Off the beaten path about three miles from where I grew up in Stanly County, North Carolina, a one-lane wooden bridge crosses Big Bear Creek at a site locals call Booger Hollar (fig. 3). If you drive onto this bridge at night, turn off your car and headlights, and roll down the windows, it is said that you can hear ghosts—or boogers as we call them—wailing down the creek (see Boyd, J.). Upon crossing the more traveled Saint Martin Church Road (which connects Albemarle, the county seat, and the town of Oakboro), Booger Hollar Road becomes Efird Road, Efird being my maternal grandmother’s maiden name (figs. 4–5). In 1822 our forebear Jacob Efird founded the Lutheran church now situated at this crossroads. In *The History and Genealogy of the Efird Family* (1964), Oscar Agburn Efird asserts that Jacob Efird is the ancestor of all living Efirds and the first of his family—which probably emigrated from Germany to America with the Pennsylvania “Dutch”—to hold a family meeting and a vote to simplify their German family name Ehrenfried into one more easily spelled and pronounced by Anglo-Americans. So just down the hill from the precise location where my family history can be mapped onto the topography of the county of my birth, and where a number of distant relatives are buried, boogers await anyone willing to listen for them. But who are the dead who return on a nightly basis to remind the living of their (former) presence? Could they be connected to my family tree? Could they occupy a place in it?
Fig. 3. Booger Hollar, North Carolina. (Photos by Jarrod Hayes.)

Fig. 4. Booger Hollar, North Carolina. (Photos by Jarrod Hayes.)
Fig. 5. Booger Hollar, North Carolina. (Photos by Jarrod Hayes.)

Fig. 6. Oakboro, North Carolina. (Photos by Jarrod Hayes.)
I only discovered Booger Hollar’s connection to my family tree once this project was well under way, a connection that has forced me to think of the relation between identity and genealogy in queer ways, even though genealogy is usually structured along kinship lines defined through heterosexual reproduction. Booger Hollar itself also has a long history as a *heterosexual* make-out spot; I have heard guys boast of “parking” with girls on a farm road, now blocked off, whose entrance is only a few hundred yards from the bridge. Indeed, my first attempt to photograph the bridge was foiled by a teenage couple embracing on the large rock to the left of it. Signs of this heterosexuality are physically inscribed onto the bridge itself in the form of graffiti. On some missions, I was able to photograph hints of lesbian love, again in the form of a graffito (figs. 7–8). I would suggest, however, that Booger Hollar’s queer meaning does not depend on its hospitableness to same-sex desire. Although the goings-on to which these inscriptions allude might provide a less unearthly explanation of the wailing just described, it is the more supernatural version that nourished my childhood, along with ghost stories attached to other sites as well. For crossing the bridge at Booger Hollar entails traveling a distance much greater than the span of the bridge; it involves traveling back through time, a digression, if you will, much like the one that the more strong-of-heart take when they pause there on journeys long and short or even drive out of their way to determine for themselves whether they can hear these boogers.

I have come to this reading of Booger Hollar in conjunction with two North Carolina novels, one familiar, Thomas Wolfe’s *Look Homeward, Angel*, the other perhaps less familiar, *Dream Boy*, by the gay novelist Jim Grimsley. Wolfe’s novel is a haunted one; even the living, including its protagonist Eugene Gant, are frequently described as ghosts. And, like those in my reading of Booger Hollar, these ghosts are related to a particular vision of its characters’ family tree. Furthermore, defined in matrilineal not patrilineal terms, Eugene’s position in this family tree is explicitly described by other family members as queer (in the sense of eccentric). In contrast, *Dream Boy* is also haunted by the ghosts of repressed family secrets. Its ghosts are queer in a more contemporary sense (i.e., related to nonnormative sexualities and desires). Grimsley’s novel tells the story of Nathan, the son of an abusive alcoholic father, and of his love affair with Roy, a farmer’s son and school-bus driver. The final part, over a third of the entire novel, describes a camping trip the two go on with Roy’s straight buddies, Burke and Randy. During this trip, the boys also visit a plantation house haunted by the ghost of a decapitated master.
Fig. 7. Booger Hollar, North Carolina. (Photos by Jarrod Hayes.)

Fig. 8. Booger Hollar, North Carolina. (Photos by Jarrod Hayes.)
This haunted house, however, is home to a variety of ghosts, ghosts representing sexual secrets and histories of family violence in addition to the history of slavery and racial terror. Whereas, at first glance, Booger Hollar, *Look Homeward, Angel,* and *Dream Boy* may seem to be haunted by very different ghosts, a hauntological reading, to borrow Derrida’s term, one that allows the ghosts of each of these three topoi or texts to haunt the others, can reveal the hidden similarities lurking behind the differences. If, according to Abraham and Torok, ghosts represent repressed family secrets, and according to Derrida, a disavowed alterity, I shall argue that, by conjuring up a history of violence at least partially forgotten, such a reading brings a repressed past back to queer the present.

In this, my final chapter, I return home, to a certain extent, to my own roots. It is also the chapter that drives home the affective pull of my roots in a very personal way. I am struck now that, as a graduate student when personal or autobiographical criticism was an area of exploration on the part of a number of my feminist mentors, I was never able to completely pull off acts of personal criticism myself. Even works begun at the intersection between my intellectual inquiries and my own life story always seemed to benefit when the autobiographical was expunged and I made my work conform to the more conventional academic essay. Yet, for some reason, the personal or autobiographical has managed to cling to my readings of Wolfe and Grimsley, and one of my goals in this chapter is to explore the implications of the affective pull of roots and what life writing enables in this project. In chapter 4, I considered Derrida’s use and deconstruction of the autobiographical; here I point toward a theorization of the role of the autobiographical within queer affect theory.

*Looking for Ghosts*

*Haints, boogers*: I am never quite sure when it is appropriate or necessary to translate such words from my mother tongue. If conversations with nonsouthern acquaintances are any indication, *booger* is not obvious to most speakers of English; most understand it to mean “nose boogers.” Though *booger* has an approximate equivalent in Standard Written English—*bogey*—a booger is not the same as the bogey in *bogeyman,* a word also used in Southern English, though pronounced slightly differently (as in *boogey* or *booger man*). As I grew up using the word, a booger can be any ghost of malevolent intentions. Yet I was well into adulthood before I had the slightest idea of how *booger* might be spelled. In fact, it
was when I began to revisit Booger Hollar for this project that I first saw the word in writing on a road sign. I can remember when such roads never had signs or when only “locals” in the most restricted sense (i.e., those living within, say, a half-mile radius of a given site) could name a particular rural road. In some cases, there were even disagreements over the names of roads. Because of its boogers, however, and the more earthly teenagers who haunted its most famous attraction, Booger Hollar Road was more widely recognized, even if those who knew of it probably would not have been able to agree on a spelling. Yet, regardless of how widely a road name was used, oral culture had a monopoly over such naming until 1981, when all the roads in Stanly County were given official names to permit the numbering of rural homes in order to ensure timely ambulance service to remote areas. At that time, the name Booger Hollar took on its present written form.

When I tell southerners from elsewhere about this place, and especially when I show them pictures of the road sign, I am usually treated to a knowing grin. Many are amazed that this word can be written on signposts and maps. My own first attempts to photograph the signs were frustrated by the fact that, twenty years after the first signs were erected, they were still being stolen at such a rate that they could not be replaced fast enough. The pleasure of seeing in writing a word many associate with an exclusively oral language, especially a language so often scorned, is undoubtedly part of this desire to “reappropriate” the written word by confiscating the few material “signs” of its existence. My own pleasure at seeing the word in writing elicited not a desire to break the law but rather a reflection on how the sign itself broke certain rules of Standard English. Hollar has a perfectly exact standard equivalent—hollow, as in “The Legend of Sleepy Hollow” (Irving)—and the association between the two would come easily for most southerners. I was thus a bit surprised that the signs did not read “Booger Hollow.” It came as no surprise, however, that booger would be phonetically transliterated as opposed to mistranslated into Standard English as bogey; Bogey Hollow seems so laughable to me that I would have been deeply disappointed had I discovered that the county officials who held the public forums to settle on these road names had even considered such a ridiculous option. If booger resists translation into Standard English, this resistance has also infected hollar, a perfectly translatable word; it seems almost as if the ghostly boogers have extended their haunting to the very language used to name them. I guess Standard English is not the only official language of Stanly County after all.
I was curious, however, as to how Booger Hollar became official, so curious that I devoted the afternoon of 3 August 2004 to another kind of digression in order to track down any possible record of how a word as unwritable as booger made its way onto the most official manifestations of the language of the state. The archives at the local public library offered only the year during which the official naming occurred. A trip to the county commissioners’ office in the county courthouse revealed that these years’ records had long been banished to “the vault” in the basement. When found, the minutes simply referred me to the planning department’s records, which were back upstairs, right next door to the county commissioners’ office where I had started. After a bit of searching, Stanly County planner Linda Evans pulled a folder of aged yellow notepad papers out of a filing cabinet and, among these, found the minutes of the Stanly County Planning Department meeting of 12 February 1981. They simply state, “Proposed Little Creek Rd. Objections and discussion were heard. Officially named Booger Hollar Rd.” Unaccustomed, no doubt, to requests for these particular public documents, Evans offered, without being prompted, much information about the process of officializing road names. I could still vaguely remember the public forums held to solicit input from ordinary folk, but Evans added to this knowledge by telling me about a man and woman who spent several days riding all over the county to come up with the names that were originally proposed. But Little Creek Road? How could anyone familiar with the area propose such a banal name for a road everyone knew as Booger Hollar? Did they not speak to the residents living near Booger Hollar? Perhaps more perplexing is the fact that anyone would take the time to attend an evening meeting to object to a proposal for naming a rural road that is only 2.3 miles long. It was yet another digression in their busy lives, no doubt, one not unlike the digression that usually must be taken to visit Booger Hollar.

Furthermore, what kind of objections were heard at the meeting in question? While I can appreciate the thought of good country folk rising up against this assault on their oral culture by officialdom, a more likely scenario involves local residents showing up to add a family name to an unnamed road and thus being able, by accident, to object to a name they were unaccustomed to using for another road. Efird Road, for example, was not the first suggestion either; rather, Battle Road was initially proposed. One can only presume that distant relatives were there to object to the official proposal and stamp the family name onto official county geography at the very place where it could continually be haunted.
Could they have also been the ones to push for Booger Hollar’s reinstatement? Road names such as Richard-Sandy Road serve as evidence that those with the incentive to have a road named after themselves often did so without objections (fig. 6). (And this name, a more formal equivalent of the “so-and-so loves so-and-so” inscriptions at Booger Hollar only a few miles away, officializes heterosexual naming in a way graffiti on the bridge never could.)¹ But what else was discussed at the forum? A spelling? When Evans asked me why I was interested in the minutes, I commented on the name Booger Hollar and its spelling. She replied by stating that the Planning Department was required to spell names as they were written in the minutes. Was she suggesting that Booger Hollar might be a misspelling? What constitutes a misspelling in the case of a word that only exists in spoken language?

Booger has no entry in the Oxford English Dictionary (OED), even though one can find many related words: bogy, boggard, bogle, all, like bug, “from Welsh bwg (= bug) ‘a ghost’” (OED II, 626):

boggard¹, -art . . . [A word in popular use in Westmoreland, Lancashire, Cheshire, Yorkshire, and the north midlands, and of occasional appearance in literature since c1570. Evidently related to boggle, bogle, and bog sb.²: if the status of the last-named were more assured, it would be natural to see in boggard a derivative with the augmentative suffix -ard; or if the occasional variant bizzard could be assumed as the etymological form, it might stand in the same relation to bug. See bogle.]

1. A spectre, goblin, or bogy; in dialectal use, esp. a local goblin or sprite supposed to “haunt” a particular gloomy spot, or scene of violence. . . .

b. fig. A bugbear, a source of dread. (II, 359)

Since the final d and t are interchangeable, it is not much of a stretch from boggard to booger in contexts like the ones in which Southern English is spoken and final dental consonants can be replaced with glottal stops. If “the occasional variant bizzard” is used, it is even less of a stretch. In fact, the entry’s use of appearance turns the word itself into an apparition with a shadowy past that cannot be determined with certainty, a word whose roots withdraw into the recesses of history. Bogle contains a definition that perfectly matches that of booger: “1. A phantom causing fright; a goblin, boggy, or spectre of the night; an undefined creature of superstitious dread. Also, applied contemptuously to a human being who is
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a ‘fright to behold’” (II, 360). Southerners as well might sometimes say that so-and-so is as ugly as a booger or a haint. Although I finally found most of what I was looking for in the OED, my quest for these very specific etymological roots was delayed by boogers haunting the pages of that most venerated historical account of the English lexicon, boogers hiding this entry from me during my first visits to these pages of the OED, itself, then, a sort of Booger Hollar.

Furthermore, if one attributes the definition of boggard to booger, the lack of hints in local lore that Booger Hollar was the scene of any violence suggests that it owes its reputation to the fact that it is simply a particularly gloomy spot. But, to make it into ghost stories, even merely gloomy spots must have narratives attached to them or at least must gain a narrative as they enter a ghost story. Since boggards, like boogers, “‘haunt’ a particular . . . spot,” their haunting of that place marks it as a peculiar site of memory, one where the past can be conjured up. But what kind of violence returns from night to night at Booger Hollar to remind the living of what they have repressed? Are the boogers at Booger Hollar related to my family tree? If so, does it mean that the family tree itself can be a site of violence? It is hard to think of a family tree as a place, even if its roots might be planted somewhere quite specific. The family tree visualizes a structure, that of kinship; but what kind of violence lurks within structures? And why must such violence be kept secret?

Family Romance as Ghost Story

If, as a site of memory, Booger Hollar recalls a family naming as not only a repressed secret but also a kind of violence that comes back to haunt, this site becomes haunted with latent meaning. If Booger Hollar is haunted as a place by “real” boogers (whatever spectral reality might be), if these real boogers serve as a figure for the linguistic haunting represented by the written form of Booger Hollar, Efird, too, is a haunted name, one containing the ghosts of all its previous versions. As place-names, Efird and Booger are thus intimately intertwined; as they share a single road, their signs face each other from opposite sides of Saint Martin Church Road. And, just as the etymology of booger was tricky to unravel, so, too, does the name Efird have a history whose digressions Oscar Agburn Efird took many pains to track down, a little over a decade before Haley’s own return to roots. He provides a list of the many spellings of the name, spanning the decades from the day of Johann Georg
Ehrenfried’s arrival in Philadelphia from Germany to the middle of the following century. Some of the listed versions follow:

Johann Gerg [sic] Ehrenfried. Signature to Oath of Abjuration on September 18, 1773.
Johann George Ernfdfried and wife, Catharine Barbara Ernfdried. Baptismal record of daughter, Sara, April 6, 1777.
George Ernfreed. Tax listing in 1780.
George Ernfried. Military record, November 18, 1780.
Jacob Iffert. Land grant from the State of North Carolina, October 9, 1783.
George Ehrndrifdt. Grantee in a deed in Easton, Pa., dated July 15, 1784.
George Ehrinfried. Military record, May 9, 1785.
George Earenfried. Tax listing in 1785.
Jacob Eafrit. United States census of 1790 for North Carolina.
Martin Eafert. Recital in a deed of purchase of land, November 17, 1792.
Jacob Iffret. Land grant from the State of North Carolina, June 30, 1797.
Jacob Eford. United States census of 1810 for North Carolina.
Jacob Eafort. Sponsor at baptism of Esther Eafort, daughter of George Eafort, at Bethel Lutheran Church, Stanly Co., N.C., August 22, 1819.
Jacob Euford. Grantee in land grant from the State of North Carolina, December 15, 1821.
Daniel Efird. Signature on marriage bond, July 9, 1827.
Adam Ephert. Delegate to Tennessee Lutheran Synod in 1842.
Jacob Iferdt. Signature to his will, December 3, 1842. (7–8)

According to Oscar Agburn Efird, the “memorable meeting of the clan,” which “met together and agreed to simplify and anglicize the spelling of the name, and adopted the present spelling of Efird, . . . was probably about 1827, or before, because we find Daniel Efird, one of the parties to this agreement, signing his marriage bond Daniel Efird on July 9, 1827, in Cabarrus County, North Carolina” (6).
Oscar Agburn Efird explains the motivation behind the renaming as follows:

The name Ehrenfried was difficult for anyone who was not a German or of German extraction to pronounce. . . . Outside the German communities in which they settled, these immigrants had to come in contact with the English tax collectors and many other public officials, as well as the numerous others with whom they transacted business.

It is not difficult to visualize Jacob Ehrenfried, a son of Johann Georg Ehrenfried, who together with his father had migrated to North Carolina, busily engaged at work about his farm in Mecklenburg County, that portion now Cabarrus County, North Carolina, as a total stranger rode up to his home on a good sorrel horse with bulging saddle bags across the horse’s back behind the saddle. Jacob was not alarmed, but very interested. The stranger got off his horse and tied it to a sapling, got writing material out of a saddle bag and approached the house. Jacob Ehrenfried met him at the door. The stranger introduced himself and informed him that he was the United States census taker, and asked Jacob what his name was. Jacob told him that it was “Air-en-freed.” The census taker said, “What?” Jacob, experiencing the same thing that he had so many times before, probably tried to simplify it for him and said “Air-freed.” The census taker thereupon wrote down Efrit as it appears in the 1790 United States census of North Carolina, and secured the other information about his family contained therein. (5)

In this fictionalized account of family history, Oscar Agburn Efird invents details as specific as a sorrel horse, a sapling, and an imaginary tax collector. Yet Jacob, the hero of this story, was not alarmed. In spite of the fact that “other German names” were entered into the tax register in much the same way, and that Jacob lived within one of any number of “German communities,” he confronts the census taker alone. And even though this passage hints that the necessity of renaming is tied to economic structures, it downplays any coercive aspect of economic pressures to Anglicize the family name. Oscar Agburn Efird reinforces the glorification of the ancestor as an American hero and exemplification of the American dream.

Yet the various spellings listed above tell the story not of an abrupt change but one of gradual evolution. Ifert, very similar to the final
orthography, appeared as early as 1783, and alternative spellings continued to appear after 1827, including one by the very same Daniel. Furthermore, Oscar Agburn Efird continues the story told by the list with the following description of Lutheran Church records:

In 1846, Simon H. Efird was a delegate from [Montgomery C]ounty. In 1847, Daniel Efirt was a delegate from the same county. In 1848, Adam Efert was assistant in ministerial services. In 1848, N. P. Ifert was a delegate. In 1848, Daniel Ifert was a ministerial student. In 1849, Adam Efird was pastor at Lexington, North Carolina. In the early days, the Lutherans spoke and conducted services in both German and English, and it is noted that in the German records the name is spelled Ifert, whereas in the English records it is spelled Efird. Consistently, from 1850 on, the name is spelled Efird in these minutes. (5)

Yet, since this very paragraph offers examples of four spellings not two, its attribution of spelling to the records’ language is contradicted by the evidence that immediately precedes it. It is understandable that there might be differences between signatures, church records in German and English, and government documents in English, but there is often as much variation within each of these categories as between them.

Furthermore, there is no written evidence of the meeting at which a collective decision was taken on a specific date to change the spelling of the family name once and for all. The only evidence for the meeting comes from Laura Christine Efird, who “said that her father Martin Luther Efird, told her that he remembered when his father, Daniel, his grandfather, Jacob, and his uncles, George, Martin, Jacob John, and Solomon, met together and agreed to simplify and anglicize the spelling of the name” (6). In most cases Oscar Agburn Efird is suspicious of oral history (xvii), and this particular informant is notoriously unreliable (1), believing, for example, that the family’s heritage was Dutch, not German. What purpose, then, is served by hanging on to the aspect of family oral tradition regarding a name-change meeting when Oscar Agburn Efird’s research has shown most of this tradition to be wrong, or at the most to contain only a kernel of the version Oscar Agburn ultimately settled on as truth?

The answer to this question, I think, can be found in the family romance Oscar Agburn Efird attempts to create with his genealogical history:
That these early forebears did an excellent job in simplifying and anglicizing the name cannot be gainsaid. This act of itself demonstrates so many dominant characteristics of them. These forebears had come from a cultural country into a new, undeveloped country expecting to hew a home out of the forest. They bore a name which was difficult for their English neighbors to pronounce. They had faith in themselves and in their adopted country, and anticipated its development and progress with the necessary business, religious and social contacts. This was why they adopted the present spelling of the Efird name. (6)

The version that Oscar Agburn Efird asserts as truth, therefore, allows him to present the change of name as a mark of the family’s ingenuity. This narrative of an Old World family finding the American dream in the New World (published in the Cold War 1960s no less) transforms family romance into a story of Americanization. It does not matter that every other German family that moved to the area changed its name in a similar way (see Hammer 31–33; Sharpe and Pepper 39); Oscar Agburn Efird manages to present the Efird name change as a unique example of rugged individualism. The forebear had to be a hero, and this hero could be none other than Jacob Efird: “The fifth chapter gives a full account of Jacob Efird, the patriarch of the family, so as to place him on the high pedestal upon which he so justly belongs” (xviii). In fact, he goes to great lengths to create the fiction of noble origins by mentioning at great length “Ehrenfried, son of Herman, I, of the House of Franconia, was born A.D. 995 [who] became the third ruler of the Palatinate on the Rhine, Germany, A.D. 959” (4). He also details his interest in tracking down an Old World coat of arms (6). Nonetheless, Old World coats of arms can be replaced with a different kind of New World nobility, that of the self-made man, self-made here in part because self-named. In spite of the fact that Jacob had a father, who immigrated to America, “All persons who spell their name Efird are descended from Jacob Efird” (42), not Johann Georg Ehrenfried.

The economic pressures downplayed so as to romanticize this history of the family name, however, suggest a kind of violence (even if “only” symbolic) behind the requirement that Jacob Efird’s last name be intelligible to the Anglo county officials who ensured that he would keep his claim to the land he worked. Casting aside the father’s name was specific to the class to which my ancestors belonged as yeoman farmers. Only
when a name has so little attachment to power can it be thrown away so easily. Yet might we not also think of abandoning the father’s name as a kind of patricide? In addition to being part of my family’s ancestral lands, then, could Booger Hollar also serve as a metaphor for my ancestors’ ghosts? Could the secrets that Booger Hollar simultaneously guards and reveals be the name of my great-great-great-great-great-grandfather abandoned so long ago? In such a reading of Booger Hollar, although the Efird family has been assimilated into Anglo-American culture for over a hundred years, it might still be thought of as haunted by its origins and the migrations that resulted in its (re)naming. In that case, Booger Hollar, in its connection to my family name, might be thought of as a scene of violence done to a name, a proper name. The ghosts in the Efird family tree thus reveal the economic structures that discouraged resistance to Anglicization. These economic structures might be seen as related to systems or structures of violence that leave any number of ghosts in the written and oral cultures of North Carolina.

**Wolfe’s Ghosts**

One cultural text thus haunted is Wolfe’s *Look Homeward, Angel*, which tells the coming-of-age story of Eugene Gant, a delicate, lanky, lonely bookworm growing up during the first two decades of the twentieth century in the fictional city and state of Altamont, Catawba (which bears a striking resemblance to Wolfe’s hometown of Asheville, North Carolina). This novel is also the story of a family, which is rooted in an introductory narration of the family tree whose members are racist and anti-Semitic, as is the narrator in all likelihood. In most ways, therefore, *Look Homeward, Angel* is far from queer, especially in terms of its racial politics. Eugene at times even waxes nostalgic on the institution of slavery, and African American characters are nothing more than stereotypes. Where the novel becomes a bit more interesting is in its description of the construction of white masculinity, which relies on a simultaneous abjection of black bodies and a seemingly contradictory objectification of black women’s bodies as available sexual objects (in contrast with the defense of the purity of white femininity). So we can see that the novel’s gender politics, especially as they relate to race, are disturbing as well. But the novel does interestingly describe coming to masculinity not as a natural occurrence but as a social prescription enforced through violence. And this is the dominant role that Eugene has more trouble playing.
Of the novel’s characters, none is more ghostly than its protagonist Eugene. After he has taken on a paper route in the African American section of town, the novel describes his having to wake up at 3:30 each morning:

Waken, ghost-eared boy, but into darkness. Waken, phantom, O into us. Try, try, O try the way. Open the wall of light. Ghost, ghost, who is the ghost? O lost. Ghost, ghost, who is the ghost? O whisper-tongued laughter. Eugene! Eugene! Here, O here, Eugene. Here, Eugene. The way is here, Eugene. Have you forgotten? . . . O lost, and by the wind grieved, ghost, come back again. (244–45)

Eugene is characterized as ghostly here perhaps because of his early morning drogginess, which somehow diminishes his presence among the living. However, given that *O Lost* was the original title of *Look Homeward, Angel*, this passage can be read as more central to Eugene’s characterization in general. Furthermore, the last sentence of this passage replicates word for word the last sentence of the prefatory paragraph (1), which by its very position calls the novel into existence. In other words, the novel itself characterizes narrative production as conjuring up ghosts.

In addition to being like a ghost, Eugene is also haunted. In the novel’s final chapter, he has a conversation with his dead brother, who denies being a ghost:

“Don’t you remember? I tell you, you are dead, Ben.”
“Fool,” said Ben fiercely. “I am not dead.”
There was silence.
“Then,” said Eugene very slowly, “which of us is the ghost, I wonder?” (516)

Yet Eugene, here, is less disturbed by this haunting than reminded of his own ghostlike quality. Indeed, Eugene is more likely to conjure up ghosts than attempt to conjure them away. At his brother Grover’s deathbed after the St. Louis world’s fair, Eugene has the following reaction: “[L]ike one who has been mad, and suddenly recovers reason, he remembered that forgotten face he had not seen in weeks, that strange bright loneliness that would not return. O lost, and by the wind grieved, ghost, come back again” (47). Like the novel itself, therefore, Eugene is a conjurer of ghosts, a ghost whisperer. Eugene, however, is not the center of every haunting staged by the novel; his father, Oliver Gant, has his own relation
with ghosts: “The eyes of the gaunt spectre darkened again, as they had in his youth” (5). And it is through Eugene’s father that the novel’s ghosts first haunt the family tree. The family history that serves as the preface to Eugene’s story recounts the story of his paternal forebears’ migrations from Britain. Like the patronymic Efird, Gant has been modified from its original—Gaunt—as part of the Americanization of the family. In the above quotation, however, the abandoned name of the father returns in adjectival form, modifying the word specter and returning as a ghost of the abandoned patronymic to haunt the family tree.

**Quare Wolfe**

Although the genealogical narrative that serves as the introduction to Wolfe’s novel traces a conventional family tree, Eugene Gant stands out as the most out-of-place person in the patrilineage. In contrast to the ghosts in the Efird family tree, however, it is Eugene’s matronymic that comes back to haunt him. His sister taunts, “You little freak. You nasty little freak. You don’t even know who you are—you little bastard. You’re not a Gant. Any one can see that. You haven’t a drop of papa’s blood in you. Queer one! Queer one! You’re Greeley Pentland all over again” (198).\(^4\) (Greeley Pentland was his mother’s youngest brother.) Of course queer is used here in a very different way from more contemporary uses, as the novel itself indicates in an explicit definition: “His family felt obscurely that he was an eccentric—‘queer,’ they called it—and of an impractical or ‘literary’ turn” (501). (As a literary critic, I have always felt a special affinity with this particular characterization of the literary as queer!) To emphasize this specificity of Wolfe’s use of the word queer and to distinguish this usage from its more contemporary meanings, I would suggest that it be pronounced as my parents would pronounce it: quare. In their usage, too, quare means “eccentric,” or alternatively, “set in one’s ways.” Obviously there is an etymological link with the standard English word queer, but the two are not the same, especially in a post-ACT-UP! understanding of the word queer. (ACT-UP!, the AIDS Coalition to Unleash Power, was a militant AIDS activist group founded in the late 1980s.) Quare and queer are such different concepts for my parents that my father once thought he was teaching my queer lover (at their first meeting) something he might not otherwise know (as well as offering him some practical advice for living with someone...
as difficult as I) when he described me as also being *quare*. (Hopefully my lover had figured out that I was queer!) “He’s so damn quare, sometimes you can’t even talk to him,” said my father, for whom *quare* means “ornery” in this context.

In ““Quare’ Studies, or (Almost) Everything I Know about Queer Studies I Learned from my Grandmother,” E. Patrick Johnson describes the very same word, though as part of a uniquely African American vernacular (in spite of his mention of an Irish precedent). His own favorite memory of his North Carolina grandmother’s use of the term *quare* is her expression “That sho’ll is a ‘quare’ chile” (126), and he introduces the term as a response to the concerns of many African American critics who have rejected the term *queer* because of its predominantly white deployments. While sharing such concerns, Johnson seeks to recuperate the term in a model of queer studies that would situate sexual identities in relation to other categories such as race. To counter *queer*’s whitening tendencies, Johnson seeks “to *quare* queer—to throw shade on its meaning in the spirit of extending its service to ‘blackness’” (Johnson and Henderson 7). In Johnson’s vision, in short, a *quare* queer studies would also be antiracist.

Important in Johnson’s strategy is a sometimes implicit, sometimes explicit connection between *queer* in the contemporary sense and the older *quare*. Such a connection might explain why southern lesbian feminists (or at least southern lesbians with lesbian feminist roots) might differ from their northern counterparts in embracing the term *queer*. Mab Segrest, for example, writes:

One of the big secrets of Southern humor is eccentricity. If the tragic, grotesque tradition in the South peoples itself with freaks—outcasts punished because they act out the “abnormalcy” of everyone—another tradition coexists here. Southerners have a high tolerance of and appreciation for eccentricity, a knowledge in our heart of hearts that everyone is a little strange. It is from this playful, private sense of strangeness that people maintain sanity and protect one another from the life-destroying institutions and norms to which they give lip service. The eccentric knows the great comic truth: that all humans are peculiarly themselves and deserve the freedom to discover their own forms . . . I am coming to realize how much I am—always have been—queer-identified. Queerness is now becoming a high moral and aesthetic value in my system. (*My Mama’s Dead Squirrel* 66)
In this passage, what my parents would call *quare* merges with the post-ACT-UP! *queer* in seemingly seamless ways.

Likewise, although at first glance Wolfe seems to restrict his usage of the word *queer* to the meanings of “odd” or “eccentric,” other passages in *Look Homeward, Angel* suggest that *quare* and *queer* may not be as distant as my father’s use of the words would lead one to believe. In fact at times Eugene’s “quareness” comes dangerously close to threatening his heterosexual masculinity. In a passage prior to the one quoted above, Eugene’s sister Helen taunts him in a similar way:

> You little freak—wandering around with your queer dopey face. Your’re a regular little Pentland—you funny little freak, you. Everybody’s laughing at you. Don’t you know that? Don’t you? We’re going to dress you up as a girl, and let you go around like that. You haven’t got a drop of Gant blood in you—papa’s practically said as much—you’re Greeley all over again; you’re queer. Pentland queerness sticking out all over you. (117)

Quareness here is also associated with cross-dressing, so the passage suggests that, in addition to being eccentric, quares might be less than manly. Perhaps this is one reason why it so bothers Eugene to be called queer, more so than simply being called eccentric would seem likely to bother him: “Further, it annoyed and wounded him to be considered ‘queer’” (492). In short, Eugene’s quareness (and, I would argue, his queerness) comes from a “queer” genealogy, one that almost erases his being stamped with the Name-of-the-Father.

In other words, quareness haunts both the patrilineal family tree and masculinity, and thus it starts to look rather queer, especially when one considers the passage in which Eugene expresses a hint of erotic attraction to male bodies:

> He went to the movies only to examine the teeth and muscles of the hero; he pored over the toothpaste and collar advertisements in the magazines; he went to the shower-rooms at the gymnasium and stared at the straight toes of the young men, thinking with desperate sick pain of his own bunched and crooked ones. He stood naked before a mirror, looking at his long *gaunt* body, smooth and white save for the crooked toes and the terrible spot on his neck—lean, but moulded with delicate and powerful symmetry. (489; emphasis added)
And again we see the abandoned name-of-the-father return in this passage describing a homoerotic gaze.

**Southern “Quare”**

The importance of this connection between *quare* and *queer*, I would argue, extends far beyond Wolfe’s novel to queer southern studies more generally. A lot of work in queer southern history has challenged the commonplaces in what one might describe as the master narratives of US lesbian and gay history. In *Men Like That: A Southern Queer History*, about gay life in rural Mississippi, John Howard emphasizes what he calls the three *R*s—race, religion, and the rural—to describe the specificity of southern queerness. The third *R* is perhaps the most crucial to challenging historical master narratives. His description of queer lives in the rural South is important because it challenges the essential link between the development of gay communities and urbanization that one sees in many lesbian and gay histories. As a few commentators have pointed out, much of lesbian and gay history is structured like a coming-out narrative. Coming out, as many understand it, would mean moving to a northern city. Queer southern histories, however, challenge this model of lesbian and gay identity.

In “Queering the South: Constructions of Southern/Queer Identity,” Donna Jo Smith describes a paradox in relation to what the term *Queer South* conjures up for most non-Southern Americans: “One myth that is particularly southern *and* queer reflects the notion that it’s harder to be queer in the South than in the rest of the nation. Southern and non-southern queers alike have internalized this myth to the degree that it has had a significant effect on southern queer experiences” (381). Smith also writes:

For some, the notion of a “southern queer” is an oxymoron, conjuring up images of a drag queen with a pickup truck and gun rack or of a dyke with big hair and Birkenstocks. For others, the term *southern queer* is redundant: Since the South is already an aberration, what is a southern queer but deviance multiplied? In other words, did Truman Capote really need to tell the world that he was a pervert? After all, he was from south Alabama. (370)

Furthermore, Smith describes why it is important to resist these preconceived notions: “America has long projected its ‘Queer Other’ onto the
South. And in the national cultural imaginary, definitions of the southern are regularly utilized to maintain myths of American innocence. We should question this North/South binary opposition, because it maintains structures of power that oppress all historically marginalized groups” (378–79). In other words, “Queering the South” has implications that go beyond the borders of the South (if one can speak of the South as having borders). “Queering the South” not only challenges what it means to be southern, but it also challenges what we think it means to be queer in the South, as well as in the United States as a whole. It is not only that queerness makes the South more queer, but we might also think about how the South makes queerness more queer. Furthermore, Smith articulates an antiracist politics of queering the South by “dynamiting the rails,” to use Patricia Yaeger’s term (34), as well as by unmasking ways in which northern racism hides behind representations of an essentially racist South.

*Grimsley’s Queer Ghosts*

Although Wolfe’s novel recalls Eugene’s haunted family tree, as well as his rather *quare* position within it, Grimsley’s ghosts are more explicitly queer. As the four boys set off on the aforementioned camping trip, the novel explains, “The country thereabouts is haunted with memories of the courtship between the two boys” (110). Indeed, Nathan and Roy first make out in an old cemetery, where members of the Kennicutt family, former plantation owners, are buried. At one point, Roy also informs Nathan that the Kennicuts were “kin to [his] great-grandaddy” (27). Their making out among the remains of ancestors, therefore, queers the family tree in the more contemporary sense. In addition, during the camping trip the boys entertain each other with ghost stories. Roy “tells the story of the Devil’s Stamping Ground, a place in the woods where the Devil comes to dance, you can see his hoofprints baked into the ground, and if you sleep too close to the circle, you’re never seen again” (116). I, too, read of this story as a boy in books like Nancy Roberts’s *An Illustrated Guide to Ghosts and Mysterious Occurrences in the Old North State*, which contains photos and a description of the “actual” Devil’s Tramping Ground. Within Grimsley’s novel, as within its plot, ghosts often appear as always already citations of a previous ghost story, conjured up through narrative production in much the same way that Wolfe calls his characters to
life from the dead pages of the book. In Grimsley as in Wolfe, therefore, ghosts appear primarily as characters in narrative.

The haunted plantation house Roy and Nathan visit is likewise not merely a site but also a story that precedes the visit, a story also related secondhand by Roy:

My Uncle Heben says it was in a book about North Carolina ghosts. There was a picture of this house. The last full-blood Kennicutt who lived here got killed by one of his slaves, and they cut his head off. So he still walks around the place at night looking for his head.” . . . But even so, the boys accept the facts as Roy presents them, that he has an Uncle Heben who once saw a picture of this house. That a headless ghost is said to roam the grounds, in a story famous enough to have been published in a book. They will sleep tonight in sight of a haunted place. (136–37)

Although the novel does not explicitly say so, one might infer that the master of the haunted plantation fell victim to a sort of slave revolt. The master’s ghost, then, returns to remind the living of this violence, and this haunted house, situated in the haunted landscape of a haunted novel, is a site where the past is conjured up as a ghostly presence. The ghost of the master decapitated by his slaves returns to remind the living of this violence, and the resulting haunting would be the memory of resistance to slavery kept alive. Ghosts thus serve as manifestations of history creeping into the present, histories of oppression and resistance.

On this former plantation, however, ghosts represent the haunting of more than dead individuals. Once inside the abandoned house, the boys see a ghost that produces additional meaning for Nathan:

A figure in the door. A vaguer shadow. Someone stands there with his legs spread apart. He is sturdy, square-shouldered, like Nathan’s Dad when he was younger, like Preacher John Roberts. Like Roy. He is familiar. He makes no sound. He is another blankness of the house, a ghost who could be anyone, living or dead. . . .

And Dad’s hand on Nathan’s thigh.

The unsteady voice in Nathan’s ear whispering. Do you remember what we did when you were a little boy?

While overhead the voice of the preacher sails like a wind of itself, Do you remember what the Lord said unto Abraham? (161–2).
It is thus through this haunting that the reader discovers that the abuse Nathan has suffered at his father’s hands was sexual. Previous vague allusions then become clearer: “Sometimes the look in Roy’s eyes reminds Nathan of his own father, of the look in his own father’s eyes, but Nathan prefers not to think about that and shuts off the thought before it begins” (4). Or “An image of his father gives the fear. The image comes to Nathan from dangerous places, from territories of memory that Nathan rarely visits” (11).

After the ghost in the plantation house disperses the four boys, Roy and Nathan take advantage of being alone to have sex. When they are caught in the act by Randy and Burke, Roy runs away, and Nathan is raped and presumably killed by Burke (at first also thought to be a ghost). The ghost of the plantation house is also what connects Roy and Nathan’s queer love to southern history. This haunting brings into association histories of paternal violence and racial terror as the present backdrop for homophobic violence. The haunted house, therefore, is home to a variety of ghosts, ghosts representing not only the history of slavery and racial terror but also sexual secrets and histories of family violence. This haunted site is thus the fertile ground for a very queer love that seems inseparable from the very violence that would prohibit it. As much as his rape by Burke, Nathan’s love for Roy is haunted by memories of his father’s abuse.

**Hauntologies Familial and Collective**

In *Dream Boy*, therefore, the political implications of two sorts of ghosts, the haunting associated with sexual secrets and that which represents the return of histories of racist violence, come into conflict, if, that is, one supports, as I do, solidarity between antihomophobic and antiracist criticism. While one might wish to conjure up the ghosts of repressed and marginalized sexualities, conjuring up the racializing violence from the past might have far less positive implications. How might one reconcile such contradictions? Is reconciliation the most productive way to negotiate them? How might ghosts in the family tree come to be seen as having a relation to those of more collective histories? The answers to these questions, I would suggest, might be worked out by turning to the work of the French-language, Hungarian-born psychoanalysts Nicolas Abraham and Maria Torok, who in *L’écorce et le noyau* (1978) [*The Shell and the Kernel: Renewals of Psychoanalysis*], describe the phantom as a man-
ifestation of repressed family secrets (skeletons in the closet, we might say) and provide a means of expanding this relation between hauntology and genealogy.⁷

Abraham, often in collaboration with Torok, devoted much of his life’s work to elaborating the interrelated theories of introjection, dual unity, the crypt, and the phantom, the concept of the crypt preceding that of the phantom in their work.⁸ The most important distinction between the crypt and the phantom is that the crypt operates at the level of the individual subject whereas the phantom is not only intersubjective but also intergenerational: “The phantom which returns to haunt bears witness to the existence of the dead buried within the other” (Shell 175).

The most practical elaboration of the crypt can be found in The Wolf Man’s Magic Word: A Cryptonomie (1976), Abraham and Torok’s reading of Freud’s History of an Infantile Neurosis, the famous case of the Wolf Man. Here they define the crypt in the following way:

The crypt works in the heart of the Ego as a special kind of Unconscious: Each fragment is conscious of itself and unconscious of the realm “outside the crypt.” At once conscious and unconscious: This provides the explanation for the peculiarity of the intrasymbolic and not cosymbolic relationships of the word. (80)

Or, in The Shell and the Kernel:

The crypt . . . is neither the dynamic unconscious nor the ego of introjections. Rather, it is an enclave between the two, a kind of artificial unconscious, lodged in the very midst of the ego. Such a tomb has the effect of sealing up the semipermeable walls of the dynamic unconscious. (159)

The existence of a crypt is most often signaled by a particular work or cryptonym that gives a peek at what is buried in the crypt. Put differently, the crypt represents a fake return of the repressed, a “false Unconscious: the crypt in the Ego—a false ‘return of the repressed,’ the action in the Ego of hidden thoughts from the crypt” (Wolf Man lxxi).

The encrypted secret par excellence is sexual and involves the “cryptonymic displacement of a taboo word” (Wolf Man 26), and it is this aspect of Abraham and Torok’s theorization of the crypt that has made it attractive to literary critics who have used Abraham and Torok’s meticulous analysis of word associations in their reading of Freud as a model appli-
cable to other literary texts (see Rand’s introduction and commentary in Abraham and Torok, *Shell; Rashkin*). It is also the crypt that, transmitted to the child by the mother as a result of the period of dual unity during which the child shares the mother’s unconscious, results in the phantom. According to Abraham, therefore, not only does the phantom inhabit the family tree but the family tree also provides the structure that allows for the phantom’s production. Or, as Nicholas T. Rand writes in his introduction to the English translation of the essay “Notes on the Phantom,” “In Abraham’s view, the dead do not return, but their lives’ unfinished business is unconsciously handed down to their descendants” (Abraham and Torok, *Shell* 167). In this view, ghosts are the psychological manifestations of family secrets—hidden for generations—that return to haunt the present.

Although Abraham’s collaborator Maria Torok has argued that “the diverse manifestations of the phantom, which we call *haunting*, are not directly related to instinctual life and are not to be confused with the return of the repressed” (*Shell* 181), we could say that ghosts represent the return of what *others* (namely, our ancestors) have repressed. So phantoms do return, like the repressed, thereby serving as a link between past and present in a familial context and resisting the erasure of past secrets from memory. As in the case with the crypt, the secret of illicit sexual relations (and their products) produce the most exemplary phantoms, Abraham and Torok suggest, so how might their sexual phantoms be used to theorize further the histories of violence that leave traces in so many of the ghost stories from my childhood? Illicit sexual relations, after all, are not necessarily more likely to be violent than licit ones.

On the one hand, one must be careful not to equate the phantom à la Abraham and Torok with the ghosts I have described in North Carolina culture: “[W]hat haunts are not the dead, but the gaps left within us by the secrets of others” (*Shell* 171). On the other, Abraham and Torok do occasionally associate metaphorical ghosts with more literal ones (if one can speak of literal ghosts): “The phantoms of folklore merely objectify a metaphor active in the unconscious: the burial of an unspeakable fact *within the love-object*” (172). And the literal (and literary) ghost that has most interested them is that of Hamlet’s father in the same Shakespeare play that serves as one of Derrida’s main pre-texts in *Specters of Marx*. Abraham even wrote a sixth act as an addition to Shakespeare’s *Hamlet*, which (supposedly) lays Hamlet’s ghost to rest by reestablishing the rule of the royal family in the person of Hamlet Jr. Yet it is in this sixth act that the role of the psychoanalyst with regard to phantoms becomes clear. In
Hamlet ghosts threaten the social order, and it is the duty of the psychoanalyst to restore that order by laying them to rest. By turning Hamlet into a detective story whose crime can be solved through cryptonymic analysis, Abraham reveals the secret that the ghost of Hamlet Sr., as a phantom in the psychoanalytic sense, appears (as in making an appearance) in order to hide: “[T]he duel alluded to by Horatio (1.1) between King Hamlet and King Forinbras was rigged and . . . King Hamlet, realizing that Gertrude (not yet his wife) was in love with Fortinbras, killed the Norwegian ruler with a poisoned sword” (Rashkin 24). The role of the psychoanalyst is to silence ghosts; Abraham and Torok are thus antphantom in the sense that they seek to make phantoms disappear, to conjure them away.

One characteristic that unites Abraham and Torok with many other theorizations of haunting is a certain tendency toward metaphorization. Abraham and Torok’s ghosts serve as metaphors of a prior repression, the traces of family secrets repressed by previous generations. With the exception of Morrison’s Beloved, literal ghosts rarely haunt the pages of Chambers, Peterson, Gordon, or Abraham and Torok. But even Morrison’s ghosts are products of literary invention. Can theorizations of haunting account for ghosts of a less metaphorical or less allegorical variety? Is it even possible to speak of a ghost whose haunting could be only literal? Abraham is interested in one more literal, though still literary, ghost, but he can only lay Hamlet Sr.’s ghost to rest by raising another—that of Hamlet Jr.—kicking and screaming, if you will, from the dead. Although Hamlet rises from the dead in Abraham’s version, he still thinks he is dead. If it is the work of ghosts to keep secrets—indeed to lie—in order to trick the living into turning them away from the path toward truth, toward resolution, toward laying these very ghosts to rest, how are we to know that the risen Hamlet is not yet another ghost conjured up to keep other secrets? How are we to know that Hamlet is not more than a mere representation in Gertrude’s eyes of her desire for Fortinbras Sr.? How do we know that the ghost of Hamlet Sr. is not reproduced as the ghost of Hamlet Jr.? How do we know that he is not Fortinbras’s bastard son? Ghosts that lie, in other words, are perhaps the only ones telling the truth.

The ghosts of this violence return until other readers produce political interpretations worthy of their hauntings, until they unlock their crypts, to use Abraham and Torok’s analogy for the goal of a particular model of psychoanalysis. In The Writing of History, Michel de Certeau describes history writing as necessarily involving the kind of silencing
implied in such ghost stories: “Writing speaks of the past only in order to inter it. Writing is a tomb in the double sense of the word in that, in the very same text, it both honors and eliminates” (101). History is, to use another of Abraham and Torok’s term, cryptophorous, and interment is a means of silencing. History, like the ego, then, has its crypts, wherein the secrets it cannot avow reside. At the political level, therefore, ghosts might be read as manifestations of repressed histories of violence and exploitation. As such, silencing such ghosts would only be to participate in the very violence that gave rise to them. This chapter thus attempts to reverse the metaphor that haunts Abraham and Torok. Whereas they think ghosts can be laid to rest, we can further theorize the intersection between Abraham and Torok, on the one hand, and de Certeau, on the other, by underscoring the importance of conjuring up ghosts, not conjuring them away. In other words, ghosts, even as defined psychologically by Abraham and Torok, can represent political secrets just as well as familial ones; in this sense, ghosts in the family tree are allegories of history, of what history has repressed. They are the repressed political secrets transmitted from generation to generation.

Abraham and Torok’s talking cure of conjuring away phantoms is therefore ripe for deconstruction or, we might say, haunts deconstruction as much as the ghosts of Hamlet and Marx. For more connects Derrida to Abraham and Torok than their mutual interest in the ghosts of Hamlet. In addition to his introduction to their work, his analysis of Genet in Glas involves a kind of cryptonymic reading, which they develop in that book. With Derrida, then, we can read Abraham and Torok at yet another allegorical level; in fact, having queered Derrida in chapter 4, we can use him to queer Abraham and Torok in turn. When the ghost that represents the return of a repressed family secret is read not just as the particular secret of an individual family but also as the secret of the Family, those lurking within structures such as those of kinship and the family tree, haunting becomes more than a psychological phenomenon; it becomes an ideological one whose narrative form is that of allegory. Abraham and Torok’s ghosts might thus be thought of not as an abnormality within a particular family but as products of a kinship structure that relies on the very abnormality it represses. One might even discern the seeds of this understanding of Family that queering Abraham and Torok gives access to in Derrida himself; it is, after all, the ghost of the father that haunts Derrida, the ghost of Hamlet’s father and the spirit of Marx as a sort of forefather for deconstruction.
Queering the Ghosts of Racial Terror

When, in *Dream Boy*, Nathan’s father shows signs of falling back into a pattern of abuse, Nathan hides in the cemetery, studies, and even sleeps there. It is easy to see how the ghostly memories of gay desire and love might constitute a queer haunting, even the southern comfort zone of a ghostly cemetery that protects Nathan from his father’s violence. But the ghosts of slavery, paternal abuse, racial terror, how might they figure into a queer relation to the past? The answer to this question requires a brief and final detour back to Wolfe to understand the racial politics behind the construction of white heterosexual masculinity in opposition to its queer and racialized Others. By reading Grimsley and Wolfe against each other, then, we can also understand how Wolfe’s ghosts are also conjurations of racial violence in a further queering of his family tree. In such a reading, the ghosts of the novel might thus be said to represent the others of white masculinity, ghosts that constantly haunt it, thereby recalling histories of racial terror and gendered violence.

The critical hubris I wish to embrace in such a return is indicated in/by the title of Mab Segrest’s *Memoir of a Race Traitor*. Like me, Segrest is white and southern; unlike me, she comes from a southern family with a pedigree, that is, with a “distinguished” and relatively complete genealogy. Yet this family tree has its own ghosts. A large part of her racial treason consists of bringing out of the closets of the past the history of her ancestors’ participation in acts of racist violence. For example, she describes how her great-grandfather William Cobb “fought Osceola in Florida in the Seminole Wars” (101) and therefore participated in the Euro-American genocide of Native Americans, literal and cultural. Her grandfather “shot and killed Sammy Younge, a Black student activist” (2). She offers this second bit of her family’s history of racist violence in the opening essay of the collection of her autobiographical essays on her experiences of anti-Klan organizing in North Carolina as a white southern lesbian: “Osceola’s Head.” Osceola, Segrest explains “became a leader in a guerrilla insurgency of Seminoles and escaped slaves” (4) who fought Andrew Jackson’s troops in Florida until his capture. In the essay entitled “Robeson, Bloody Robeson” (103–32), Segrest links her great-grandfather’s participation in the repression of Native American resistance to European colonization and genocide with the history of the Lumbee Indians in the North Carolina county named in the title. This essay details a long history of officially tolerated, if not sanctioned,
violence against the Lumbee, as well as their rich and equally long history of resistance to this violence (including armed opposition to the Confederate army).

The title *Memoir of a Race Traitor* refers to reactions to her antiracist activism on the part of not only Klansmen but also some of her own kinfolk: “My Klan folk had me spotted: a race traitor. Even in this beginning, the ‘I’ of memoir betrays, when this story belongs to many people, many of whom in large ways or small do not agree about the facts I assemble, much less their interpretation” (4). And one of the key tropes that characterize her relation to her own whiteness is that of haunting. Indeed, ghosts are a metaphor she uses on several occasions. In spite of conjuring up ghosts of a violent past in order to conjure away such racism from her own conception of white lesbian feminist identity, haunting also plays a more positive role in asserting herself as a race traitor: “I had become a woman haunted by the dead. / I was haunted by people like Julian Pierce” (127). But haunting is a metaphor for the memory of not just the targets of racist violence but also its perpetrators, and haunting even refers to her memories of her own mother, who had told Segrest stories that she came to consider potentially offensive to Segrest.

I would suggest that all family histories might be considered similarly haunted, that all roots are likewise haunted. Given that the US South is still haunted by its history of slavery, how does a southern white gay man reclaim origins in a way that does not glorify this history of racial violence? In *Slaves in the Family*, Edward Ball conjures up the ghosts of his family’s history of owning slaves by debunking its oral tradition of remembering forebears as benign masters. In so doing, Ball uncovers not only histories of violence but also the interracial couplings that produced the distant African American cousins he discovered during the course of returning to his prominent Charleston roots. By bringing skeletons out of his family’s closet, Ball has “blackened” his family tree of sorts, which earned him the anger of a large portion of (the white side of) his family. In contrast, many of Ball’s African American relatives welcomed his efforts; indeed, as Haley claimed to have done, Ball was able to establish some of their family trees all the way back to an African ancestor pinpointed in a specific African region. These genealogical findings would have been inconceivable without the research of a large number of his African American cousins, research that had been, in large part, inspired by Haley. No matter how many ghosts one finds in the family tree, conjuring them up does not repair the economic disparities that
persist more than 145 years after abolition. But can they debunk the myths that have enabled these disparities to continue?

I find it hard to recognize myself in Ball’s portrait of the South. In spite of his efforts to reveal the injustices of slavery, he is not immune to romanticizing his family’s antebellum past, and his ability to rattle off the genealogies of white family members makes his writing more akin to European aristocratic genealogies than the history of my maternal grandmother and her Efird sisters. As I was growing up, the Efird dinner (our expression for the annual family reunion—my only family reunion—which occurred just before Christmas) was not only the occasion for eating the best southern food I have ever had; it also exemplified for me the meaning of family. My paternal grandparents (whom we only visited once a year just after Christmas, even though they lived only two and a half hours away across the South Carolina border) seemed distant in comparison. Indeed, my mother always punctuated the end of these visits with a familiar refrain: “I sure am glad we didn’t raise our young’uns in South Carolina.” Even the relatives on my maternal grandfather’s side of the family (from whose lands came the small plot on which my parents built our first house) seemed like aliens for the most part. Home was the smell of southern cooking and the sound of my grandmother and her sisters chatting while their brothers remained silent. So strong were the kinship links that connected woman to woman among the Efirds that my grandmother’s sisters-in-law were much more a part of the family than her brothers, even after these brothers died. Indeed, even after her sisters-in-law remarried, their new husbands were brought into the family. Though the most official version of the Efird family history traces its genealogy along patrilineal lines, when I was growing up, the Efird name was only significant as far as I could trace it back along matrilineal ones.

Remembering the Efird family tree as Ball remembers his constitutes for me a crucial component of queering the South, which should also bring to the fore a specific kind of glitch in African American family trees: the denial of a patronymic to slaves in the United States and the subsequent selection of one after abolition. Ball also counters the myth that most ex-slaves took their masters’ names, at least in his family’s context: “The Balls . . . thought the appearance of black families called Ball would diminish their status. An equal worry seemed to be that masters feared that darker families named Ball might be taken as sons and daughters of whites” (352). The miscegenation white Balls fear others would suspect had already been occurring for centuries, even if it had
been concealed in a specific kind of closet central to southern constructions of race and sexuality. The Ball name, carefully preserved through centuries of genealogies, thus turns out to be just as haunted as the Efird name, though in its own way. Examining various family trees (including Haley’s) in comparison therefore opens the doors of a variety of closets. Ball uncovers the story of a distant African American cousin who shot a man whose wife she was in love with (293). This story, carefully preserved by black oral tradition, comes into the white Ball family tree to queer it at the same time as it blackens it. How many other queer ghosts lurk within his family tree, ghosts whose stories he failed to tell? In a way, then, the fears that pursue Ball’s white family members are literalized by the ghosts that haunt Wolfe’s racist masculinities.

Season 3, episode 12, of the American version of Who Do You Think You Are? (2012) features Paula Deen and her teary reaction to the discovery that one of her ancestors was a pro-secessionist politician who owned thirty-five slaves. Situated in relation to the controversy of her use of the N-word, which resulted the following year in canceled shows and endorsements, this episode drives home the point that the notion of roots continues to be of contemporary concern and relevance. Yet it also serves to caution that uncovering ghosts of racial oppression in one’s own (white) family tree does not necessarily lead to antiracist models of white identity. Indeed, read alongside Oprah’s tears, discussed in the introduction to this volume, Deen’s seem to repeat tragedy as a farce. Nonetheless, although the Efird family tree (especially my connection to it) and Eugene Gant’s queer genealogy seem a far stretch from Paula Deen’s and Edward Ball’s family histories, I would argue that much can be gained by comparing them. Like Segrest’s family tree, my own hosts its fair share of racial terrorists. Oscar Agburn Efird fondly speaks of the plantation of his grandfather and of the “tragedy” of its occupation by Union soldiers (vii). In the following passage, he even justifies certain past actions of the Klan:

During reconstruction days, Reverend Adam Efird was a prominent advisor of the Ku Klux Klan in his community. Bruner Efird, son of Reverend Adam Efird, told his son, the author, a number of times how he, a mere boy five or six years of age, remembered that frequently, about twilight, groups of men wearing white sheets would ride to the grove in front of the house. Adam would go out and confer with them for some time and return to the home. Let neither his descendants, nor his relatives, nor his friends be dismayed at these incidents. At
that time, the Ku Klux Klan had among its leaders and members the best citizens of the white South, and was entirely different from the Ku Klux Klan of the present day. During Reconstruction Days in the South, law enforcement had broken down completely. In those days the Klan was necessary to protect the virtue of the white women from the recently freed slaves, and to protect the community and its property from the scalawags and carpetbaggers. (132)

The history of slavery thus haunts the present of Efirds whose ancestors did not own slaves in part because slavery was surely a factor in the accumulation of wealth that allowed Efirds of certain branches to profit from the labor of their distant relatives, as I discuss later in this chapter.

Wolfe’s Queer Ghosts

But first, I would like to return to Wolfe one final time because, in a way, the fears that pursue Ball’s white family members are literalized by the ghosts that haunt Wolfe’s racist masculinities. Of all the parts of Look Homeward, Angel, none reveals the gendered politics of race and the racial politics of gender and sexuality more than chapter 22, which describes Eugene’s experience as a newspaper delivery boy: “He was given the Niggertown route—the hardest and least profitable of all” (244). Before he even begins this route, he has heard talk from other paper boys about the difficulty of collecting money owed on subscriptions along it. For example, “Number 3 . . . had the Niggertown route” (138). Instead of collecting his money, however, Number 3 “takes it out in Poon-Tang. . . . A week’s subscription free for a dose” (138). At another point, a boy with a grin on his face is accused, “You’ve been on a Poon-Tang Picnic in Niggertown” (145). Although poontang, is not a uniquely southern word, I encountered it far more frequently in the South of my boyhood, in which it was usually uttered in male homosocial settings because it was considered inappropriate in mixed company. This name for female sexual organs just as often refers metonymically to sexual acts committed with them, and although it did not imply a racial specificity in situations in which I heard it as a boy, in Wolfe’s novel it is used almost exclusively in reference to black women in a way that reduces their femininity to sexual organs and acts as defined by white male access to them.

It is in this context that Eugene begins his paper route, work that requires him to rise early each morning. The description of waking so
early (quoted above) is also where the novel connects white talk about black sexuality with the kinds of haunting I have described:

Waken, ghost-eared boy, but into darkness. Waken, phantom, O into us. Try, try, O try the way. Open the wall of light. Ghost, ghost, who is the ghost? O lost. Ghost, ghost, who is the ghost? O whisper-tongued laughter. Eugene! Eugene! Here, O here, Eugene. Here, Eugene. The way is here, Eugene. Have you forgotten? The leaf, the rock, the wall of light. Lift up the rock, Eugene, the leaf, the stone, the unfound door. Return, return. . . . Brother, O brother! They shot down the brink of darkness, gone on the wind like bullets. O lost, and by the wind grieved, ghost, come back again. (244–45)

Even after he has left home for work, the novel describes “the ghostly ring of his own feet” (249). And in the following description of going along this paper route, this ghostly sleepiness is brought back to the question of black sexuality as he moves “past the stabled torpor of black sleepers, past all the illicit loves, the casual and innumerable adulteries of Niggertown” (247). It is not long, however, before interracial sex talk begins to include Eugene in its couplings, real or imagined. Coworker Jennings Ware, for example, offers advice concerning one of Eugene’s new customers, whom the former labels “a High Yaller”: “‘She’s a pretty good old girl,’ he said. ‘You’ve got a right to a few dead-heads. Take it out in trade’” (247).11 The next customer Jennings talks about implicates Eugene as a potential sexual partner even further:

“But, oh man” he said, after a moment. “If you want Jelly Roll you’ve come to the right place. I ain’t kidding you!”

“With—with niggers?” Eugene whispered, moistening his dry lips. Jennings Ware turned his red satirical face on him.

“You don’t see any Society Belles around here do you?” he said.

“Are niggers good?” Eugene asked in a small dry voice.

“Boy!” The word blew out of Jennings Ware’s mouth like an explosion. He was silent for a moment.

“There ain’t nothing better,” he said. (248)

While the other delivery boys treat such matters jokingly, even with pride, Eugene’s reaction is one of abjection. And nowhere is this abjection more violently obvious than in the infamous “Jelly Roll” passage. It concerns Eugene’s customer Ella Corpening, whom the novel describes as “a mulatto of twenty-six years, a handsome woman of Amazonian pro-
portions, with smooth tawny skin” (251). When he goes to collect her subscription fees, she is unable to pay:

“You come roun’ in de mawnin’,” she said hopefully. “I’ll have some-thin’ fo’ yuh, sho. Ise waitin’ fo’ a white gent’man now. He’s goin’ gib me a dollah.” . . .

“What’s—what’s he going to give you a dollar for?” he muttered, barely audible.

“Jelly Roll,” said Ella Corpening.

He moved his lips twice, unable to speak. She got up from her chair. “What yo’ want?” she asked softly. “Jelly Roll?”

“Want to see—to see!” he gasped. (252)

In typical Wolfe fashion, dialogue is transcribed here in a way that exaggerates differences in white and black vernaculars with deviations from the standard marked in a pronounced way in black speech even when almost identical ones in white speech are not. Interestingly, in spite of the exaggerated deviation of black speech from the norm of literary English, it is Eugene who becomes inarticulate here. Nonetheless, once inside her house, he issues his requests:

Far off, he listened to the ghost of his own voice.

“Take off your clothes.”

Her skirt fell in a ring about her feet. She took off her starched waist. In a moment, save for her hose, she stood naked before him. Her breath came quickly, her full tongue licked across her mouth.

“Dance!” he cried. “Dance!” (253)

Whereas the novel says of his pursuit of customers behind in their payments, “He sought these phantoms fruitlessly for weeks” (251), here he is the one who once again becomes ghostly, and this in an unbearable tension between desire and disgust. Furthermore, in spite of her compliance with his request, she does not offer herself up as spectacle before his gaze; rather, she draws him into her embrace to dance with him:

Her powerful yellow hands gripped his slender arms round like bracelets. She shook him to and fro slowly, fastening him tightly against her pelt.

He strained back desperately against the door, drowning in her embrace.

Slowly she released him: without opening her eyes, moaning, she slid back as if he had been a young tree. She sang, in a wailing minor key, with unceasing iteration:

“Jelly Roll! Je-e-e-ly Roll!”—
her voice falling each time to a low moan.

Her face, the broad column of her throat, and her deep-breasted torso were rilled with sweat. He fumbled blindly for the door, lunged across the outer room and, gasping, found his way into the air. (253)

He “drowns” in her embrace, which threatens to subsume him, and he responds to this embrace by pulling himself away violently as if the embrace were not merely physical but rather also threatened to dissolve his whiteness. He responds, in other words, by asserting her racial difference. In contrast with the curiosity he expresses after Jennings first uses the term *Jelly Roll*, faced with the actual possibility of interracial sex, Eugene recoils with revulsion even as Ella continues to taunt him.

“Jelly Roll,” that object of fear and desire, like a “Poon-Tang Picnic,” equates interracial sex with food. In fact, as a boy, I always assumed *poon* was an abbreviation of *pudding*, whose pronunciation (when pronounced with an elided *G* and a glottal stop instead of dental consonants) it resembles quite a bit. Web searches on the term, in fact, reveal that I am not alone in making this assumption. If for Julia Kristeva the experience of abjection involves an attempt on the part of the Self to expel what is actually an intrinsic part of the Self, if, as the expression goes, “you are what you eat,” Eugene runs the risk here of becoming what he abjacts and rejects, what he has almost “eaten” but instead expels from himself. Instead, the novel sublimates the object of his desire as he disseminates the printed word: “He knew all the sorrow of those who carry weight; he knew, morning by morning, the aerial ecstasy of release” (248). In this sexualized description of lightening his “load” of undelivered papers, he becomes “a lord of darkness” (248). Between Jennings’s description of the availability of “Jelly Roll” and his own opportunity to taste it for himself, his sister Helen says, “What’s wrong with him? Is it the Pentland crazy streak coming out?” (250). The near shattering of his white masculinity is thus associated with that queer/quare ghost in his patrilineal family tree, the one of his being “tainted” with a matrilineage that likewise threatens his right to the patronymic.

My point here is not to retrieve these passages (or even the novel as a whole) from accusations of racism. While it might be possible to engage in a debate about whether the novel shares its characters’ rac-
ism, this is likewise not a debate I care to enter. (The slippage between the use of the N-word between dialogue and narration would make even this debate difficult.) Rather, along the lines of what has been called whiteness studies and the critical moves I would associate with critical race theory, I want to suggest that these passages in Wolfe might become fodder for a queer critique of southern white masculinity. Furthermore, the connection between *quare* and *queer* I have suggested is closely connected to the racial queering of white masculinity in Wolfe. This connection becomes more explicit in a passage that describes the aftermath of the guilt brought on by witnessing school buddies bullying a Jewish boy while his desire to conform (not to mention his lack of physical strength) prevented him from objecting:

He never forgot the Jew; he always thought of him with shame. But it was many years before he could understand that the sensitive and feminine person, bound to him by the secret and terrible bonds of his own dishonor, had in him nothing perverse, nothing unnatural, nothing degenerate. He was as much like a woman as a man. That was all. There is no place among the Boy Scouts for the androgyne—it must go to Parnassus. (196)

In counterdistinction to other passages in which characters openly express their anti-Semitism, here Eugene becomes united with the object of his disgust much as he does in the “Jelly Roll” chapter. Only here, it is not just his Protestant whiteness that is questioned but also his masculinity.

*The Ghosts of History*

To allow Wolfe’s queer ghost of racial violence to haunt my own family tree, I return one final time to the oral culture of Stanly County, North Carolina. As part of “rereading” my past through the ghost stories that nourished it, I also read for the first time a ghost story whose cast of characters includes an Efird family. “The Ghost of Jezebel” tells the story of Isaac Efird, a child laborer in a cotton mill who is chased by the ghost of a sheep murdered by his forebears (Morgan, “Ghost”). This varmint (as animal spirits are sometimes called) had killed Ishmael Efird (from an earlier generation) because he had been forced by his brothers to mistreat it as part of their own mistreatment of him. Through a bit of
ingenuity, Isaac’s family foils the varmint by tricking it into mistaking a dummy for Isaac, whose resemblance to Ishmael is what conjured up the ghost once again. When Jezebel butts the dummy into the water, thinking she has killed the one who wronged her, she is appeased and disappears forever.

I happened upon this story as upon a hidden treasure, not so different from the gold protected by ghosts in the stories of pirates who, in order to keep the location of their gold a secret, killed the associate(s) who helped them bury it. Yet I was still haunted by the question of the real. Was this a “real” nuclear family? I looked for it in *The History and Genealogy of the Efird Family*, but, while Old Testament names such as Ishmael and Isaac were quite common among Efirds, there was no Leyland Efird (Isaac’s father in the story) in the family tree. Was the story an authentic product of local oral tradition? Like the other ghost stories discussed here, this one was collected by local journalist and amateur folklorist Fred T. Morgan. He published many of his stories in the county paper when I was a kid. Does the fact that I can remember some of them authenticate their circulation by means of oral transmission? Which comes first, here, the written version or the oral one? Were these even the most important questions to resolve? I came to bracket the question of the real as I learned (following Abraham and Torok) to do in the case of ghosts. Over the course of this project, folks back home have sometimes asked me whether I believe in ghosts, whether I think ghosts “really” exist. One of the advantages of Abraham and Torok’s explanation is that it shifts the question of the real away from the ghost itself toward the ghostly phenomenon in the etymological sense of the work, that is, as an appearance, read apparition. When the more pertinent question becomes “Do folks ‘really’ see ghosts?” I think we have to agree that they do.

Ultimately, I came to realize that the “truth” told by “The Ghost of Jezebel” lies less in the accuracy of its representation of the Efird family tree than in its connection to the historical context in which the branches of this tree have unfolded. Isaac lives on what is locally known as a “mill hill,” a “village” of houses for workers owned by the bosses as part of a system of economic exploitation that ensured obedience by granting bosses the power to evict their workers. My maternal grandmother and her sisters were the first generation (in their branch of the Efird family tree) to leave the farm and work in such textile mills. My mother’s first years were spent in a house on a mill hill known as Wiscassett Hill. At the age of four, she was evicted with my grandparents because, although my
grandmother was still employed by the mill, my grandfather had quit his job to start a business hauling brick and asphalt. Because “the man of the house” had betrayed his employer, the family no longer had the right to live there. The other mill hill in Albemarle, North Carolina, was formerly known as Efird Hill. In fact, the mill where Isaac Efird works in “The Ghost of Jezebel” is located on the property once owned by his great-grandfather, which suggests that his family must live on Efird or Wiscassett Hill as well. The “real” John Solomon Efird, his father Irenus Polycarp Efird, and J. W. Cannon (who founded Cannon Mills) opened Efird Mills, the first in Stanly County, in 1896. “J.S. Efird and J.W. Cannon started Wiscassett Mills in 1898” (Sharpe and Pepper 64; see also Efird 464). Jezebel’s ghost returns to remind the living of the repressed memories of a son mistreated by his brothers, but because of its biblical references in the names of Isaac and Ishmael (as well as their diasporic implications), it also recalls the disinheritance of one son in favor of the other. Jezebel, then, is not just the ghost of a sacrificial sheep; she also tells the story of how one branch of the Efird family tree became part of the local ruling class by living off the labor of its “disinherited” brethren, such as the members of my grandmother’s branch, a disinheritance conspicuously absent from the family history written by Oscar Agburn Efird. Furthermore, Jezebel is not the only ghost that recalls this history of oppression. In “Ghostly Happenings at YMCA? Employees Learn to Accept ‘Strange’ Incidents” (2000), Morgan describes a series of unexplainable incidents occurring after hours at the Stanly County Family YMCA (formerly called the Wiscassett Memorial YMCA): loud crashes, an “errant elevator” (1A) that makes strange trips with no one inside to press the buttons, lights turning themselves on and off, the clothes dryer operating by itself, the turnstile clicking, footsteps, shadows, all without setting off the alarm as any late-night human intruder would. Employees have begun to refer to the author of these incidents as “Freddi, the friendly ghost” (3A). In his effort to explain the ghost story, Morgan relates the robbery and murder of L. W. “Dad” Watkins by John Gray and Carl Sweatte, who “hack[ed] off his head, arms, and legs . . . [and] placed these body parts in a burlap bag. . . . Later, they placed the burlap bag and its grisly contents in the hot furnace of the old Wiscassett School, which stood on the corner exactly where the older part of the Stanly County Family YMCA stands today” (3A). I, however, would propose an alternative explanation. When I was a child, one summer at a day camp sponsored by the YMCA we were given the option of visiting the supposedly haunted upper floors of the YMCA building, which, we were told,
was formerly a funeral parlor. I, of timid nature, opted out, but my pals were treated to a ghostly spectacle, performed no doubt by the camp counselors and/or other YMCA employees. I did tell my grandmother about this event, and when I got to the part about the YMCA being in a building formerly occupied by a funeral parlor, she had a rather strongly adverse reaction: she was a mill worker at Wiscassett when the YMCA was built, a funeral parlor never existed on that site, and their “donations” to the YMCA were deducted from their salaries without their consent. My own “ghost story” obviously conjured up the resentment still harbored thirty years after this extortion.

My reading of Freddi and Jezebel (like that of Booger Hollar) thus adds a layer of political meaning to Abraham and Torok’s theorization of the phantom. It takes us from family past to economic history, indeed makes family genealogy an allegory of history tout court. Though tentative as an explanation, Morgan’s narration of the murder of “Dad” Watkins is important because a ghost story that does not offer a cause or root of the symptom constituted by the ghostly phenomenon is somehow incomplete. The traditional ghost story thus explicitly contains its own interpretation at a certain level (the root of the haunting, the individual act of violence that returns with each apparition). Yet this explicitly articulated interpretation can itself be read as an allegory for more collective acts of violence. Sometimes this allegorical level is suggested literally in the ghost story. When Jezebel reappears, collective rumors point a finger at the company as bearing a certain responsibility: “Great alarm stirred the people. Couldn’t the mill company do something? Couldn’t the law do something?” (67). The use of free indirect discourse here obfuscates authorship of the assignation of blame in a stylistic parallel of the very keeping of secrets Abraham and Torok designate as the cause of ghostly phenomena. Furthermore, Jezebel is the name once used to refer to the archetypal promiscuous slave woman (see White 27–61). In addition to telling the story of class oppression within a single family tree, therefore, “The Ghost of Jezebel” also alludes to racial injustice and the history of slavery.

In fact, one might argue that “The Ghost of Jezebel” actually links the economic exploitation of the cotton mills to that of the institution of slavery. A familiar story about the rise of the New South (like a phoenix from its ashes), the story that emerges, for example, from a visit to the Museum of the New South in Charlotte, North Carolina, tells how, on the foundation of an agricultural society based on cotton raised and gathered by slaves, the Piedmont region of the middle South was indus-
trialized through the development of the textile industry, which then provided the capital with which Charlotte became the banking center that it is today. Such museums frequently also promulgate another myth of the post-civil-rights-movement South, that it has risen above a dark past marred by racial violence to retain a distinctive regional identity not founded on nostalgia for antebellum institutions. The ghost of Jezebel, then, returns to remind us that there is more of a connection between Adam Efird (Oscar Agburn Efird’s plantation- and slave-owning, Klan-supporting grandfather—personification of the Old South) and John Solomon Efird (the New South capitalist) than these myths would have us believe. In fact, John Solomon’s father, Irenus Polycarp, owned a plantation as well, and the grist mill and cotton gin (which might be understood as the origin of his foray into textile manufacturing) were complementary ventures to that of running a plantation (Efird 464). In fact, this plantation was only half a mile from the place where Booger Hollar Road becomes Efird Road.

As part of my rereading of ghost stories from my childhood, rediscovering once familiar stories, and discovering new ones for the first time, I found one even closer to home than Booger Hollar. “The Musical Ghost of Rocky River” tells the tale of Flaubert Greene, a musician who played at Rocky River Springs, a popular nineteenth-century resort for whose waters Aquadale, my hometown, was named. I visited the ruins of this resort as a child; they were only about half a mile from my house. The springs there, each high in its own mineral content, were believed to have therapeutic properties, but they went dry when greedy owners, desirous of filling swimming pools with their waters, used dynamite in the attempt to increase an insufficient natural flow. (This [hi]story itself comes back from my childhood as a morality tale with its own class implications.) Flaubert Greene, as the story goes, was inspired by voices coming from the point where Alligator Branch empties into Rocky River. There the surface swirled and eddied over a suckhole with a depth that had never been probed. Early white settlers in the area said Indians claimed alligators and shad from the Atlantic Ocean, 175 miles away, once infested the creek and that an Indian maiden had drowned herself here in heartbreak for her slain lover. There was talk that the Indians gave some of their departed brethren a headstart toward the Happy Hunting Grounds via the suckhole.

Young people from the resort often hiked down the scenic trail to the Indian Hole. (Morgan, Haunted Uwharries 9–10)
After the musician becomes more and more obsessed with the musical inspiration flowing from this source, one day friends arrive too late to prevent him from being sucked into the hole himself. They hear the voice of his former beloved, who previously suffered the same fate. It is said that those with an ear for music can still hear the music of Flaubert Greene coming from Indian Hole.

Like Jezebel, the musical ghost of Rocky River also brings back not only the violence of an individual slaying but also that of the cultural and literal genocide committed by Europeans against Native Americans, a genocide that marks the very foundation of American nation building. After all, stories about “Indians” constitute an important subgenre of ghost stories. Booger Hollar has taught me to understand such ghost stories as giving me access to another version of the history I learned through their more “official” counterparts. The fact that Anglo readers of these stories use them to satisfy an exoticist pleasure that associates Native American culture with the mysterious and (today) a New Age spirituality, the fact that Anglo tellers of the stories use them to reproduce denials of genocide in no way eliminates their allegorical significance. In the case of another important part of Grimsley’s novel’s haunted landscape, for example, the Indian Mound Roy shows to Nathan, the history of violence goes back even further, situating human bondage in a territory expropriated through genocidal means at the very founding of America. They also make love on the Indian Mound, and memories of the latter haunt Nathan’s day-to-day life: “In the submersion of home, Nathan returns again and again to the image of Roy’s body on the Indian Mound, lost and bewildered under the power of Nathan’s mouth” (44).

When structures such as the family tree can be thought of as haunted, and Booger Hollar can be read against the violence of heterosexual kinship structures, the definition of *heterosexuality* itself—which requires repressing its Other, sometimes with the use of physical violence—is haunted. From the histories of class and racial oppression allegorized in “The Ghost of Jezebel,” we can then read it at a further allegorical level as telling a story about the violence inherent in the Family itself, Family being a key component of the institution of heterosexuality. Booger Hollar is a queer site, then, because it is here that the secret of Family, the violence on which the Family is founded, the violence that must be forgotten for the family to be institutionalized as a normative structure, returns to haunt. *Queer Roots* thus engages in a further queering of Derridean hauntology by conjuring up the haints that represent the violence kept out of the family tree as a representation of the kinship structuring
the normative family. From the role of violence in ghost stories, we can thus return “real” ghosts, as well as the ghost of Marxist politics, to Derrida’s hauntology.

As a child, “Don’t let the boogers gitcha!” served as a more vivid equivalent of “Sleep tight, don’t let the bed bugs bite!” The OED suggests that the two expressions might be etymologically connected, as bug and booger are.¹⁷ For me, boogers could only come from one direction, the woods behind our house, the very woods I knew would take me to Rocky River Springs were I not afraid of getting lost and were there not more certain ways of getting there. In fact, during a brief period, I was visited at night by strange lights outside the window in my bedroom that looked out onto these woods. For a while, I left my curtains open so I could see them. Later I shut them to shut out the lights and finally shut out the memory of them, which returns only as I write these lines. As I have conceived and reconceived this project and worked toward its completion, the radical roots of Queer Roots have returned from my past like so many ghosts to haunt me once again. These ghosts, along with many others, have taken over this project as if this book, too, were a haunted house. I have made my peace with these haints, made my peace as many a proprietor of houses haunted has been forced to do. In fact, I have come to cherish the unsettling forces these hauntings arouse and become impassioned with unearthing the meaning they conjure up from the past. I thus end this chapter (and this book) by conjuring up Jezebel once again, Jezebel the essence (in the hauntological sense) of who I am.