Mr. Kroger, Tom, Laura, Myra, the artist) seemed to represent the inherent instrument to access his characters' unconsciousness. Capote then displayed a preference for projection (Walter, Vincent, Miriam, Kay) and reaction formation (Walter, Vincent, Miriam, Kay). Ultimately, the defense mechanism of repression constituted the most common and unifying means which was utilized in order to block the Southern trauma in all the selected short stories.

By advancing Presley's argument of moral deformity through reconceptualization of distortion in terms of its dark legacy, it was thereby validated that the distorted images constitute a physical remnant of the antebellum South in which the haunted past, the psychological trauma and the notion of deformity are intertwined. The methodological framework of Freud's defense mechanism moreover reasserted the notion of shared Southern guilt, which signified not only the psychological clash between the (un)conscious processes, but also the jar to one's identity derived from the legacy of the antebellum South. This particular result fuels the notion of extreme similarity and overlapping among the selected authors, mainly in connection to their respective complete short story collections. Furthermore, the psychological burden of the past was thus reified as an indivisible part of the

context of the American South, wherein it manifests as much in the intricate details of an individual's psyche as in the communal fears firmly embedded in the Southern thinking.

To conclude, since the objective of this thesis was primarily centered upon the role of deformity in the selected Southern Gothic short stories, I am aware that other disciplines, including racial and, especially, queer theories could also be applied. Additionally, as the core of my analysis comprised merely three particular Southern authors, I am fully convinced of the possibility of further more exhaustive research by means of different texts and perspectives. I hereby hope my findings may have significantly broadened and contributed to the conceptualization of deformities in relation to the context of the American South, more specifically within the historical, literary and psychological field of Southern studies.

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