



# **The Literary Grotesque and Motherhood: Mothers and Daughters in Southern Literature**

*Lori Ann Stephens*

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This brief book focuses on the Gothic elements that help to shape and define literature of the American South and on how these elements are incorporated into Southern literature through overt use of the grotesque. After exploring the foundations of what may be loosely termed the Southern Grotesque, this work analyzes two literary themes that have played major roles in the evolution of Southern fiction, which often centers on women and the roles they play in Southern society: coming-of-age themes and motherhood themes. Coming-of-age themes trace the lives of adolescent girls who grow up in Southern culture, come of age spiritually in the South, and search for identity, while motherhood themes track the influence (both productive and destructive) of Southern women who are thrust into motherhood. This book also examines the Grotesque and Gothic connections among the authors of Southern literature, in particular Zora Neale Hurston, William Faulkner, Carson McCullers, Flannery O'Connor, Alice Walker, and Toni Morrison. These writers of the grotesque tradition have influenced my own novel-writing, to which I refer in the last chapter, a study of the creative process.

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