“Whiteness,” as both a field of study and an even an identity, has very often been viewed through its connections to postmodernity, most particularly with the assumption that whiteness equals a body situated within a rootless mass culture1. Such an assumption, based in colonialist and Enlightenment ideals, obscures the construction of the white subject in favor of seeing whiteness as an empty “center” that defies description. As Richard Roediger famously asserted, “whiteness describes, from Little Big Horn to Simi Valley, not a culture but precisely the absence of culture. It is the empty and therefore terrifying attempt to build an identity based on what one isn’t and on whom one can hold back.” In this paper, I complicate such assumptions by looking at the ways in which two novels, Affliction by Russell Banks and Lullaby by Chuck Palahniuk, use the white body and its connection to landscape as a way of writing power and powerlessness in fiction. In these novels, the white body becomes a place to both re-inscribe and question a version of colonialist and neo-colonialist power dynamics that would see whiteness as simply a negative space. In my reading of Affliction, I trace the ways in with the novel lays out and plays with the tensions within ‘whiteness’: class pressures, the separation of mind and body (one of the classic Kantian markers of whiteness), the fetish of whiteness, and the interestingly pervasive idea that the white body is a masculine body. But with the body’s connection to the landscape of rural New England, I argue that the Banks views the white body and the land, the “perimeter” and the “center,” as interconnected and dependent upon one another. While the separation of mind and body has been often viewed as the path to “civilization,” Affliction undermines such colonialist paradigms at the same time it problematically marks whiteness as exceptional. In Lullaby, whiteness takes on vastly different properties. In this novel, Palahniuk also locates power within a landscape; in this case, Africa. The white middle-class characters in this novel appropriate the power of (a monolithic) African culture through the use and abuse of a traditional African song – a lullaby that has the power to kill all those who hear it, thus accounting for childhood deaths attributed to SIDS. This violent taking in of traditional non-white power is used for all sorts of nefarious deeds, culminating in a body-switching conclusion that attempts to erase all difference. The question of whether or not Palahniuk succeeds in this task is a crucial one to explore, and both of these novels offer us a way into understanding contemporary formulations of the white body.