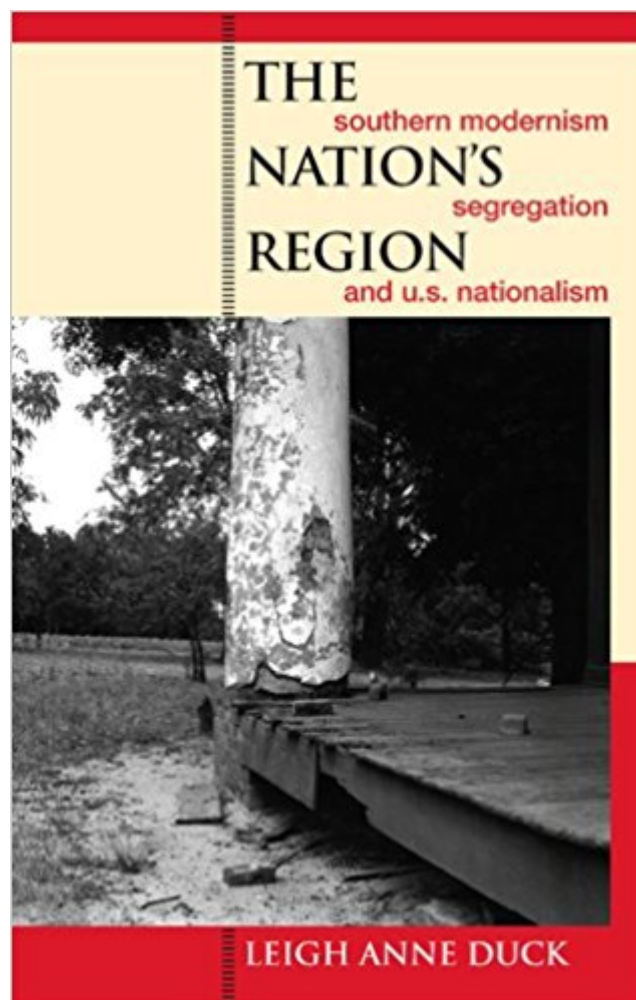




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The Nation's Region: Southern Modernism, Segregation, And U.S. Nationalism (The New Southern Studies Ser.)



Synopsis

How could liberalism and apartheid coexist for decades in our country, as they did during the first half of the twentieth century? This study looks at works by such writers as Thomas Dixon, Erskine Caldwell, Zora Neale Hurston, William Faulkner, and Ralph Ellison to show how representations of time in southern narrative first accommodated but finally elucidated the relationship between these two political philosophies. Although racial segregation was codified by U.S. law, says Leigh Anne Duck, nationalist discourse downplayed its significance everywhere but in the South, where apartheid was conceded as an immutable aspect of an anachronistic culture. As the nation modernized, the South served as a repository of the country's romantic notions: the region was represented as a close-knit, custom-bound place through which the nation could temper its ambivalence about the upheavals of progress. The Great Depression changed this. Amid economic anxiety and the international rise of fascism, writes Duck, "the trope of the backward South began to comprise an image of what the United States could become." As she moves from the Depression to the nascent years of the civil rights movement to the early cold war era, Duck explains how experimental writers in each of these periods challenged ideas of a monolithically archaic South through innovative representations of time. She situates their narratives amid broad concern regarding national modernization and governance, as manifest in cultural and political debates, sociological studies, and popular film. Although southern modernists' modes and methods varied along this trajectory, their purpose remained focused: to explore the mutually constitutive relationships between social forms considered "southern" and "national."

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