

Houston A. Baker Jr. Preface: Violence, the Body and “The South”
and
Dana D. Nelson

An animated telephone call between the North and the South was the origin of the present special issue. We had just agreed to serve as visiting coeditors of *American Literature* and visiting faculty members in the Duke University English department for the 1998–1999 academic year. This telephone conversation commenced as a planning session for the joint work we hoped to undertake for the journal. But the talk veered almost from the outset to “The South,” as we discovered the intersection of our personal histories in Kentucky and of our professional interests in matters Southern. The intersecting geographies of our telephone conversation were emblematic, we felt, of the nuanced inseparability of North and South in any fruitful model of American cultural studies we could imagine for a new millennium. As one of us quipped during the call, “Every time a shocking act of racist violence occurs in New York, Illinois, or Pennsylvania, you can bet another movie on Mississippi will appear within six months.” From this observation came our idea for a course entitled “Mississippi,” whose subject would be the national formation of the United States and the dynamics of race, region, and citizenship entailed by, as it were, a putatively split and decidedly Manichean geography. We recalled Malcolm X’s pithy summation of U.S. regionalism as a possible epigraph for the course syllabus: Mississippi, Malcolm declared, is anywhere in the United States south of the Canadian border.

Slowly the idea took hold that we needed to collaborate on a project that would contribute to a new Southern studies, an emerging collective already producing a robust body of work in current Ameri-

American Literature, Volume 73, Number 2, June 2001. Copyright © 2001 by Duke University Press.

232 American Literature

can Studies scholarship. By a new Southern studies, we have in mind efforts such as Patricia Yaeger's *Dirt and Desire: Reconstructing Southern Women's Writing, 1930–1990*; Ann Goodwyn Jones and Susan Donaldson's collection *Haunted Bodies: Gender and Southern Texts*; Richard Gray's *Southern Aberrations: Writers of the American South and the Problems of Regionalism*; and other monographs, essays, histories, and films that reconfigure our familiar notions of Good (or desperately bad) Old Southern White Men telling stories on the porch, protecting white women, and being friends to the Negro. We thus resolved to edit a special issue of *American Literature* investigating regions, national formations, speculations, intuitions, and assertions adumbrated in our extended telephone conversation. The plans for our special issue were in place when we hung up telephones north and south.

In literature, music, film, popular culture, religious records, and studies by social scientists, we find bodies in jeopardy in the South—violence always in ascendance. Bodies are disappeared in “The South.” Bodies are made grotesque. And certain bodies in “The South” are romanticized. Why does this happen? Whose “South” is it that appears in so many discourses? Whose interests are served by varying inscriptions of “The South”? How far does our gaze extend and how extensive are our maps when we look southward? What are the relations of borders and bodies when we say “The South” and think (U.S.) racism? The macabre dragging and decapitation of James Byrd Jr., a black man, by three white men in Jasper, Texas, assures us that the South plays a durable, extravagant partner in racist violence. But the brutalization of the black Haitian immigrant Abner Luima in a Brooklyn police precinct and the horrific shooting to death by New York police officers of Amadou Diallo reminds us that Northern violence against the body of the Other is still, in the words of a famous black nationalist of the 1960s, “as American as apple pie.”

We decided to focus on *the body* because our speculation was that the visual, bounded body of the Other was bedrock for the construction of both regionalism and racism in the United States. As one contributor to our special issue, Jennifer Rae Greeson, has argued elsewhere, the “consistent and pervasive relocation of colonial attributes onto the figure of the south in early national literature suggests that the nationalization of the United States was built in part upon an intranational, regionally-inflected symbolic geography, in which the terms “South” and “U.S.” formed an ideological juxtaposition.”¹ This link-

age formed the basis for the country's transition from colonies to confederation to Nation. It offered a regional geography against which the more abstract body of the "new American" could be articulated. Tracing the semiotic permutations of Crèvecoeur's bucolic imagining of the American Farmer from his prewar watercolor "The Plantation of Pine Hill" and his postwar publication *Letters from an American Farmer*, Greeson notes a crucial bodily repression. In the watercolor, the Farmer, his wife, and a child stand in the shade of a tree observing a slave plowing the field; in *Letters*, it is the Farmer himself who plows. As Greeson summarizes, "[T]hese two representations of relatively consistent content carry vastly different ideological weight: the new national 'American Farmer' of Crèvecoeur's text here replaces the traditional colonial planter of his painting. . . . Whose hand is on the plough makes all the difference" to the imagining of this new national man. Importantly, the colonial planter remains in the United States, but this body and "his" politics are emphatically relocated to Charleston, to a "South" that now becomes alternately imagined as national but alien, what Crèvecoeur describes as the northern mirror image of colonial Peru.²

It is difficult to imagine an abstract violence dissociated from human and environmental bodies. Our intention, however, is not to essentialize or limit the term *body* by confining violence to, say, spectacle lynching, illegal laborers' abjection, or the economics and politics of the prison-industrial complex. Rather, we deem those millions of African bodies deposited by ships to (especially) the mid-Atlantic and Southern colonies of the United States inescapable entities in any new and fruitful definitions of "The South." Furthermore, we know that the murder, displacement, and relocation of thousands of Native American bodies from the same geographies in which enslaved Africans in the United States worked the land is a critical area of investigation for a new Southern studies. It goes without saying that body politics surrounding black and white women of "The South" have been of paramount concern historically, from the profound observations of Mary Chestnut to the energetic and polemical writings of bell hooks.

In our call for papers, our sense that it would be important to connect Latino/a geographies and theoretical issues to our purview led us to place the word "South" in scare quotes; our hope was to secure submissions that would carry our issue beyond traditional boundaries and into often neglected territories of the Americas. Thinking about

234 American Literature

a “South” that includes, say, Texas, New Mexico, Arizona, and southern California invokes yet another “South”—the south-of-the-border space where Latino cultures construct, challenge, inform, and expand the economic, political, and violent social histories of “our America.” Cultural anthropologist Richard Flores, for instance, traces the emergence of what he calls the “Texas Modern,” a sociopolitical formation that in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries reworked the relations of Anglos and Mexicans (elites and nonelites). Flores shows how the concept of the Texas Modern “allows us to consider events and practices relative to one another that all too often are disjointed by the rationalizing forces of Western, modern thought” and, we might add, the National Imaginary.³ From the social displacement of Mexican elites to the reorganization of Mexicans as an inferior “race,” the new forms of the Texas Modern corroborate and redeploy deep logics in racist nationalism, from the Louisiana Purchase to the Jim Crow South to Proposition 187 and “post-Affirmative Action” culture.

We believe candor is a desirable attribute of prefaces. So it is fair to report that when we put down our telephone receivers, we had in mind a special issue that would contain a penetrating essay on the prison-industrial complex in the South as a present-day avatar of chattel slavery, one that would, as in Joan Dayan’s arguments about “Legal Slaves and Civil Bodies,” analyze “how the rhetoric of law both disables civil persons and invents legal slaves,” a slave identity reconstructed in today’s penal enactments of “civil” law.⁴ We had in mind a comprehensive essay that would render unavailable for all future use the sign “South” as a state description and alibi for Northern whites. That is to say, we hoped for the persuasive deconstruction of the sign as marker of convenience and preserver of what might be called “white geographical innocence.” We wanted the sign to be completely discredited as an acceptable marker of an outlaw, retrograde, socially imagined, and almost always entirely fictional United States territory that contains white racism. We wanted something like what the feminist economic geographer team J. K. Gibson-Graham invent as part of their immanent critique of anticapitalist efforts, a process of imagining, articulating, and recognizing all the anticapitalist space *inside* the devouring machine of capitalism.⁵ Similarly, we imagined essays that would enable the process of imagining, articulating, and recognizing antiracist, antiregionalist spaces inside the nationalist machine of “The South.”

The many thought-provoking submissions we did receive—so much wider a range of thinking and contribution than space permits us to publish here—inspired us to think even harder about the categories that we made central to our call. Our discussion about these diverse and thoughtful contributions helped us to develop an emerging informal vocabulary and set of assumptions. “Thick,” for example, became an operative sign for experiences south of Mason-Dixon, calling up not only the heaviness of summer atmospherics but also the deep complexity of black and white, Latino and “American,” woman and man, and the viscous dynamics of everyday labor, politics, and religion that characterize life in the deep South. One of our maxims became, “‘The South’ is the U.S. social, political, racial, economic, ethical, and everyday-life imaginary written as ‘regionalism.’” As we talked through in more complex ways our mixed feelings about the South(s) in which we both now live, we found ourselves elaborating a preliminary joint analysis.

For instance, we talked about the structuralist principles that guided nation formation: nationalism, wholeness, union, coherence. In order for there to exist a good union, there must be a recalcitrant, secessionist “splitter.” To have a nation of “good,” liberal, and innocent white Americans, there must be an outland where “we” know they live: all the guilty, white yahoos who just don’t like people of color. Slavoj Žižek has described this agreeable splitting and projection as the “kernel of pleasure” that organizes nationalism’s joy in “wholeness.”⁶ Following his analysis, we might conclude that “The South” comes to the rescue of U.S. wholeness at the moment of the nation’s joyful decision to go with the money. U.S. capital’s nineteenth-century industrialization and factory profits rendered even the handsome gross agrarian revenues of King Cotton modest sums. Of course, this was very bad news for cotton growers and large plantations owners south of Mason-Dixon. For the world hegemony in setting the price of cotton enjoyed by, say, the Savannah wharfs suddenly became less important than what New England industry had to offer the world. The bargaining chips of economic influence over U.S. polity had suddenly enjoyed a rapid increase in Yankee hands. In order to ensure ongoing profits at the right edge of technology, industrialization, factories, and a nineteenth-century globalizing economy, the United States came to the great fissure in our history. No “kernel” of joint and mutually agreed upon national pleasure could hold two halves together—

236 American Literature

despite constitutional compromises and the fully imbricated economics of slavery's Northern financiers.

"We the people" have of course never been whole. In this special issue we draw attention to the way "our wholeness" has long been constructed through the abjected regional Other, "The South." For instance, consider the naming of the Civil War. "Civil" signifies in myriad, mostly progressive and positive, ways. But for "us," the oxymoron of "Civil War" signifies apocalypse, death, systemic collapse. Whose collapse does this "civil" vision of wholeness caption? Barbara Fields reminds us that the only definition of the carnage between 1861 and 1865 is a "war of liberation," a conflict releasing from chattel slavery millions of African bodies held in captivity below Mason-Dixon. Drew Faust similarly would have us remember that unregistered among the some 600,000 people who officially died in this "civil" war were the scores of thousands more who were not on the muster rolls—such as blacks trying to leave plantations and both blacks and whites who died as a result of guerrilla actions.⁷ These bodies somehow remain floating on the Southern edges of a reconstructed national history. Thus "The South" is thick with civilly disappeared history, the history of indigenous, black, Latino, and Asian laborers and their families, their joys and suffering largely effaced in this history of the Civil, under the mark of "The South."

It was the black novelist John O'Killens who said that the United States is geographically three regions: "down south, up south, and out south."⁸ The historian Howard Zinn agrees, suggesting that the specific pleasures and horrors of mapped territories below Mason-Dixon are, finally, American and America to the core.⁹ In our own discussions, we found ourselves wanting to mark out a political space for the resistance that comes in pleasure—for instance, in the interracial awareness, political action, and sense of community that become possible in the blacker and more Latin and more Asian parts of the South, as well as in the region's foods, its architectures and landscapes, its rhythms. Pleasures of "The South," we agree, have been thick, complicated, and hard to navigate, always imbricated with the visual and the inescapable collapse of distinctions suggested by the homology "North equals Good Whites, Good Life for Blacks," while "South equals Bad Whites, Bad Life for Blacks."

We didn't get the essays we imagined; instead, these six essays exceed every expectation we had when we talked, long ago, by telephone

across regions. This original, subtle, nuanced scholarship on “The South,” unanticipated in our first conversation, has expanded us both intellectually and ethically. Our issue is graced by the contributors’ thorough research and imaginative detail, which have changed our view of the magnitude of the importance “The South” carries for any fruitful and, dare we say, legitimate writing of “American” in the vocabularies of scholarship. We have the good fortune to have received responses that advance the project of a new Southern studies, while at the same time giving testimony, scholarly acumen, and evidence to the substance of things unseen by all previous projects in such outmoded categories as “Southern literature” or “Southern architecture.” We are privileged to have received essays and cooperation from a distinguished group of authors who have brought the best interdisciplinary models of scholarship and strikingly original models to the task of rereading familiar texts and pressing conundrums of our new “Southern” century.

A few words are in order about the contours of this special issue. Many of the themes that guide it are set out in our lead essay, Jeannine DeLombard’s “‘Eye-Witness to the Cruelty’: Southern Violence and Northern Testimony in Frederick Douglass’s 1845 *Narrative*.” DeLombard highlights the “visual power of the injured black body” in abolitionist literature. Contrasting Emersonian transcendentalism and slave narrative, she analyzes how Douglass confronts the insistent racialization of abolitionist discourse, where the transcendent abstraction of the observer is guaranteed through her or his dematerialized witnessing of violently embodied slaves—their “naked, scarred backs,” their insistently vulnerable bodies. Douglass quickly realized, DeLombard argues, that his authority within the abolitionist movement would always position him as a witness more than an advocate, an authority that produced not Emersonian transcendence but an insistent corporeality structured always through black physical vulnerability. As she puts it, the “testamentary authority” of the black activist-witness “served to deepen the sensory predicament of black embodiment.”

To counter this predicament, Douglass’s *Narrative* shifts emphasis away from the vulnerable physical metaphor of the *eye* witness to what DeLombard describes as the “immaterial” or “pure” voice. He does so to offer a “discursive antidote” to the “trauma of witnessing.” His desire to displace the authority of sight with voice coincides can-

238 American Literature

nily with a developing nineteenth-century scientific critique of the authority of vision. New theories in the nineteenth century located vision not in the disembodied and objective space of Emerson's floating eyeball but in the physical body, subject to its weaknesses, blindspots, and subjective fallibility. As she summarizes, the "broader implications of this new understanding are potentially staggering": "vision," according to Jonathan Crary, "is redefined as a capacity for being affected by sensations that have no necessary link to a referent, thus imperiling any coherent system of meaning." In the very moment, then, that abolitionist discourse grounded its authority in eye-witness accounts, "optical science was undermining the reliability . . . of such observation." Finally, then, we can only appreciate the power of Douglass's relocation of his critical authority from sight to voice if we attend to these shifts in scientific and juridical discourse: only this context will fully clarify the significance of his "abandoning the role of the slave witness and adopting instead the role of the antislavery advocate."

Douglass's efforts in Northern abolitionism to claim a "universal subjectivity unencumbered by corporeality" raise questions about the place of the North in our special issue on "The South." Jennifer Rae Greeson's essay on Harriet Jacobs's manipulation of the urban gothic form in her *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* pursues these questions. In "The 'Mysteries and Miseries' of North Carolina: New York City, Urban Gothic Fiction, and *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*," Greeson wonders what is lost in traditional considerations of Jacobs as a Southern writer. By the time Jacobs published *Incidents*, she had lived and worked twenty years in the North. Greeson argues that by disregarding Jacobs's life there, "current criticism assumes a one-to-one correspondence between [her] life in North Carolina and her representation of that life, thereby failing to attend to her apparently voracious reading and her formative contact with established writers and publishers in New York, and slighting as well the probability that her interpretation and re-presentation of her lived experience in North Carolina evolved with her own life between the 1830s and 1861." This "simplification" of Jacobs's career is symptomatic, moreover, of what Greeson terms "the bipolar conception of the category Southern writer itself, a conception that collapses identity and representation and thereby naturalizes and essentializes portrayals of 'the South.'"

Greeson's investigation maps Jacobs's strategic use of and refinements on a familiar political genre in the North, the urban gothic, thus

raising questions about how the antebellum North navigated its own psychosocial issues by looking southward. Why was “degradation” so compelling a trope for Northern audiences in the 1850s, Greeson queries. Even more than the way in which this trope organized Northerners for an attack on Southern slavery, the North’s obsession with degradation, especially as it was embodied in fallen women, points also toward “a complex and fascinating economy of reform” in which abolitionist writers harnessed “fears . . . about the modernization of Northern society” against the National Other: the South.

Bryan Wagner’s essay shares DeLombard’s interest in visibility, which Wagner analyzes as “protocols of racial visibility” in a reading of Charles Chesnut’s *The Marrow of Tradition*. Examining the prevalent trope of “Negro Domination” in the rhetoric surrounding the events on which the novel is based, the 1898 Wilmington Riot, Wagner finds an important aspect of those events overlooked by Chesnut’s critics but clearly recognized by Chesnut. Wagner argues that as black-owned stores and black service providers began to change Wilmington’s landscape, whites fought to restore visual order to the city. This “order” was premised on the spatial maintenance of a black underclass, an order that was visually disrupted by the new local architecture of an emerging black bourgeoisie, whose hospital, school, and shops—and whose presence in new mixed-race neighborhoods—altered the city’s visual field. As Wagner argues, Chesnut’s research in Wilmington two years after the riot led him to understand the violence of the white response as “the product of a [white] epistemological crisis,” a racialized “disturbance of vision” that resulted in a kind of white “identity collapse.” Chesnut understood that such collapse will manifest itself bodily: as Wagner notes, Chesnut’s white characters feel “anxious and disoriented,” and they respond by creating “theaters of repression where they can dramatize” and feel once again comforted by “their racial superiority.”

Just as Greeson suggests that Northern abolitionists yoked visceral anxieties about modernism to the familiar strategy of Southern anxiety projection and thus to antislavery politics, Wagner shows us Chesnut’s postwar recognition of white Southern attempts to project a “distinctly modern future” that would guarantee “the safe return of racial hierarchies of the past.” *The Marrow of Tradition* understands that this white supremacist modern future will be visually organized, performed, and guaranteed through white habits of seeing: when the

240 American Literature

aversion of eyes and “veil[s] of forgetfulness” are not enough, rioting and policing can accomplish the necessary reorganizations of landscape to eliminate any evidence of black equality.

The spatial imperatives of segregation seem to emerge, in Wagner’s reading of Chesnutt’s analysis of white supremacy, from the physical monitors of the white body. How violent sociopolitical imperatives enter the body and seem to be produced from within is precisely the subject of Laura Doyle’s essay, “The Body against Itself in Faulkner’s Phenomenology of Race.” Reading the “violent internal ruptures” in Faulkner’s plotting of *Light in August*, Doyle shows how the story’s gap, its inability or refusal to narrate the murder of Joanna Burden, plays out “the folded-over and captive relation” of racialized bodies in national narratives. Doyle’s essay reads the novel “as a guide to our ongoing entanglement in the snarled legacies of violence, the body, and the South.” In the narrative loophole that the text creates around Burden’s murder, a loophole that invites approach and always refuses reconciliation or closure, Doyle finds a pattern for the dilemma of “intercorporeality,” or what Merleau-Ponty has described as the body’s chiasm. This concept summarizes the epistemological gap that emerges as we try sensorily to know and verify ourselves: we feel our right hand with our left hand, but in the moment of reverse there is a hiatus or a gap, as our hands cannot be simultaneously touching and feeling, present and knowing. It is through this gap, argues Doyle, that the violence of the sociopolitical world enters our bodies, that the “inside is called out,” that the “body disappears and reappears in worldness, in a nation’s social script, as other to itself.”

For Joe Christmas, race is simultaneously alienating and a map for self-understanding, “a way of experiencing himself in the world—of coming to himself from outside himself.” It is a mode of involuntary self-witnessing that invites the terms of a racist order into the deepest sources of meaning in the body. As for Chesnutt’s class-conscious whites, Joe Christmas’s “cross-racial” sexual experiments in the North leave him feeling ill. And in this way, his visceral struggles link to the “racist reader’s visceral response to the familiar, essentializing details of race thinking.” Race in this novel works as a seduction and a colonization, and although Faulkner might promise here a “Southern storytelling that narrates race as *aporia* rather than *alibi*,” it equivocates: it “may even be *about* such equivocations.”

The strained equivocations of white homopolitical desire form the

subject of Andrea Levine's investigation in "Sidney Poitier's Civil Rights: Rewriting the Mystique of White Womanhood in *Guess Who's Coming to Dinner* and *In the Heat of the Night*." Again, we see representations of the South mediating non-Southern and, here specifically, white liberal anxieties. Levine provides an analysis of late-sixties liberalism in the moment when black nationalism had begun its sharp questioning of the legacy of interracial Civil Rights activism. She shows how "representations and evocations of the American South . . . functioned in the mid- and late 1960s not to 'explain' but to transform" the helplessness and frustration that many white men felt at being disqualified from the satisfying homosociality of Civil Rights culture. The characters played by Sidney Poitier in two key movies, Levine shows, frame a particular trajectory of white liberal male response, a two-pronged nostalgia characterized simultaneously by a desire for the interracial collaboration and connection authorized by the early Civil Rights movement, and a punitive "desire for racist violence" that alternately and quite differently responds to the political and affective rejection of black nationalism.

Borrowing Leerom Medovi's notion of "homopolitical desire," Levine argues that the corporeal politics of the Civil Rights movement, the imperative to "put your body on the line," sponsored "white males' identification with their black male peers, who were so often positioned as primarily corporeal sites of authenticity within the political culture of the 1960s." When Black Nationalist politics named this identification not as radical but retrograde, white men recuperated positional authority in Hollywood fantasy. This homopolitical fantasy of a return to interracial solidarity was marked by its reference to a return to the race-gender hierarchies of the U.S. South, and to spectacularized black male vulnerability. This vulnerability is especially acute in Norman Jewison's *In the Heat of the Night*, where, Levine argues, the excessive vulnerability of the Northern black policeman Virgil Tibbs in the charged Southern setting of Sparta, Mississippi, begins the work of undoing "the political mechanisms that allowed white male activists" to identify with politically charged black male bodies.

The final essay expands this issue's discussion of "The South." Ana Patricia Rodríguez's "Refugees of the South: Central Americans in the U.S. Latino Imaginary" identifies an emerging literary focus on Central American refugees characterized by "narratives of violence,

242 American Literature

war, and injustice inflicted on the body (corporeal and juridical) of a Latino American people in the United States.” Studying pre- and post-NAFTA flows of military action and global capital, Rodríguez frames the problem of Latin American refugees from the physical and economic violence of their U.S.-sponsored, neoliberal “democratization.” These refugees flee northward into the United States, only to find themselves powerless again and often in desperate situations uncannily like those they left. “In the South,” explains Rodríguez, quoting Louis Emmerij, “exists a North and in the North exists a South: they are worlds apart.” Rodríguez’s essay points out the difference between the hyper-visualized, vulnerable black body discussed by DeLombard, Wagner, and Levine, and the disappearance of the Latino/a refugee body in what we might term the popular U.S. scopic order.

Confronting what Rodríguez terms “neocolonial nostalgia,” Latino/a writers like Francisco Goldman, Graciela Limón, Helena María Viramontes, and Carole Fernández challenge their characters to understand that the “innocence” of their lost lives south of the United States was always predicated on their subordination, and they challenge white readers to comprehend and account for the internal “pockets of the South” *within* the United States, in which refugees face state-sponsored violence and repression, homelessness, and poverty. Most of all, these writers summon a “horizon of new inter-Latino subjectivities, perspectives, languages, and social meanings,” a system of signification that promises to reconfigure North and South.

Our foregoing account of the essays that follow is intended as both a guide and a personal *aide-memoire*. We want to remember all we have learned from the generous insights of our contributors. We want to foreground their theoretical apparatuses, which will augment scholarly resources for a new Southern studies. We believe the process of compiling the present special issue illustrates the best features of this emerging area of American cultural studies: our production process was a collaboration without borders, as it were. Matters often considered along their own unique axes are found here in complex convergence and intellectually challenging combination. From the outset of our project, an originative energy and interactive signifying seemed transgressive of the old *and* new economies of “The South,” economies that sponsored border-guarding signs of Southern hamlets at twilight and the vigilante patrols of the NAFTA southwest.

Of course our own interracial and intergenerational collaboration

on the present issue challenged from the outset the connotations of such signs with respect to a traditional Southern studies. And we are enormously gratified that these essays collapse traditional Southern studies assessments with respect to men and women; North and South; established scholars and astute sharers of new academic generations; “traditional” primary texts and “found” texts whose recovery has been enabled by new modes of critical perception; “national” and “regional” boundaries; anxieties of modernization and influence; and phenomenological incumbencies of “worlding” the body as a prerequisite for a *body politic*. Our hope is that our special issue will produce energetic telephone conversations, e-mails, cites, and Web sites between and among those who believe, as we do, that “The South” does not necessarily need to “rise again” in the manner of Dixie’s most outrageously fond hopes. Rather, we believe that “The South” in its most complex interlayering and significations for a new Southern studies must seriously be raised to a new American cultural studies consciousness. For indisputably, all who find the energies of this special issue compatible with a more comprehensive understanding of the Americas realize that as a nation, we are always already in “The South,” that it is unequivocally and intricately lodged in us, a first principle of our being in the world.

One cannot simply love or hate “The South,” endorse or denounce it. For there is nothing about “The South”—in all its “thickness”—one can do *simply*. A new Southern studies, like this special issue, welcomes intellectual, multiparticipant, and revisionary complexity. It welcomes the complication of old borders and terrains, wishes to construct and survey a new scholarly map of “The South.” In tandem with the seriousness of revision and reinterpretation that mark a new Southern studies, we hope there will also be more than a modicum of *pleasure* for readers who address these essays. There is no better actual or scholarly geography in which to rewrite the economies of a new national *pleasure of specificity*, as it were, than “The South.” It has been a great pleasure indeed to witness our inaugural telephone conversation transform itself into the present volume. We welcome what we trust will be the conversation the volume invites.

Duke University

University of Kentucky

244 American Literature

Notes

- 1 Jennifer Rae Greeson, "The Figure of the South and the Nationalizing Imperatives of Early United States Literature," *Yale Journal of Criticism* 12 (fall 1999): 210.
- 2 Ibid., 213, 215. See J. Hector St. John de Crèvecoeur, *Letters from an American Farmer* (New York: Viking-Penguin, 1981), 166. A developing body of scholarship studies the influence of Spanish colonization and South American politics on U.S. literature and its democratic imaginary; see, for instance, Eric Wertheimer, *Imagined Empires: Incas, Aztecs, and the New World of American Literature, 1771–1876* (New York: Cambridge Univ. Press, 1999); and Ralph Bauer, "Colonial Discourse and Early American Literary History: Ercilla, The Inca Garcilaso, and Joel Barlow's Conception of a New World Epic," *Early American Literature* 30 (1995): 203–32.
- 3 Richard Flores, "Mexicans, Modernity, and *Martyrs of the Alamo*," in *Reflexiones 1998: New Directions in Mexican American Studies*, ed. Yolanda Padilla (Austin: Univ. of Texas Press, 1999), 3.
- 4 Joan Dayan, "Legal Slaves and Civil Bodies," in *Materializing Democracy*, ed. Russ Castronovo and Dana D. Nelson (Durham, N.C.: Duke Univ. Press, forthcoming, 2001).
- 5 See J. K. Gibson-Graham, *The End of Capitalism (As We Knew It): A Feminist Critique of Political Economy* (London: Blackwell, 1996).
- 6 See Slavoj Žižek, "Eastern Europe's Republics of Gilead," *New Left Review* 183 (September/October 1990): 50–62.
- 7 Drew Gilpin Faust, "'A Riddle of Death': Mortality and Meaning in the American Civil War," 34th Annual Robert Fortenbaugh Memorial Lecture (Gettysburg, Penn.: Gettysburg College, 1995).
- 8 John Oliver Killens, *Black Man's Burden* (New York: Pocket Books, 1969), 12.
- 9 Howard Zinn, *The Southern Mystique* (New York: Knopf, 1964), 218; quoted in James C. Cobb, *Redefining Southern Culture: Mind and Identity in the Modern South* (Athens: Univ. of Georgia Press, 1999), 73–74.