

“We’re what we are because of the Past”: History, Memory, Nostalgia, and Identity in Walter Sullivan’s *The Long, Long Love*

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***Abstract:** Walter Sullivan (1924–2006), a Nashville, Tennessee native who spent most of his academic and professional life at Vanderbilt University, is generally considered by critics as a literary descendent of the first two generations of Fugitive-Agrarians and the Southern Renaissance to which they belong. This essay seeks to position Sullivan’s second, largely forgotten novel, *The Long, Long Love* as part of the post-agrarian, post-Renaissance, postmodern, and post-southern American intellectual reevaluation of the South that questions tradition through an assertion of “pro–New South, pro–urban, and pro–capitalist” values and thoroughly reconsiders Civil War “truths,” myths, history, and memory.*

***Keywords:** Walter Sullivan, history, the South, nostalgia, *The Long Long Love**

As historian David Goldfield argues, ever since the end of the American Civil War (1861–1865), southerners have struggled with the burdens of history, memory, nostalgia, and identity. While some have become “fixated upon the past and therefore immobilized by it,” others have become “total amnesiacs,” which is equally dangerous (298). The Vanderbilt Fugitive-Agrarians, who rose to prominence during the interwar years and included authors and critics such as John Crowe Ransom, Robert Penn Warren, Allen Tate, Donald Davidson, Andrew Lytle, and Cleanth Brooks, “sought an im-

possible place in between, and as a result perceived history as a continuing dialogue that united the poles of the past and the present” (Tunc 184). For them, history provided a past “to be mythologized,” while memory constructed a mythology “ready to be used as a means of understanding and evaluating the present” (Gray 38). Consequently, many of the first generation Fugitive-Agrarians sought solutions to what they saw as the problems of modernity—industrialization, urbanization, and the fragmentation of the “homogeneity” of southern identity that came with social and cultural change—and a return to the pastoral values of the “good farmer” and the “gentleman planter” of the antebellum world. Moreover, in their writing, they deployed the pre-war South (the past) as a means of making sense of their own world (the present).

Walter Sullivan (1924–2006), a Nashville, Tennessee native who spent most of his academic and professional life at Vanderbilt University, is generally considered by critics as a literary descendent of the first two generations of Fugitive-Agrarians and the Southern Renaissance to which they belong. As Mark Royden Winchell notes, “born in 1924,” Sullivan was “one of the youngest members of the third generation. As such, he is too young to have been a part of the southern renaissance but old enough to feel that he missed out on something important” (“The Whole Horse” n.p.). Sullivan was the student of, or very close friends with, the most prominent Fugitive-Agrarians including Davidson, Ransom, Warren, Lytle, Brooks, Tate, and his wife Caroline Gordon (Sullivan, *Nothing Gold Can Stay* ix–x). Yet, much like the Fugitive-Agrarians themselves, Sullivan felt trapped not only between the poles of the past and the present, but also by the onerous intellectual burden of the Renaissance. While he certainly revered this legacy, he also recognized that the tenets of the Fugitive-Agrarians as expressed in *I’ll Take My Stand: The South and the Agrarian Tradition* (1930)—especially those aspects which prioritized the kind of history and memory most closely associated with the Dunning School,¹ denigrated urbanization and industrialization as the ruin of southern culture and pastoral

1 During the early twentieth century, historians such as Columbia University professor William Archibald Dunning and his followers helped perpetuate the Reconstruction Era “Lost Cause” ideology by promoting the idea that the South was ruined by Reconstruction, segregation was necessary to protect white values, and the antebellum period was the golden age of southern culture (Current 213). This historical framework was embraced by many of the more conservative members of the Fugitive-Agrarians, especially Donald Davidson.

life, and favored a return to agrarianism—were no longer feasible by the 1950s.

The post-World War II South was a rapidly changing region of the country in terms of its economic and labor structure as well as racial, class, and gender relations. As Sullivan expressed to *Contemporary Authors*: “I began my career as a writer when the southern literary renaissance was coming to a close, although we did not know at that time” how “soon the end of the renaissance would come. The South was changing and southern attitudes were changing and the unified, although flawed, culture that had supported the renaissance was becoming fragmented as the population of the South became less homogeneous” (“Walter Sullivan” n.p.). Although Sullivan found Agrarianism appealing as an ideological and literary trope and was inspired by the Modernist writers of the Southern Renaissance, he simultaneously recognized that the past, especially the ways in which it was being remembered through history and mythmaking in fiction, was in dire need of reevaluation in light of the paradigmatic shifts of the mid-twentieth century. As he readily admitted, the world of his professors “was not my world: their culture was almost foreign to me” (Sullivan, “Carousing” 577). Thus, his own project ultimately involved a revision of their vision.

Like mid-twentieth century historians W.J. Cash and C. Vann Woodward, Sullivan challenged hegemonic visions of the Old South, specifically the Agrarian sense of history, place, family, and community, thereby laying the foundation of the *post-southern* turn that characterizes Southern Studies today (see Bone). He embraced the notion that “the world itself changes and the South is part of the world,” and that by the 1950s, “the old ethical foundations [had] been shaken.” Southern homogeneity was a myth that was just as out of place in this new world as the “pattern of behavior” of the Old South (Sullivan, “The Continuing Renaissance” 376–377). In *A Requiem for the Renaissance*, Sullivan argues that after WWII, the “culture of the South became too weak to sustain the collective myth upon which the renaissance had been based. That myth postulated a glorious southern past, which could be recovered only in song and story” (Winchell, “The Whole Horse” n.p.). Renaissance successors, like Sullivan, clearly belonged “to an age in which the southern myth [was] regarded as not only lost” but “irrelevant” (Winchell, “The Whole Horse” n.p.). Moreover, Sullivan warned about dwelling in the past in the face of such change: “We cannot turn back any more than we can raise the dead or stop the sun or part the ocean. We

are where we are in history and the past is past.” “We will have to find our own way out” (Sullivan, *Death by Melancholy* 111–112), which is exactly what he did through his novels.

Sullivan understood the psychological and historical significance of the “southern myth and the great literature it produced,” but was “too much of a realist to want to turn back the clock.” He believed that “the myth was bound to fail because, for all its appeal, it was essentially” a “heresy” (Winchell, “The Whole Horse” n.p.). Like memory, and to a certain extent the crafting of historical narratives, it involved human interpretation, intervention, and often an elision of trauma, like the horror of slavery. This tension between history, myth, and memory, their burden on the present, and their social relevancy, is the crux of Sullivan’s forgotten second novel, *The Long, Long Love* (1959), which focuses on the impact of the Civil War on the Adams family of Tennessee. Saturated with gothic elements like many classic works of the Renaissance, *The Long, Long Love* represents Sullivan’s attempt to make sense of the elements which continued to haunt southern society in the mid-twentieth century: the Civil War and how it would be remembered, mythologized, and commemorated; historical accuracy; the feasibility, or even desirability, of agrarianism in a changing world; and the tension between the values of the “Old” and “New” South. Above all, in the novel Sullivan deconstructs the Agrarian burdens of place, family, community, and the past on present identity, especially in terms of what Richard King has called the “Southern family romance”—a “tradition” loaded with historical consciousness and nostalgia “whose essential figures [are] the father and the grandfather and whose essential structure [is] the literal and symbolic family” (7).²

2 As an understudied novel, *The Long, Long Love* is in particular need of further critical engagement, specifically in the realms of contextual and intertextual analysis, which is beyond the scope of this essay. Such analysis would reveal precisely the ways in which *The Long, Long Love*, in a postmodern sense, echoes, and is in conversation with, other classics of southern literature. For example, Allen Tate’s “Ode to the Confederate Dead” (1928) and *The Fathers* (1938), William Faulkner’s *Go Down Moses* (1942), Caroline Gordon’s *Penhally* (1931) and *The Women on the Porch* (1944), and Robert Penn Warren’s *Flood: A Romance of Our Time* (1964) and *A Place to Come To* (1977) explore similar themes and characters using a dark, gothic palette. Moreover, a pairing of *The Long, Long Love* with Walker Percy’s *The Moviegoer* (1961) and *The Last Gentleman* (1966), both of which deal with the changing definition of southern masculinity in the mid-twentieth century, would also enhance the complexity of these themes in Sullivan’s work. Coupling *The Long, Long Love* with more contemporary works dealing with race, such as Toni Morrison’s *Beloved* (1987) and *Playing in the Dark* (1992), would help flesh out issues concerning southern history and the subjectivity of memory.

This essay seeks to position *The Long, Long Love* as part of the post-agrarian, post-Renaissance, postmodern, and post-southern American intellectual reevaluation of the South that questions tradition through an assertion of “pro–New South, pro–urban, and pro–capitalist” values (Bone 148) and reconsiders Civil War “truths,” myths, history, and memory. Sullivan grapples with these issues through protagonist Horatio Adams, who embodies the war’s legacy of death, defeat, and destruction. Specifically, Horatio represents the historical *dis-membering* (through nostalgia) and selective *re-membering* (through amnesia and mythmaking) that occur when “the truth” challenges traditional values such as family honor, pride, personal identity, gender roles (especially masculinity), ancestor worship, and posterity. Venerating his father and commemorating his grandfather, Civil War General Tavean Adams, are the foci of Horatio’s obsession with the agrarian past, a personal mission which he equates with his own reputation and character. However, as he discovers, history is not always as it is remembered, and memory cannot substitute for history, for embedded in the word *commemoration* (the act of reinvoking the past) are *memory* and *remembering*, suggesting that these processes are inextricably linked to one another. As Sullivan elucidates, when one aspect of this fragile, unstable balance collapses, what remains is “an ironic view of the Old South and the Civil War” and “the folly of worshiping the past” (“Carousing” 577)—a calamity that, as Sullivan suggests, can only be remedied by confronting the past and embracing the realities of the present and future.

Longing for the Past through History, Memory, Nostalgia, and Identity

As Goldfield has commented, “southerners tend to live in multiple time zones. Past, present, and future are conflated, and the past is the most important of all” (15). For southerners like Sullivan who came of age between the end of the Civil War and World War II, “history—defeat, the war, the past,” “these were not abstractions,” “they were very real. Southerners knew that history was not merely something in books” (Rubin and Jacobs 33). In fact, “Southerners growing up in the first half of the twentieth century found dating the war difficult because their elders often discussed the conflict as if it had happened yesterday or was still in progress” (Goldfield 27). They individuals were “strongly reared in the ways of an older South, vividly taught the beliefs and loyalties of the nineteenth century as the South knew them,” and were raised on the history, memory, nostalgia, and myths of the

antebellum world and the Civil War, which became an intricate part of their identity. However, Sullivan's generation was "of the twentieth century, not the nineteenth." It "could believe in the old Army of Northern Virginia," yet maintain a "two-way vision" that incorporated postwar America and the rest of the world (Rubin and Jacobs 37). While the Civil War was a constant presence in the lives of these southerners, existing "around the periphery of every southern novel," making "its appearance in quaint old ladies and portraits above the fireplace and monuments on the squares," as Sullivan recognized "someday we shall have to turn back to it, if only in an effort to understand more fully the painful time we are now living through which will then be the past" (*Death by Melancholy* 67). This critical "returning" is a significant part of Sullivan's project in *The Long, Long Love*.

Born in 1900 and symbolically a child of the new century, Horatio Adams—whose name evokes heroic historic figures Horatio Nelson (English naval hero) and American Founding Father John Adams, as well as R.W.B. Lewis's *The American Adam* (1955), which challenged Agrarian interpretations of history—belongs to Allen Tate's generation of southerners who preceded Sullivan's cohort but likewise shared the burden of the Civil War. A member of a wealthy, aristocratic Nashville family, his obsession with death, history, and his Confederate grandfather's grave begins at a very early age: his parents are killed on the Titanic when he is twelve, which has a profound impact on how he perceives the world. He believes that his past, present, and future are inextricably linked with death, and thus cannot live his life. An overwhelming fatalism guides his existence, and the shadow of death is always lingering in the background, even during his happiest moments. For Horatio, the "long, long love" is not the love for a woman, but for the past—a nostalgic longing for history and memory which, as the novel unfolds, becomes a dangerously fluid and unstable foundation for his identity. This triangulation of history, memory, and nostalgia intensifies at moments of crisis in Horatio's life, which run parallel to, and are reflected in, crises in U.S. society, compelling Horatio to question his identity and the reader to rethink American cultural events, especially in the southern context.

Even as a child, Horatio is absorbed with the past, which becomes an adult infatuation that fuels his hubris and eventual undoing. He is particularly fascinated by cemeteries not only as a "site of memory" (Hanson 365)—a space for the ritualized performance of grief, trauma, and loss—but also as a powerful venue for the living to re-member and commemorate

the departed. For the Agrarians, as for Horatio, this process involves the creation of a “sense of belonging,” a shared collective identity that was unified, and strengthened, by the mythos of deceased individuals. With his parents’ death comes the “proof and the harbinger of [his] own mortality” (*LLL* 15) and the fear of not being remembered, of being lost in the annals of time and history. By grieving for his parents, he grieves for his own mortality: “There was a comfort” in “conjuring up these images of the past.” “Wasn’t my memory of my parents a kind of monument to them” that “in the future someone...would remember me?” (*LLL* 17). However, because his parents die at sea, they have a watery grave with no markers or monuments, which contributes to Horatio’s obsession with his grandfather’s grave—a concrete, tangible, symbol in need of protection. Being commemorated and venerated, Horatio believes, is “the finest of all victories over death” (*LLL* 18), and he becomes fixated on his grandfather’s legacy because it is immortal: it “transcends the cold embrace of the final earth” (*LLL* 26). For Horatio, there is perfection in death—those who die young, like his parents and grandfather, never age, and history is usually kind to such individuals since human beings have selective memories, or amnesia, which tends to obliterate the unsavory elements of deceased lives. He finds consolation in the idea that human beings can survive, at least for a while, in posterity through commemoration, and shapes his life according to this belief.

Monuments, and certainly cemeteries and gravesites, “serve as a place of memory, a physical spot that Americans can visit, touch, and treat as a conduit to [an] historic event,” and “hence the nation’s glorious past” (Meriwether and D’Amore xi). Individual and collective identities are shaped through processes of commemoration, which connect us to the past and provide continuity by functioning as literal and figurative touchstones of tradition. What is chosen for commemoration is just as significant as what is forgotten and is often a reflection, and reinforcement, of local, collective, and cultural values. In other words, “we are what we remember” (Meriwether and D’Amore). For Horatio, the commemoration of the past gives life, and ultimately death, meaning, significance, and purpose, and shapes his “relationship to the rest of the world” (Meriwether and D’Amore x).

For Horatio, the static past (Old South) signifies a respite from the turbulent present (New South), a safe space into which he can exile himself when he feels like a misfit in his own time. In his case, “the nostalgically remembered past [stands] against the present and thus invite[s] comparison. The former was made into a spectacle that was beautiful, bearing little or

no relation to the ugly latter” (Anderson 107). Horatio blindly trusts representations of the past, building his identity around the Old South because, to him, it embodies untainted perfection—a rich, “ordered” civilization of esteemed values such as chivalry, patriarchy, family, and the land, all of which have been lost in the meaningless, “disordered” New South. Since the commemoration of heroes is “an attempt to order the past, to extract from its frightening disorder events or people or ideas the culture needs to celebrate in order to understand the present” (Gros 57), Horatio deploys ancestor veneration as a comforting way to recapture his grandfather’s romantic legacy and the “noble” traditions of antebellum society. “With heroes larger than life and their exploits greater than legends, the past became perfect, and white southerners,” such as Horatio, “living in the imperfect present, visited their history as often as possible,” until the “present and past became indistinguishable” (Goldfield 31–32).

As David Anderson contends, “although nostalgia draws its strength from the past, it is unmistakably a product of the present.” Nostalgia “always appears against the backdrop of ‘massive identity dislocations,’ in periods of ‘rude transitions rendered by history,’” and “in times of fear in the face of electrifying change” (107–108). Nostalgia, which is essentially history sweetened with sentiment (Anderson 108), creates a unified narrative out of often dislocated events and memories, allowing individuals to achieve control over the present by controlling representations of the past. In the context of the South, this not only elides the cruel realities of slavery, gender inequality, classism, and war, but also supports the assumption that there was such a civilization as the “Old South” in the first place. Mid-twentieth-century historians such as W.J. Cash and C. Vann Woodward, for example, claimed that in fact, the Old South never existed and that it was “invented” by members of the New South as a means of empowerment and self-definition in the drifting, uncertain, chaotic world of Reconstruction followed by the disintegration of agrarianism and social change (see Cash and Woodward). In other words, the Old South embodied a selection of “painless” memories of moonlight and magnolias by “white southern elites” salvaged from remnants of the antebellum world that best fit individual and collective identities in the “painful” present (Anderson 131). The invented Old South provided white southerners with traditions which gave continuity and meaning to the present, while offering hope for the future. Moreover, it “banished time” by “erect[ing] a legend to live by and for,” “a reminder to do well and think right and remember that the legacy is

watching” (Goldfield 3, 20). However, by the end of *The Long, Long Love*, Horatio discovers the elusive/illusory nature of history, nostalgia, and tradition, and the fragile, socially constructed balance on which legacies, legends, and posterity rest, but not before he has lost everything in the present.

In his twenties, in the 1920s, Horatio, much like the rest of the nation, prospers, marrying Nancy Henderson and fathering a boy, Tavean (named after his grandfather), and a girl, Anne. During the Great Depression of the 1930s, Horatio begins to look inwards, contemplating the tragedy in his own life and the fragility of mortality, which is accentuated by Tavean’s near-death experience with childhood illness. In the 1940s, Horatio reaches a critical turning point in his life—middle age—with his identity crisis paralleling that of the South. He becomes increasingly plagued by the tension between the past and the present, which is exacerbated by the collapse of agrarianism after World War II and the entrance of southerners into cities and urban professions. According to the Agrarians, this led to an alienation from the land, which resulted in an identity crisis since the land was an integral part of “being southern.” In this New South, “business became the Southern man’s business,” which created a new urban, sophisticated, professional, elite class (Mayfield 125). With a lucrative brokerage firm in downtown Nashville, Horatio is engaged in this world—he went “faithfully to the office in town and read *Barron’s* and *Poor’s* and the quarterly and the annual reports of a thousand companies” (LLL 26). However, he feels alienated from himself, his past, his family, and the land, all of which in the novel is symbolized by Adams’ Rest, his ancestral plantation. By his early fifties, Horatio believes that he has lost “what matters”—family, history, and the agrarian tradition, which he equates with the values of the Old South—amidst the sea of consumerism, self-gratification, and prosperity that defined life in the 1950s. His angst deepens, with his inner turbulence reflecting the external changes in the South (such as the disintegration of a strong, white, male, “southern identity” as a result of migration to the region and the Civil Rights Movement), and the nation as a whole, especially with mounting panic over the Cold War. Horatio subscribes to the notion that “in the South’s eager race to emulate the rest of the country, all the things they had been taught were good were being cast aside.” The “South was callously throwing out cherished ways of faith and life,” and southern tradition was being debased in the name of “modernity” (Rubin and Jacobs 40). Horatio loves Adams’ Rest precisely because it is a cherished, frozen symbol, where not much has changed since his grandfather went to war.

“To go into the house at Adams’ Rest” was “to go into another time” (*LLL* 121), the past, where he could escape the chaos of the present. Yet, ironically, Adams’ Rest will not bring the family rest, but rather upheaval.

As C. Vann Woodward expresses, “along with the glittering vision of a ‘metropolitan’ and industrial South to come there developed a cult of archaism” (154) which venerated the past. Although Horatio is a mid-twentieth-century citizen, a part of him is always “looking backwards,” with a “two-way vision” that is conscious of the past in the present. Worshipping the Old South through this cult of archaism becomes Horatio’s (civil) religion in the absence of true religious conviction. In middle age, he becomes obsessed with Adams’ Rest as an archaic fetish, for the plantation represented an “idea of agrarian orderliness and the redemption of a turbulent society,” the “natural basis for a social order, the natural support for a moral order,” and a nostalgic “little world, a way of life, an epitomizing of cherished values that were to be defended at all costs” (Cardwell 7, 15–16). Horatio is devoted “to the shrines and relics of the past,” and “love[s] Adams’ Rest even more” than his home in the city (*LLL* 17) because it is an idyllic retreat from the stressors of the “real world.” Built by his great-grandfather in 1821, and thirty miles south of Nashville on the outskirts of Van Buren, the plantation embodies not just Horatio’s family history but also his identity as a southerner. Still in operation, “the land was under cultivation: tobacco and corn and pasture and orchards” (*LLL* 27); yet, this bastion of agrarianism is haunted by a “skeleton house staff” as well as the ghosts of the past. “The house at Adams’ Rest was full of mementoes. The old ledger books from slavery days still lined the office shelves” and in the wardrobes was “a Freemason’s apron and an old militia uniform...dresses with hoop skirts and some military belts and an empty holster,” as well as paintings of his dead ancestors, always watching (*LLL* 17–18). Clearly, like southern history itself, Adams’ Rest is a gothic “haunted house.”

Horatio’s cult of archaism, however, includes far more than physical fetishes like historic relics and plantation homes; it also incorporates the “moral code” on which southern civilization was constructed (*Death by Melancholy* 69). He grapples with this code in his everyday life, struggling to maintain the virtues he associates with the antebellum era—masculinity, honor, and heritage—in a changing world. He prides himself on being able to hold his liquor like a gentleman, and is an avid sportsman. He engages “in activities, like hunting, fishing, and riding that recalled earlier historical notions of manly virtue” and “invoked traditional virtues like ‘honor’ and

‘thrift’” (Gros 62) in order to recuperate a lost white, upper-class, masculinity in the face of urbanization, industrialization, and changing social power relations as exemplified by the increasing political visibility of African Americans, women, and the working class. Venerating his grandfather and the masculine, cavalier heroism he symbolizes thus serves a double function: it is part of Horatio’s commemoration of the past and his protection mechanism in the present.

It is when Horatio feels most emasculated—when he experiences a midlife crisis after Nancy’s suicide and his hasty marriage to Emily, who has an affair with his son Tavean—that his obsession with the past increases, as if it will provide him with refuge from the traumatic present. On the night of their twenty-seventh wedding anniversary, Nancy, who is in the early stages of lung cancer, ends her life by overdosing on sedatives because she is exasperated by Horatio’s fixation with death. This same grotesque fascination compels him to marry a much younger woman, Emily, within a year of Nancy’s suicide. Horatio subscribes to the “cult of youth because to be young is to be strong,” and “sexual prowess” is “far from death” (Sullivan, *Death by Melancholy* 125). Since his own youth has disappeared, Horatio tries to recapture it vicariously through Emily in an attempt to prolong his life and stave off his demise. Twenty-six years old, or thirty years younger than Horatio, the Marilyn Monroe-like Emily represents a sip from the fountain of youth, and Horatio, who dislikes organized religion, worships at her altar instead. Wanting to freeze the passage of time because “every beginning discloses” the “inevitable end” (*LLL* 65), he spends his honeymoon “afraid of what time must do to me.” “I looked at my wife and was glad that she was young. My heart celebrated her youth and her youthful beauty” (*LLL* 72, 76). However, the old ghosts begin to haunt Horatio and he neglects Emily for his obsession with the antebellum South and the Civil War. He cultivates a relationship with Philip Holcomb, Anne’s boyfriend, “a tall man with broad shoulders and horn-rimmed glasses who taught history at Vanderbilt” (*LLL* 45). A Civil War specialist, Philip begins asking questions about Horatio’s grandfather and why he was buried in the Confederate cemetery, like a regular soldier, rather than at his family estate since he was so close to home when he died. Moreover, as Philip skeptically states, at the Battle of Van Buren the General’s “Corps didn’t get to the field until the shooting was over” (*LLL* 49), rendering the claim that Horatio’s grandfather died in the battle highly unlikely, which begins the unraveling of the past.

Horatio discovers that as a prank, some of the local Van Buren youths paint the Confederate soldier statue on the town square, and the angels, crosses, and headstones in the cemetery a “bright, yellowish, nauseous green” (*LLL* 88). Horatio feels violated, as if everything he has held sacred has been destroyed. The fact that the vandalism occurs on Halloween further underscores the grotesque nature of the desecration and the gothic notion that the ghosts of the dead still linger among us, awaiting resolution. Horatio’s feelings of displacement are also heightened by the event: “I don’t understand it...I don’t know what the world is coming to...When we were boys...we would no more have thought of desecrating that monument than we would have...damn their times, they’ve got to be caught” (*LLL* 90–91). Defaced with bright green paint, the statue ironically attracts renewed attention, especially from children in jeans who signify the younger generation. As Sullivan suggests, by the 1950s, symbols of the South’s Confederate past—especially monuments—had become less central in the day-to-day lives of southerners, who were, perhaps rightfully so, more concerned with mid-twentieth-century matters.

Like the vandals, Anne had never stopped “to calculate the loss” or what these graves meant to the history of the South, until someone had defaced them (*LLL* 94). As she notes, “whoever had been running wild,” in the cemetery, “with a paint brush had at least learned a lesson in history. The Civil War had been a big war” and “here a long time ago a lot of men had died” (*LLL* 93). Tavean and Emily, on the other hand, mock Horatio’s dramatic reaction to the vandalism, and an ideological, intergenerational rift begins to form in his marriage: “I was hurt that she so little understood the meaning of the vandalism and then I was angry...She knew the present...but she couldn’t understand about my grandfather...If she doesn’t see why I love my grandfather, how can she love me?” (*LLL* 111) Horatio harbors a respect for the past and for death that is lost on Emily, who is young, vivacious, and from a working class New South background with no roots. Moreover, since her death is far away, for Emily the present is more important than the past. This places her in direct conflict with her husband who, paternalistically, scolds her like a child: “Emily...don’t be a fool. Be young and innocent” but “don’t think you’re going to live forever, because you’re not” (*LLL* 111).

As Horatio confides in Philip, “I’ve been revering my grandfather’s memory, going and paying my respects to his grave even since I can remember... if we lose our sense of the past, we lose our identity in the present.” “Each

generation doesn't just start all over. We're what we are because of the past. And what we are will affect the future" (*LLL* 101). However, for Anne, the past is a dangerous, slippery slope of self-destruction and should be left alone. As she foreshadowingly warns her father, once you "catch hold of the past, there is no letting go this side of Noah" (*LLL* 102). Nevertheless, as someone who believes that the only consolation that death provides is the hope "that we all might be remembered" (*LLL* 113), Horatio selfishly and single-mindedly becomes consumed with the vandalism to the point where it pushes everyone, especially Emily, who turns to Tavean due to neglect, out of his life. Anne is able to recognize the folly of his actions—that fixating on the past, and obsessing over future posterity, destroys the present by eliding its realities: "You keep on worrying about the past and future, and there is nobody attending to the present. You are planning on what will happen to us when we are all dead, but who will see after us now when we are alive?" (*LLL* 120)

Horatio's ire becomes uncontrollable when the vandals return and paint the statue's coat red and britches blue. They also "put red and blue stripes on his face. He looks like an Indian" (*LLL* 123). While for Horatio turning a Confederate soldier into a Native American warrior is the final insult, the event also represents a sharp criticism of how certain deaths are remembered and commemorated while others, like those of Native Americans, are ignored, marginalized, and sometimes even concealed in the American historical record. Although Native Americans also fought in the Confederate army, in this case, their deaths only resurface to mock the "true" sacrifice of white patriots. The same vandals further deface and emasculate his ancestor's memory when the paint General Adams' green headstone with flowers, compelling Horatio to think "of the time not long ago" when "the recollection of the Confederacy and of the Confederate Army had been kept brightly alive" (*LLL* 124–125). While some segments of society had moved beyond the war to more pressing contemporary concerns, Horatio had not, and his grandfather's grave, like Adams' Rest, becomes a fetish, or stage on which to perform lost masculinity, honor, and pride, and to reaffirm family ties and historic continuity. For Horatio, the only way to restore these sacred values is to relocate his grandfather's remains to the family cemetery at Adams' Rest, where they would be under his protection.

Philip, who is suspicious about the circumstances surrounding General Adams' death, warns Horatio not to move the grave, for that will change the way in which his grandfather is commemorated and mythologized: "Ev-

erybody will be so busy remembering that the stone was painted and that you moved the grave because it was painted, they will forget about the war and about the battle. They will just keep on handing down the story of the painted stone” (*LLL* 143). However, since Horatio subscribes to an antiquated code of southern male honor which includes asserting one’s masculinity, social authority, engaging in patriarchal veneration, and chivalrously defending one’s family (especially women) against real and perceived offenses, he becomes even more motivated to relocate his grandfather. In this case, reburying the “mortal remains of a loved one” would not only “provide a continuing touchstone with the life of that individual and their retransformation to the sacred realm of the hereafter” (Hanson 359), but, for Horatio, would also restore his family’s grandeur, white southern masculinity, and the patrician loss of social, political, and economic authority in the New South.

Revealing and Revising the “Truths” of the Past

Horatio proceeds with the exhumation for protecting the bones means protecting history, and reburying them denotes honorable, public vindication. However, he is mortified when he discovers that the grave is empty, suggesting that the family history, memories, and social values in which he is invested are deceptive myths. Since Horatio derives his identity from these elements, when the grave, a representation of the glorified past, is revealed to be bare, the sacred is instantly transformed into the profane, and he becomes a perpetually displaced, meaningless relic who neither belongs to his own time nor to that of his grandfather. As Horatio discovers, his personal Lost Cause myth, replete with the heroes and principles of the antebellum South, is constructed on a fragile foundation, a shifting bed of quicksand that disappears right from under him. In the process, he learns a very post-modern lesson: that identities are socially, ideologically, and personally constructed and therefore fragmented, changeable, and always unstable.

This devastating revelation prompts Horatio to reevaluate who he is as a person. He becomes cognizant of all the different elements that comprise his identity—family honor, heritage, community standing, and public opinion—when he makes the grim discovery about his grandfather. Horatio attempts to find continuity and solace in the past, only to discover that it is just as fluid as the present, with its own secrets and lies. Consequently, he suddenly feels castrated, emasculated, worthless, insignificant and, above

all, duped. The empty grave also suggests that myths are often created to conceal an unpalatable reality, and that living in the past is futile: glorified ancestors should not be placed on pedestals and revered for they too were flawed. Horatio has difficulty coming to terms with these discoveries because “when you have believed something all your life you cannot stop believing it, no matter how obvious it is that you have been wrong” (*LLL* 159, 162). He believes that by relocating the grave he will create “something that will stand with us against the steady course of time and the forgetfulness of man” (*LLL* 161), but ultimately discovers that what he has been commemorating all these years is an illusion.

Tavean warns his father not “to let a dead hero ruin a live fool’s life” (*LLL* 172). In other words, not to allow the legacy of the past ruin the present. He also cautions him not to excavate the past too deeply for history itself is a socially constructed and manipulated protective mechanism. As a result, nothing, not even the past, is stable. Horatio disregards Tavean’s advice and once again permits his obsession with death to ruin his life. Deploying the trope of “family honor” to conceal “family shame,” Horatio convinces Philip to track down his missing ancestor and assist him in restoring his grandfather’s name. “As a southern history professor, Philip is sensitive to the burden of the past in the present,” and “speaks in his own voice when he tells us of his quest for Horatio’s grandfather’s gravesite” (Winchell, *Reinventing the South* 83). This postmodern technique of dispersing stable narrative voices—in this case, describing the same events from three different perspectives, Horatio, Anne, and Philip—is particularly significant in *The Long, Long Love*. The polyvocal “voicing back” not only successfully dismembers and re-members history through multiple perspectives in order to re-present it differently, but it also suggests that there are often numerous, and sometimes conflicting, *histories* and not just one master metanarrative of *History*.

Much like Horatio, Philip feels a responsibility to the past—not just to protect it, but to retell it as accurately as possible. After weeks of meticulous research and dead ends, Philip discovers an alternative history. Just before his death, General Adams lodged at Elmview, the Dedman residence just south of Columbia, Tennessee. Philip travels to the estate and where he encounters Charity Dedman, a descendant who charitably tells him the “truth”: “Your man, your General Adams was here. Grandfather and the rest of them won’t talk about it. It’s that Old South and magnolia business.... He died here. My great-grandfather killed him.” “He’s still here, what’s left

of him. I suppose they wouldn't have told me except I found the grave" (*LLL* 217). She lights a cigarette, which, when combined with her tight, red, treader pants, language, and the fact that she reads leftist publications such as *The Partisan Review* and *The Nation*, marks her, like Tavean and Emily, as a member of the New South who questions the values of the Old South. She continues: "You can bet they Goddamn well didn't want to tell me. They kept on feeding me this stuff about respecting the Old South." "This general and some other fellow came here to spend the night. My great-grandfather was a boy then, too young to be in the army. He and his mother were the only ones here. During the night, this general tried to rape my great-grandfather's mother and my great-grandfather killed him" (*LLL* 218). Charity leads Philip to the grave in the back of the house where they buried him after the murder. "You know how they act about honor. And sex," Charity notes, which is why "Ever since, they've been hating his damn Confederate guts" (*LLL* 220).

As an historian, Philip doubts that what Charity, a biased source, tells him is the entire truth. "She was at a rebellious age." "She was fed-up with the old julep-scented South; she had got the liberal view, like you get a fever, and she was shaking with an ague to tell all the scandal about the past" (*LLL* 221). After all, the 1940s and 50s was a time when historians like Cash and Woodward were revising the recounting of the southern past and undoing the work of the Dunning school (see footnote 1), especially in light of the burgeoning Civil Rights Movement. Ostensibly, many took this revisionism to the extreme. What bothers Philip is that "you could still find the grave site cleared. This was not to mention the marker which Charity told me about" (*LLL* 222), which prompts him to wonder why would a rapist, whose murder should have been concealed, have a grave marker? Moreover, why would someone clear and maintain his grave? As Philip discovers, the truth is somewhere in between. Thurman Shoffner finally answers Philip's questions:

Major Pearson was my mother's father...He told me about the death of General Adams... [T]hey had spent the night at the Dedman place and that most assuredly General Adams had been in the bedroom of the woman. He was shot there and he died with no clothes on. And, of course, in the presence of her son, the woman claimed that the general had tried to rape her...What else would you expect her to say under the circumstances? She had her good name to protect. She had the boy's actions to defend....But Major Pearson did not believe General Adams had raped her. That is why he rode on to Van Buren and did what he did...[He] reported to everyone he saw that General Adams was on the field. After the battle, he found a spot and broke the ground and marked the spot as the burial place of General Adams. (*LLL* 223–225)

As Philip learns, memory, nostalgia, honor, and commemoration—like history—are also subjective, imperfect, and flexible values that can change over time: she concealed the general's murder to protect her own honor, yet maintained the grave after his death, probably out of guilt and respect, something that the twentieth-century Dedmans and Adamases cannot comprehend. The general, on the other hand, died not because of a “dishonorable” act (rape), but rather because he was searching for consolation, human warmth, and some semblance of the past at a desperate time. As General Adams admits in one of his letters, “I know that the old days are gone as the blessed face and figure of my wife are gone...But I should like once more to...feel the touch of a genteel woman” (*LLL* 177), a wish that costs him his life. Much like Horatio, Major Pearson wanted to protect the general's place in history; thus, he fabricated a heroic myth about his final hours and burial place that would ensure his posterity for generations to come. Ironically, it is the act of historic preservation that ultimately proves to be the general's, and Horatio's, undoing.

By the end of the novel, Tavean's fate mirrors that of his great-grandfather and namesake: he dies (in a car accident) while engaging in forbidden behavior (absconding) with another man's wife (his step-mother, Emily). Only Horatio appreciates the way in which the past emerges victorious—like history repeating itself—and concludes that his family is cursed: no one matures into old age or dies of natural causes; they perish from suicide, accidents, murder, or drowning, and the sins of the father (General Adams) are revisited on the sons (Horatio, his father, and Tavean). Horatio feels betrayed by history and reacts by despising his grandfather “because if he had behaved himself and died where he should have died and been buried where he should have been buried, then I might now have Tavean and Emily both” (*LLL* 230). A believer in historical determinism, or the ripple effect of history, he refuses to take the blame for anything, instead holding the past responsible for his present misfortune.

As Richard Gray explains, because southerners attempted an unsuccessful national project (the Confederacy), they are particularly “haunted by specters of failure and guilt” (161). Ultimately, Horatio, like many southerners of his generation, must abandon his feelings of failure and guilt in order to move on with his life. Dwelling on the dead past causes pain in the live present, and he decides to break this vicious cycle by burying General Adams in the family cemetery, for “I shared the guilt of all the past. I shared even in the guilt of my grandfather. Except I was worse than he was” (*LLL*

252). While General Adams is killed while seeking “love” and hope, Horatio kills all the love and hope around him. It is also at this point in the novel that Horatio, for the first time, begins to question his rigid, self-centered, definition of masculinity, suggesting that it, like his perception of the past, is also flawed and out of place in the mid-twentieth-century South. He must negotiate a new, sensitive masculinity, and a new, inclusive identity, and finally begins to embrace the “pro–New South, pro–urban, and pro–capitalist” values (Bone 148) that surround him as a way out of his destructive agrarian past. He consciously decides to embrace the present, with all of its turbulent change, returning to Nashville, back to his brokerage firm and Emily, with whom he reconciles through forgiveness.

According to Mark Winchell, *The Long, Long Love* “exposes the limitations of a sacred southern virtue—reverence for the past” (*Reinventing the South* 80), and the notion that memory involves re-membering re-constructing, re-producing, re-presenting, re-interpreting, and selectively forgetting the past. Horatio discovers that some aspects of the past should be forgotten, and that “bad memories” involve not only the absence of recollection (amnesia) but also the *persistent* presence of subjective and distorted memories. The family history the Adamses had been reciting for almost a hundred years is revealed to be pure fabrication—a (dis)honorable ruse that was constructed to conceal the questionable ending of a (dis)honorable gentleman. The truth, in turn, was manipulated by each subsequent generation to the point where multiple histories (glorious death on the battlefield, rape/retribution killing, and unwarranted murder) exist in tandem. Clearly, “this blending of a manipulated historical memory and the nostalgia resulting from the collapse of the Old South” caused “the southern past to undergo spectacular reconstructions” (Anderson 132). Thus, *The Long, Long Love* emerges as a postmodern and post-southern novel which questions and problematizes the objectivity and accuracy of southern history, unmooring the solemnity of place, family, and community by exposing the biases and fallacies of commemoration and nostalgia as well as the flawed memories and identities they produce. As Sullivan proposes, nostalgia is not *constructive* but *destructive*. There is no “grand narrative” of History with a capital H, for history is often manipulated for personal and ideological reasons. Furthermore, Horatio’s discovery suggests the perpetual existence of multiple historical (counter)narratives and the idea that monuments, which include burial sites, can both *connect* the past and the present and *correct* the past in the present.

The Long, Long Love is also significant for its commentary on the changing nature of southern society in the mid-twentieth century. As Sullivan conveys in *Death by Melancholy*, in the South, “the traditional code of ethics was to a certain extent a projection of family devotion, and once it was stripped of its basis in human affection it became worthless as a standard by which to live” (81). By the 1950s, this code was no longer adequate, because “even southern aristocrats” were “no longer willing to live within the limits” of “tradition” (Sullivan, *Death by Melancholy* 82). While at the beginning of the novel, Horatio is “a man whose piety for the southern past is everything that an Agrarian could want” (Winchell *Reinventing the South* 81), by its end it is clear that this piety is no longer feasible or desirable in this new, urban, capitalist world. Out of place in the New South, where the comfort of the anonymous city has replaced the comfort of the wholesome family farm, Horatio finds solace in history, in the world of the Old South which, as he discovers, was just as chaotic and disordered. The modern South may seem meaningless and absurd to Horatio, but the Old South was similarly tainted, but in different ways—not by industrialization, commercialism, and the anonymity of the urban setting, but by the moral corruption and hypocrisy that accompanied human bondage, the patriarchal system, and rigid social norms and values. Ultimately, Horatio must confront the lesions of the past in the present and accept the new changing, urban world of Nashville, thereby reinforcing Sullivan’s postmodern critique of southerners’ “blind trust” of the past and his call for a reevaluation of tradition, which involves a candid approach to history. As *The Long, Long Love* exemplifies, “we are forever inhabiting several historical spaces at once” (Meriwether and D’Amore xiv). However, we are never who we are simply because of the past (history), or because of what we remember (memory). History, as Sullivan elucidates, is always interactive and never completely deterministic: we have the agency to confront, reconcile with, and overcome the past, curtailing its repetition and shaping it as much as it shapes us.

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