**Do you think Rhoda made the right decision to stay in Scuffletown?**

First of all, I don’t think this is a question that could be answered, or should be answered. Just as how full-bodied and complicated the characters in this novel are, the decisions they made, including Rhoda’s decision to stay in Scuffletown, are sufficiently complicated. I believe that every decision is made by the character with his/her life experience, current situation, and a long process of thinking and considering, through struggle and conflict. Concentrating on Rhoda, she first promised Henry to go with him and made some plans together, but then she changed her mind more or less overnight, “I didn’t fall asleep until after midnight…Suppose we did escape North Carolina to start over somewhere else? …We belong here. North Carolina needs Henry Lowrie.” At the same time, she claimed that “I felt it had risen from deep down, from the earth itself, from the past and from the dead.” (p. 328) It’s clear that there’s a complex background and plenty of reasons behind her decision. I don’t think I can judge if she made right decision or not.

Furthermore, I think this decision rooted deeply in her lifetime experience, and it’s more like that she had to make such decision that she chose to do so – it was necessary and inevitable that she stayed in Scuffletown, as she said “there was nowhere else for me.”

From her childhood, Rhoda had learned the significance of the place, of hometown. At the very beginning, when she started to reminisce, Rhoda told us that “I have loved this place as much as I've loved any human soul” (p. 2) an admission that, in light of her passionate love for Henry Lowrie, is quite remarkable. Before she even started to consider love and marriage, she had tied herself to the land she lived on, and realized that it was a lifelong connection: “That's what I wanted to do. Stay in the place that was mine, and keep seeing its beauty and never lose heart until my dying day.” (p. 85) When finally faced with the opportunity to leave, her response echoed the beginning: “In my lifetime all my strongest urges of love or grief or wild fury had come to me in the out-of-doors, under this very sky. What flooded me now was not love and the other rages but *home*. There was nowhere else for me.” (p. 328)

Throughout the story, Scuffletown and its residents showed a strong sense of community, and such sense of community was also reflected upon Rhoda, which also led to her stay. When she was still a child, Allen Lowrie, the patriarch figure of Scuffletown, told her that she would be a teacher and then would come back to and stayed in North Carolina. Scuffletown was especially diverse, with all kinds of colors living together, and racism was not really an issue in Scuffletown, in contrast with the “larger world”. To many of them in Scuffletown, for example, Applewhite, unlike Rhoda, who at least had options, they indeed had nowhere else on earth to go. Henry Berry, the scion of the Lowrie family, put a strong significance on his community too – his decision to escape was partly because his existence in Scuffletown would only cause trouble for others. The sense of community and heritage also dominated her way of educating her children. When Henderson was hanged, she decided to take Sally and Del to the see the execution. “I wanted this story passed down to someone in years to come, a singer or a poet not born yet, Henderson’s heir, who’d know what to do with it.” (p. 303) Henderson’s mother also told Rhoda “You tell yours to tell Henderson’s someday, what they saw here. And to tell their children too.” (p. 311) From the perspective of continuation and inheritance of culture and identity, I guess Rhoda did make the right decision.

**Do you think "her-story" reflects the "his-story" of this area of eastern North Carolina?**

More or less, yes. First of all, the novel isn’t entirely first personal perspective. This novel is, to some extent, like a memoir of Rhoda. While Rhoda’s immediate personal observations and feelings dominate the novel, sometimes Rhoda offers her reflections as if she is recounting her childhood story, and sometimes the author records the events happening out of Rhoda’s sight. From this point of view, we can count on the (fictional) credibility and objectiveness of the story. In contrast, in Tracks, much of Pauline’s accounts is far from the truth. Second, and more importantly, Rhoda Strong, as the name suggests, is not completely the traditional type of woman in her time. Her mother, Celia Sweet, basically ran all the housework, instead of her father, and most of the times, she acted as the guide and protector for the children. Inheriting such trait from her mother, Rhoda appeared more mature, independent, and brave than many around her. For example, Flora basically became an ordinary housewife after marriage to Andrew. Miss McCabe was afraid to be involved in any of the issues and conflicts. In contrast, Rhoda planned and participated the rescue for Henry. And her husband, Henry, also treated her not as an affiliation but as a partner. When Rhoda wanted to join Henry’s business, he gave her the chance, and when she decided to stay, he respected her decision. From this point of view, Rhoda’s perspective should be more comprehensive than most of her contemporary females, and therefore could more or less reflect the story of males.

Admittedly, the story is more or less subjective, as suggested by Rhoda herself, “Mine is only a single and limited testimony, one woman's version -- as much of the truth as I know or can guess, but not guaranteed pure, not unswayed by certain passions. Love, for one.” (p. 2) However, through much of the details of Rhoda’s personal experience, such as her love for and marriage with Henry, we could gain insight into the status of the society at that time.

**Does the book raise any questions about how history gets recorded and told?**

I think this question has two dimensions. First, this novel itself is a historical fiction. As we have discussed in class, most of the events and characters had been real. The author did comprehensive research on the history of the area, reflected in many details in the novel. However, the perspective of storytelling is completely fictional. Rhoda’s thoughts, personal feelings, and reflections run through the entire story, but we are not guaranteed they reflect the real historical character. Furthermore, we, as readers, might as well further misinterpret the intentions of the author. History, in this sense, is never the “truth” – it’s most likely merely the subjective interpretation of the limited records by the later generations.

Second, many characters in the book had different views and definitions of history. For Dr. McCabe, history was more or less objective. It had to be written – he complained to Celia that “we can't have history by say-so”. To him history had to be supported by Archeological or Anthropological evidence, and therefore he tried to find relics and measure head sizes. On the other hand, to many of the Lumbees, such as Celia, history was simply a collective memory, an identity recognized by a group of people. When questioned about the history of Scuffletown, what Celia offered were stories and gossip and introductions to dead people. When Dr. McCabe excitedly announced his discoverings while Rhoda was giving birth to Polly, the others simply didn’t care – to them, at least at that time, they did not need proof for their history and their identity. Such view of history was also passed down to the next generation, as Rhoda took her children to the execution hoping that they could pass that part of history to others and to their generation.