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# Deconstructing Whiteness, Redefining Southern Literature: Bringing Back African American Voices into Southern Literature

Mi Ok Sa

*Indiana University of Pennsylvania*

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STUDENT HAS RESTRICTED ACCESS TO FULL TEXT OF THE DISSERTATION.

ONLY COVER PAGES AND ABSTRACT ARE AVAILABLE AT THIS TIME

DECONSTRUCTING WHITENESS, REDEFINING SOUTHERN LITERATURE:  
BRINGING BACK AFRICAN AMERICAN VOICES INTO SOUTHERN LITERATURE

A Dissertation

Submitted to the School of Graduate Studies and Research

In Partial Fulfillment of the

Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Philosophy

Mi Ok Sa

Indiana University of Pennsylvania

May 2014



Indiana University of Pennsylvania  
School of Graduate Studies and Research  
Department of English

We hereby approve the dissertation of

Mi Ok Sa

Candidate for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

November 12, 2013

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Signature on File

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Veronica Watson, Ph.D.  
Professor of English, Advisor

November 12, 2013

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Signature on File

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Mike Sell, Ph.D.  
Professor of English

November 12, 2013

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Signature on File

---

Todd Thompson, Ph.D.  
Assistant Professor of English

ACCEPTED

Signature on File

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Timothy P. Mack, Ph.D.

Dean

School of Graduate Studies and Research

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Title: Deconstructing Whiteness, Redefining Southern Literature: Bringing Back African American Voices into Southern Literature

Author: Mi Ok Sa

Dissertation Chair: Dr. Veronica Watson

Dissertation Committee Members: Dr. Mike Sell  
Dr. Todd Thompson

In this study I argued the necessity of including African American writers into Southern literature to enhance our understanding of white identity in 20th-century literature. Though my project is the expansion of the prevalent trend in Southern literary studies, it shows important, new reasons for the necessity. By examining whiteness in twentieth-century Southern literature, using critical whiteness theories, and insisting on the inclusion of white-life fiction, I demonstrate the imperative of including African American literature to gain a clearer understanding of whiteness.

In addition, my project sheds light on four thematic areas that are important in exploring white identity: Southern womanhood, space, biracial identity, and class. By comparing black writers' works with those of white writers' in terms of four thematic aspects, I demonstrate that African American writers offer keen insights into whiteness that white writers fail to show. To this end, I compare the portrayal of biracial identity in William Faulkner's *Light in August* with that in Charles Chesnutt's *The House behind the Cedars* in Chapter 2; I also compare the portrayal of white womanhood's interrelation with race and class in Tennessee Williams's *A Streetcar Named Desire* with that in Zora Neale Hurston's *Seraph on the Suwanee* in Chapter 3. For the framework of my study, I employ a few critical whiteness theories such as Toni Morrison; Owen J. Dwyer and John Paul Jones; David Roediger; and Tim Cresswell.