

WEBB, CYNTHIA MONTGOMERY, Ph.D. *Reframing the Plantation House: Preservation Critique in Southern Literature*. (2015)
Directed by Dr. Scott Romine. 238 pp.

This dissertation contextualizes southern narrative critiques of plantation house preservation through the historic preservation movement, from its precursory development in the 1930s through today. Examining literary representations of plantation houses as historic relics in the contemporary moment, I demonstrate how a range of twentieth- and twenty-first century southern writers critique or challenge its architectural preservation. The southern plantation house has been coded in American popular culture as an exemplar of architectural heritage and a symbol of southern history, both of which beckon its preservation. Various modes of preservation, from nineteenth-century plantation fiction's reminiscence of family homes and heroes to twenty-first century's thriving tourism industry, figure the plantation owner's house in romanticized ways that celebrate its architectural aesthetics, present its history through a narrow register of racial relations, and promote its nostalgic embrace. I argue that against prevailing tendencies toward various uncritical ethos of preservation, William Faulkner, Walker Percy, Alice Randall, Attica Locke, Allan Gurganus, and Godfrey Cheshire reframe the plantation house within complex historical and cultural contexts that counter the developing historic preservation movement's popular following by illuminating the mythologies undergirding the iconic white-columned architecture and their perpetuation through its preservation.

Through an interdisciplinary approach, *Reframing the Plantation House* combines architectural history, historic preservation, and a significant level of textual literary

analysis to reveal counter-narratives that unsettle an assumed historical integrity and cultural significance associated with extant plantation houses. Beginning in the 1930s with the first federal initiatives to preserve architectural heritage as a precursor to the preservation movement, I argue that Faulkner's narratives reframe ruined plantation mansions within historical and cultural contexts that substantiate their ruination and abandonment. The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 heralded piquing restoration sentiments and popular historicism. Against this cultural drive, I argue that Walker Percy aligned plantation house restoration and the desire for historical authenticity with parodic fantasy. Slave histories have been predominantly silenced in plantation mythology and tourism. Contemporary writers Alice Randall and Attica Locke each address this selective history as I argue that they reinscribe symbols of slave history within plantation architectures and narratives. An enduring desire to preserve the plantation house without also preserving the traumas of slavery remains today, which Allan Gurganus and Godfrey Cheshire illustrate and attempt to remedy through narrative.

REFRAMING THE PLANTATION HOUSE:
PRESERVATION CRITIQUE IN
SOUTHERN LITERATURE

by

Cynthia Montgomery Webb

A Dissertation Submitted to
the Faculty of The Graduate School at
The University of North Carolina at Greensboro
in Partial Fulfillment
of the Requirements for the Degree
Doctor of Philosophy

Greensboro
2015

Approved by

Committee Chair

© 2015 Cynthia Montgomery Webb

For Daniel, Isaac, and Grams.

APPROVAL PAGE

This dissertation written by Cynthia Montgomery Webb has been approved by the following committee of the Faculty of The Graduate School at The University of North Carolina at Greensboro.

Committee Chair _____
Scott Romine

Committee Members _____
Christian Moraru

Risa Applegarth

Patrick Lee Lucas

Date of Acceptance by Committee

Date of Final Oral Examination

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I am grateful for the guidance and encouragement of many dedicated professors at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro who have invested their time and insights in my own education and development. I am particularly indebted to Scott Romine for his generous resourcefulness and patient support of this project from its inception. This dissertation owes its genesis to his hand in introducing me to the vast array of southern literature and studies. I thank Christian Moraru for his infallible readings and commentary, which have inspired my work in countless meaningful ways. Risa Applegarth has been such an attentive and honest reader whose welcome insights will continue to guide my writing for years to come. Patrick Lee Lucas has been an invaluable guide into the forays of architecture and preservation. I am especially thankful for his continued enthusiasm and dedication to this project through its completion.

Fellow graduate students and peers have challenged, encouraged, and inspired me throughout this process. I am especially thankful to Scott Gibson and Andrew Pisano for their support as writing partners, friends, allies, and also for sharing the immeasurable encouragement and kindness of Kristina Pisano and Cristina Jacome with me.

I hold profound gratitude to my family. While only my name appears on the title page, they are each honorary recipients of the degree to be conferred. I thank my husband, Daniel, for his inexplicable patience and unwavering support; most especially, I thank him for lending me his perseverance when my own waned. My exceptional parents, Jeff and Jean Montgomery, have offered steadfast encouragement. My mother has been

nothing short of heroic in her selfless contribution to our family and home these last two years. Last, but not least, I am grateful for my son Isaac, who has granted me the greatest educational experience of a lifetime.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
CHAPTER	
I. INTRODUCTION: REFRAMING THE PLANTATION HOUSE	1
II. THE “NECESSITY FOR RUINS” IN WILLIAM FAULKNER’S YOKNAPATAWPHA COUNTY	29
III. “A PASSION FOR OLD ‘AUTHENTIC’ THINGS”: PSEUDO-AUTHENTICITY IN WALKER PERCY’S <i>LANCELOT</i>	85
IV. “DON’T BRING YOUR PAST INTO THIS HOUSE”: RACIALIZING THE PLANTATION HOUSE IN ALICE RANDALL’S <i>THE WIND DONE GONE</i> AND ATTICA LOCKE’S <i>THE CUTTING SEASON</i>	129
V. PRESERVATION AND THE SENTIENT TRAP IN ALLAN GURGANUS’S <i>PRESERVATION NEWS</i> AND GODFREY CHESHIRE’S <i>MOVING MIDWAY</i>	183
VI. CONCLUSION: THE NEW OLD HOUSE	223
BIBLIOGRAPHY	228

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION: REFRAMING THE PLANTATION HOUSE

Considered the grandest of Mississippi's antebellum plantation houses, the late-Greek Revival mansion at Windsor Plantation faced destruction in a fateful and consuming fire in 1890. Its remains, a palatial colonnade of twenty-three Corinthian columns joined by decorative iron balustrades, have been visited by thousands of tourists who wander off the nearby Natchez Trace to view its skeletal ruins.¹ Intricate details of the columns delineating Windsor's monumental and imposing footprint have been preserved and reproduced countless times in photographs, often evoking Rome's fallen monuments. Many photographs and narratives exemplify the "golden haze of memory," to borrow Stephanie Yuhl's phrase, that surround Windsor Ruins. Such depictions invoke a hauntingly gothic mood implying that the magnificent columns, as legendary ruins of an extinct culture, recall a golden age of splendor tragically ruined.

In 1938, a recent college graduate named Eudora Welty, who would later become a renowned and prolific writer, traveled her home state of Mississippi as a publicity agent with the Works Progress Administration. The job entailed traveling, photographing, and most importantly "writing of people who were making do in the teeth of the Depression" (R. Price ix). She chronicled much of this experience through photography, as much for the WPA as for herself. Welty took numerous snapshots of individuals, architectures, and landscapes. Of the experience, she says "it gave me the blessing of showing me the real

State of Mississippi, not the abstract state of the Depression” (Welty, *One Time* 3). In 1970, she published *One Time, One Place*, her first of several photography collections from these years. Reflecting back on her early days with the WPA, she said “I could see a picture composing itself ... Practice did make me see what to bring out and define what I was after” (R. Price xiv).

Welty took numerous photographs of Windsor Ruins during her travels, yet one particular black and white photograph proves to be especially illuminating.² Taken from a distance, the iconic columns are minimized, compacted, and nearly fade into the blank background. The shadows of nearby trees darken the columns’s fluted lines. The Corinthian capitals, blackened over time, resemble the tips of wooden matchsticks. The positioning of the frame, which allows the columns to obscure trees in the distance, creates the visual illusion of treetops rising out of the capitals. The foregrounded landscape, shadowed with contrasting shades of light and dark, leads the eye to an area of lightness near the lower right corner of the frame. There a winding foot-trodden path leading to the hollowed mansion carries the imprint of Welty’s shadow. The form, with elbows poised, reveals Welty viewing the scene from the camera’s lens. The silhouette of Welty’s trademark short hair and a-line skirt cast an impression upon the photograph as intimate as her signature.

As a developing writer who was already attentive to exploring southern sense of place, particularly as it related to gender, race, domestic space, and community, Welty surely acknowledged the dual impressions her shadow fosters. The feminine profile suggests a ghostly plantation mistress still attached to Windsor’s ruins. However, the

intimation of Welty's distinct writerly voice, imposed through her shadow, disrupts focus from the sentient monument just as the frame distances its viewer from the architectural grandeur. Her unique photograph provokes a critical view of the plantation house ruins unlike the copious portraits and narratives of Windsor associated with stateliness and loss. Welty's photograph "reframes" Windsor Ruins by shifting attention from the revered ruins to complex ideologies overshadowed by the relic in white collective memory, particularly the pedestaled position of white women and the segregated social order such architectural monuments fostered in the antebellum South.³

My interpretation of her photograph's ability to foster a critique of prevailing sentiments, which register the ruined plantation house as a site of tragedy and loss in white cultural memory, broadly illustrates the overarching literary tactic I examine throughout this project. *Reframing the Plantation House* uncovers southern narrative critiques of uncritical preservation ethos through fictional portrayals of the plantation house that challenge its figurative architectural preservation. Narratives written by William Faulkner, Walker Percy, Alice Randall, Attica Locke, Allan Gurganus, and Godfrey Cheshire expose mythologies that motivate and perpetuate common nostalgic modes of preservation, which present plantations through a narrow register of the past rather than their more complex historical realities. Furthermore, their works reframe the South's iconic architecture within broader historical and cultural contexts to unsettle its assumed historical integrity and cultural significance. Each narrative examined in this study problematizes preservation of a southern plantation house, paying particular attention to its architectural design and narrative history. These works showcase wide-

ranging meanings and outcomes of preservation, which include property conservation, cultural perpetuation, physical rehabilitation, as well as tourism.

Reframing the Plantation House employs an interdisciplinary cultural studies approach that brings together literature, architectural history, and historic preservation. Situating various literary representations of the preserved plantation house within contemporaneous issues in historic preservation and its popular mainstream following, I bring to light the ways in which southern writers highlight the cultural drives motivating preservation of the iconic white-columned mansion. Taking into account architectural design and its historical evolution enriches my reading of narratives—such as those by Faulkner, Randall, and Gurganus—that illustrate perceived ideologies and mythologies associated with particular design aesthetics. Historic preservation practices such as plantation tourism have consistently figured plantation houses in conventional ways that emphasize architectural design and an owning family’s significance within a local, state, or national context. Although entities such as the National Register of Historic Places consider these aspects fundamental substantiating criteria for architectural heritage conservation, this method fosters selective and romantic portrayals of stately homes more than it encourages recovery of plantation histories beyond grand architecture and wealthy proprietors, an issue that Locke specifically addresses. Drawing attention to the preservation movement’s development and its cultural following is especially important to my study because it reveals not only how southern writers have countered prevailing sentiments and trends toward saving the “Big House,” but also how preservation evolves in generational cycles as it is driven by popular culture representations.

The literary plantation house, whether intact, ruined, or restored, has operated in specific ways over time. Antebellum fictional portrayals of the well-maintained plantation house served a didactic function by symbolizing an ordered and natural world established through hierarchical social and racial relations. Literary representations of the plantation house in disrepair also have been motivated by varying purposes across different historical periods. Nostalgia for the plantation house peaked after Reconstruction as southern writers of the plantation school glorified the Old South as a golden age. Actual preservation and restoration of the physical plantation house has become increasingly prevalent since the 1930s due to a rising wave of popular historicism. In response, southern narratives have surfaced to challenge and critique the cultural trend toward its preservation through fiction.

Numerous questions drive this exploration of southern literature's evolving treatment of the historic plantation house. How is the preservation or renovation of houses fostered and challenged in southern writing? How do southern writers depict and grapple with architecture as a cultural repository as they question the meanings and traditions preserved through safeguarding historic architecture and the potential effect of sustaining these ideologies? Perhaps most pointedly, what aspects of the plantation house and its preservation are challenged, and in what ways do narrative critiques engage with historic preservation and popular culture trends?

Reframing the Plantation House argues that southern writers have generated fictional critiques of plantation house preservation that engage with developing historic preservation philosophies emerging from the 1930s forward. This dissertation surveys

examples of fictional plantation house preservation, restoration, rehabilitation, and tourism to show the historical and contextual range in which southern writers have engaged in this conversation. Through these fictional critiques, they reframe the plantation house within a greater historical and cultural awareness of its realities.

Persistent across this range of writers and time periods is an observation and challenge of preservation-inspired mainstream discourses's tendency to embrace foundational myths that situate the plantation house as a repository of collective history rather than dominant cultural memory. If its preservation is to be meaningful and relevant beyond cultural nostalgia, musealization, and the narrow register of wealth and whiteness, these literary texts argue that the broader contextual and racial history embedded within these southern spaces must be brought to the forefront.

Just as Welty's photograph continues to preserve the ruins of Windsor Plantation, William Faulkner's novels repeatedly preserve the ruined plantation house through narrative. His "narrative ruins" of Yoknapatawpha appear in stark contrast to the growing momentum of preservation sentiments sparked in the early 1930s by federal initiatives to preserve architectural heritage. Walker Percy's texts satirize the desire to preserve and commodify southern identity within the musealized and replicated plantation house, a critique he forges against the popular historicism cultivated by the mid-1960s historic preservation movement. The realm of plantation house preservation through the late-twentieth century revolved around the spectacular display of architectural grandeur that overshadowed the racial oppression underpinning the plantation system. In response, African American writers of the twenty-first century have addressed the cultural

preservation of Tara, *Gone with the Wind*'s iconic plantation house, and the absence of black history within its phenomenal wake. Alice Randall and Attica Locke offer African American perspectives on the racial silences prominent in both the literary and material preservation of the plantation house. Twentieth- and twenty-first-century preservation trends have stimulated an increasing interest in historical houses and objects in a search to possess and preserve meaningful signs of white heritage and identity. How to narrate and “sell” plantation house restoration in a period of greater ethical and historical awareness appear as central questions underlying the narrative and cinematic approaches of Allan Gurganus and Godfrey Cheshire, respectively.

Critical considerations of the plantation house in popular memory and contemporary culture have developed in recent years within cultural studies and southern studies. In *Reconstructing Dixie: Race, Gender, and Nostalgia in the Imagined South* (2003), Tara McPherson describes the “critical blindness” that restricts visibility of the plantation to a racialized dichotomy of viewing either whiteness or blackness, romance or stereotype, nostalgia or trauma, as opposed to seeing the plantation as a site historically representative of both (24, 7). Jessica Adams's *Wounds of Returning: Race, Memory, and Property on the Postslavery Plantation* (2007) explores how consumer capitalism continues to circulate the commodified black body of the plantation slave through a variety of reimagined plantations. Her work includes a brief ethnographic tour of “plantations without slaves,” analyzing tourist plantation sites in Mississippi and Louisiana that portray an “‘authentic’ representation of plantation life” for tourists who also call for the sanitization of its slave history (65). Adams's tour echoes a

comprehensive study of plantation tourism documented by Jennifer Eichstedt and Stephen Small in *Representations of Slavery: Race and Ideology in Southern Plantation Museums* (2001), which observes that a vast majority of plantation museums and tourist sites aggrandize white-centric historical narratives and either minimize or silence slavery. Scholarship in cultural studies such as these have drawn attention to the problematic dissonance between the plantation's history and its twentieth- and twenty-first-century cultural representations in ways that I argue highlight the subjective and selective versions of history preserved in southern plantations sustained by historic preservation endeavors.

While most of the writers and narratives examined in this dissertation have been discussed in literary scholarship, my study offers new perspectives and modes of inquiry through its unique combination of architectural history, design interpretation, preservation methodology, and cultural impact, all of which enrich my literary analysis. This dissertation attempts to intervene in American Studies through southern literary and preservation fields as it voices narrative concerns and resistances to the cultural effects of plantation house preservation. To date, only two published essays, both by Brian Carpenter, discuss southern literature and preservation in tandem. Carpenter's insightful articles examine a motif of preservation in a selection of William Faulkner's and Walker Percy's works. I find, as does Carpenter, that these two particular southern authors offer generous reflections on preservation across their works. For this reason, I dedicate two chapters exclusively, and individually, to Faulkner and Percy. However, Carpenter and I differ greatly in the arguments we pose as well as in the approaches we utilize, which I

discuss in respective chapters. The greatest distinction between our works, I argue, is my contextualization of the preservation and architecture fields as well as the mainstream cultural milieu throughout my analysis—an interdisciplinary approach that enriches this study beyond what considerations of the literary texts alone can provide. This approach acknowledges literary and documentary narratives as voices, rhetoric, and engagements within a broader social sphere, that is, the cultural and historical moment of their present and the residual past.

Architectural Design and Influence

The plantation house *image* has long been associated with Greek Revival pediments, columns, and porticoes; however, a variety of emerging architectural styles, economies, and cultural trends influenced its construction and its appearance in history. Although considered the most popular architectural style of the nineteenth century (Lane 8), Greek Revival was one of many trends within architectural fashions of the 1800s in the United States. The Greek Revival style remained popular into the 1840s when its use in new construction began waning, supplanted by more ornate and opulent architectural forms. Regional prosperity increased through advances in cotton production and harvest in the South. As a consequence, newly constructed plantation houses reflected this rise through an increased grandeur of wealth and style. More ornate designs such as Italianate and Gothic Revival architecture grew prominent in the 1850s. The Italianate (Renaissance Revival) style, a popular architecture that coincided with the rapid growth of American cities, maintained a formal and symmetrical style, yet noticeably differed

from the Greek Revival through its “severe blockish form similar to the Italian palazzo” (Tyler 71). Key features of Italianate architecture incorporated into southern buildings include a wide cornice extending beyond the building’s frame supported by elaborate brackets.

The asymmetrical, intricate Gothic Revival style contrasted even more strongly with Greek Revival structures, and interest in Gothic Revival generated increasingly grand buildings and grandiose detailing (Tyler 76). With pointed arches, asymmetrical roof lines and floor plans, tall, narrow windows and steeply pitched roofs, the Gothic Revival was a free-flowing architecture attributed to an interpretation of nature and landscape. The late-1800s saw the rise of Beaux-Arts Classicism and the mid- to late-1800s saw increasingly grand and ornate Romantic architectural styles—Gothic Revival was followed by Romanesque Revival and Second Empire styles—the latter of which “was elaborate and exotic enough to satisfy the need for extravagance felt by many of those who had become rich during the Civil War” (Tyler 80). By 1850, new millionaires chose to display wealth through architecture, “and ostentation became a new ideal in design” (Hamlin 334). Whereas Colonial and Classical Revival architecture of the early-nineteenth century shared a focus upon “balance, classical motifs, and smooth pale surfaces,” late-nineteenth-century designs featured “eclectic, picturesque styles...characterized by irregular outlines, exuberant machine-made ornament, and rich textures and colors” (Bishir, *Southern Built* 277). Along with the distinct stylistic shift in the mid-nineteenth century came particular ideological interpretations of designs and biases toward their perceived representations.

Neoclassical architectures, especially Greek Revival, were elevated as a “natural” style of the Old South through their symbolic emphasis upon restraint and simplicity in comparison to the elaborate styles that followed (Hamlin 244). Greek Revival houses ranged in size, from modest to monumental, but “all with the same ‘manners,’ the same graciousness of detail and rightness of proportion,” through which the style masked issues of monetary wealth (Hamlin 329). In the 1930 Agrarian manifesto *I’ll Take My Stand: The South and the Agrarian Tradition*, Donald Davidson describes the Greek Revival plantation house in terms of bucolic harmony and tradition as he claims,

The South has always had a native architecture, adapted from classic models into something distinctly Southern; and nothing more clearly and satisfactorily belongs where it is, or better expresses the beauty and stability of an ordered life, than its old country homes, with their pillared porches, their simplicity of design, their sheltering groves, their walks bordered with boxwood shrubs. (55)

His belief in the Classic-Revival-inspired plantation house as a “native architecture” and as “distinctly Southern” typifies its romantic and pastoral affinity in white collective memory. Davidson’s vision of the plantation house “express[ing] the beauty and stability of an ordered life” speaks as well to southern scholar Lucinda MacKethan’s claim that the house reflected the “dream of arcady”: “The great house, with its simple and stately facade, its ordered arrangement of buildings and gardens and fields, its aura of serenity and grace, was easily equated with the southerner’s idea of what Eden must have been” (*Dream of Arcady* 43).

Although the Greek Revival style is commonly associated with “native” or “natural” southern architecture and early American tradition, its historical origins were

hardly particular to either: “the Greek Revival in America was simply part of a great wave of taste that swept across the Western world at the end of the eighteenth century, turning up as far east as St. Petersburg in Russia and as far west as Philadelphia in America at about the same time” (Lane 8). Moreover, many of the architects hired to build southern homes and public buildings in the first half of the nineteenth century were either British or Northern (Lane 8). Likewise, many of the materials also were imported, because “there were few cities in the South large enough to support the skilled, white craftsmen necessary for the architecture and furnishings of the plantation house. Hence most artifacts—stairs, fine millworks, architectural ornament, marble mantles, furniture, and fabrics—came either from the North or from Europe” (Fitch, *American Building* 76). Not surprisingly, during the late-seventeenth through the eighteenth centuries elite plantations of the American colonies looked to the aristocratic estates and Georgian manor houses of England for inspiration (Vlach 3-5).

Neoclassical styles, such as the Greek Revival, gained influence in the early development of the United States. As architectural historian Norman Tyler explains, neoclassical designs became the vision of a national architecture through Thomas Jefferson’s influential intrigue with European Greek-style temple architectures while serving as minister to France in the late 1700s. Jefferson went on to design the Virginia State Capitol building in Richmond, a Greek-style temple patterned after the Maison Carrée at Nimes. Completed in 1792, it was the first public building in neoclassical temple form in the United States (Tyler 69). Through Jefferson’s influential designs, neoclassical styles, including the Greek Revival, came to be considered the premier style

for the new American Republic, especially after the War of 1812, as the United States moved away from British architectural styles for patriotic reasons (Tyler 69). Greek architectural forms such as columns, pediments, and porticos appealed to the young nation not only for their pleasing aesthetics, but also for their intimation of history. A variety of additional popular culture influences promoted the growth of Greek Revival architecture in the United States. *Antiquities of Athens* (1762) and *The Builder's Assistant* (1818), architecture books popular among upper- and middle-class builders and property owners, propagated the illustrated designs of Greek Revival forms to a wide audience. *The Builder's Assistant*, the first American architecture book to illustrate Greek designs, offered detailed illustrations for those who wanted to incorporate Greek design into their own less monumental residences without the expense of an architect.

Neoclassical designs held particular appeal among affluent white southern plantation owners claiming mythic descent from Cavaliers and Greek antiquity (Cobb 43). As the South sought leverage to justify slavery and their sectional identity, prominent landowners and leaders looked back to historical models of slavery. Southern historian James Cobb contends that, "Not only did ancient Greece provide a useful model of a slave society that developed a refined and thoughtful landed class, but its great philosopher Aristotle had placed slavery within a natural human hierarchy, where some would dominate and some would remain in perpetual subjection" (42). By adapting Greek forms into exterior and interior architectural design, southern plantocracy

portrayed an imagined lineage, displayed an allegiance to “democratic” principles, and emulated refined culture. Plantation culture, therefore, saturated the Greek Revival with a wealth of symbolic power, cultural refinement, and honorable restraint.

Following the Civil War, efforts to reimagine a glorified Old South have persistently mischaracterized the plantation house, inflating it to a symbolic manorial status that belies its relatively minor role in actual antebellum economies. The plantation mansion has become a prominent symbol of southern identity, history, and tradition since the Civil War; however, its portrayals and memorializations in late-nineteenth-century Lost-Cause representations did not correspond with the actualities of antebellum plantation culture (McPherson 44). Roughly 46,000 plantations existed in the South in 1860, yet only approximately 2,300 of these plantations owned one hundred or more slaves, plantation manor status, and roughly half of those matched the “state of elegance promoted by the widespread southern mythology” (Vlach 8). Only five percent of southern plantations in 1860 “fit the plantation stereotype” of the lavish manorial estate that had developed by the end of the nineteenth century (Vlach 8). Although readily employed as a symbol of the South across a variety of media since the postbellum era, in reality the plantation mansion held a small and scattered presence geographically and demographically within the South, even if its ideology and material stature implied otherwise.

Constructing and Preserving the Plantation House in Literature

Popular perception of the plantation house also has been shaped by its literary depictions in plantation fiction, which frequently reveal an intimate relationship between

the house and its owner. In a classic study of the Old South plantation house in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century southern literature, Guy Cardwell explains that the prototype set forth in eighteenth-century British pastoral literature, “[t]he moderation, the relationship of the house to nature, the chaste and noble lady, the chivalric lord, and the religious seriousness all reappear as aspects of the Southern image” (4). The plantation house appears across a wide temporal range of southern literature since the 1830s. John Pendleton Kennedy’s *Swallow Barn* (1831) is considered the first plantation romance novel. Even in this early text, when plantations continued to structure southern economies and ways of life, Kennedy already associates the plantation house with nostalgia through “the recollection of a simpler time” (MacKethan, *Dream of Arcady* 9). Similar nineteenth-century works recall “the historical Golden Age of eastern Virginia” before the state’s agricultural depression and the ensuing decline of Virginia Tidewater aristocracy; thus, “a nostalgic mood suffuses much of the [nineteenth-century] plantation literature” (Cardwell 7). According to MacKethan, *Swallow Barn*’s “aura of nostalgia...grows into pure melancholy” (*Dream of Arcady* 40).

Kennedy foreshadows future southern writers’ responses to the diminishing plantation house for decades to come when he presents the plantation house as a vanishing relic of an irrecoverable past: “The parlor was one of those specimens of architecture of which there will not be many survivors, and in another half century, they will, perhaps, be extinct” (24). Kennedy’s narrator intends to preserve sketches of the Old

South that have become threatened by the innovations of progress. His sketches of country life, his narrator explains, “have already begun to assume the tints of a relic of the past, and may, in another generation...sink into the chapter of antiquities” (10).

In great contrast to the quiet country home and family plantation *Swallow Barn* portrays, Harriet Beecher Stowe’s celebrated anti-slavery novel, *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* (1852), converts the refined plantation house into a vulgar, unkept space indicative of the master’s treatment of his slaves. Once a “large and handsome” antebellum plantation house that “had formerly belonged to a gentleman of opulence and taste,” the house transformed into a littered and slovenly state “of coarse neglect and discomfort” under the ownership of a loathsome profit-driven slave master, Simon Legree (298, 299). Her widely-read illustrations of the horrors of slavery provided a counter narrative to the image of plantation harmony and gentility promoted by eighteenth- and nineteenth-century southern narratives.

The literary trope illustrating relationships between houses and owners, and also houses and their surrounding environments or nature, repeatedly appear in narratives, particularly as southern writers represent plantation houses as sentient spaces. Not merely accumulating or attracting subjective feeling, such literary depictions reveal that plantation houses possess a self-conscious awareness of the anxieties of history, memory, and nostalgia. Many literary treatments of sentient plantation house ruins have been inspired by Edgar Allan Poe’s antebellum gothic tale, “The Fall of the House of Usher,” which depicts an oppressive gloom originating in the land and the structure of the house. Poe’s tale associates the house’s uncanny sensory awareness with its construction in

relation to its surroundings. Usher explains that the particular order and arrangement of the stones, the fungi that spread over them, the decayed trees surrounding the structure, and the long undisturbed setting all have apperceptive qualities that have seeped into the pond. The perpetual renewal of the gloom-pervading atmosphere serves as “evidence of the sentience” (239). The conscious decay continues in the interior of the house as the narrator describes the gothic images of the room: “Dark draperies hung upon the walls. The general furniture was profuse, comfortless, antique, and tattered. Many books and musical instruments lay scattered about, but failed to give any vitality to the scene. I felt that I breathed an atmosphere of sorrow. An air of stern, deep, and irredeemable gloom hung over and pervaded all” (234). The interior qualities of the room lack “vitality.” In this and many other examples within the story, Poe associates the interior and exterior architecture of the house with the extinguishment of life. These features of the house also permeate Usher’s own body as “peculiarities in the mere form and substance of his family mansion, by dint of long sufferance, he said, obtained over his spirit—an effect which the *physique* of the gray walls and turrets, and of the dim tarn into which they all looked down, had at length, brought about upon the *morale* of his existence” (235). The painting representative of a coffin and the act of entombing his sister within the walls of the house further Poe’s metaphor of Usher’s house as a tomb of death.

Sentience operates as an important thread in many literary depictions of the plantation house and, therefore, also repeatedly appears in my textual analyses. While several of the narratives I examine in this study critique sentience, they present architectural subjectivity through differing predicaments and perceptions. For instance,

plantation fiction's tendency to evoke sentience invests postbellum plantation properties and houses in disrepair with the capacity to remember and memorialize its estranged, and esteemed, owner and also to react to its transitional positioning. Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* repeats this pattern; however, the narrative's treatment of sentience at Sutpen's Hundred adamantly avoids nostalgia in its re-presentation of the past. Literary depictions of sentience solicit affective responses tied to perceptions of the subjectivity reposed within these architectural spaces. Narratives that envision plantation architectures with an uncanny awareness of slave history, such as *The Wind Done Gone* and *The Cutting Season*, utilize sentience as a powerful agent to break free from static representations of the past and to re-present the plantation through alternative histories.

Nineteenth-century plantation school writers employed the image of the ruined plantation house to evoke an atmosphere of tragedy and loss. Sentimental attitudes toward southern life, and particularly toward the plantation house, regained popular literary appeal in the late- and post-Reconstruction-era through writers such as Thomas Nelson Page and Joel Chandler Harris. As Francis Pendleton Gaines explains, through their fictions "estates swelled in size and mansions grew proportionately great. Gentlemen were perfected in courtly grace, gay girls in loveliness, slaves in immeasurable devotion" (64). In Page's narratives, the plantation home became an especially powerful image of a noble past to be preserved. According to MacKethan, "Their threatened plantation homes are a symbol of their struggle, and perhaps of its

futility. In any case, Page's plantation settings provide much more than mere scenery; they supply motivation and meaning for the works as a whole and are at the center of Page's design" (*Dream of Arcady* 48-49).

Page's stories such as "Marse Chan" and "Meh Lady" portray postbellum plantation architectural ruins attempting to come to terms with the South's cultural and economic transitions. In "Marse Chan," plantation house ruins recede into the wilderness: "Their once splendid mansions, now fast falling to decay, appeared to view from time to time, set back far from the road, in proud seclusion, among groves of oak and hickory, now scarlet and gold with the early frost" (1). By the end of the story, the mansion's transformation from splendor to decay represents the fall of its heroic master. In "Meh Lady," the faithful black retainer, Uncle Billy, explains that the physical house mourns Master Phil's death "after dat, things sut'n'y went bad. De house looked dat lonesome. I couldn' byah to look at it; ev'ything I see look' like Marse Phil jes' done put it down, or jes' comin' after it. Mistis and Meh Lady dee wuz in deep mo'nin', of co'se, and it look like de house in mo'nin' too" (88-89). Stories such as these generate nostalgic sentiment for plantation architecture by associating the decay and desolation of plantation estates with the tragedies of fallen heroes. No longer under the paternal supervision of white owners, the once beautiful homes of an idyllic past deteriorate as the architecture assumes the mortality of its possessor. The decay and decomposition of abandoned plantation homes repeatedly imagines architectural sentience. Page and Harris both noticeably use the "faithful [black] retainer" as mouthpiece to glorify the past.

Early twentieth century narratives have similarly situated the plantation house within moments of cultural transition and nostalgia that attempt its preservation. In the Southern Renaissance, literary depictions of the plantation house reflected tensions between agrarian and industrial attitudes toward the South's shifting regional identity and economic prospects. These tensions, often coded as tradition versus modernity, were represented through characterizations of family divides over nontraditional suitors for marriage, architectural modifications, agricultural crises, town development and commercialization. In Caroline Gordon's *Penhally* (1931), Allen Tate's *The Fathers* (1938), and Eudora Welty's *Delta Wedding* (1946), reflections of these tense circumstances rested upon the fate of the white family homestead, the plantation house. In Gordon's novel, Penhally plantation's sale transforms the agrarian family homeplace into a commercialized fox hunt club and ultimately provokes fratricide. In Tate's *The Fathers*, the Buchan's industrializing son-in-law attempts to update the antebellum plantation house by raising its foundation as if to secure it against the economic forces he brings to the land. The house, however, burns to the ground during the Civil War along with the Buchan patriarch. Welty's *Delta Wedding* envisions the favorable restoration of a defunct plantation house when the daughter marries a man of the working class and thus brings new life into the family line. In each novel, there is a desire to retain and preserve the plantation house that links characters to southern tradition and identity. Gordon and Tate pose the greatest challenges to preserving the plantation house within a functioning agrarian space. While Tate parallels the fall of his fictional plantation house with the fall of the Confederacy, Gordon imagines its perpetuation, not as a "plantation,"

but instead as a commodification of cultural nostalgia endorsed for upper-class whites. The iconic southern plantation house, of splendor or decay, occupies a central (sometimes even centripetal) focus within southern literature.

Instilled with a nostalgic conflation of history and a collective memory that often has been more selective than comprehensive, the plantation house has continued to hold iconic status in southern culture and literature long since the postbellum period. The forces of time, dramatic economic and cultural shifts, and modern architectural developments had made their mark on extant antebellum architectures by the 1920s and 1930s as they diminished and decayed. However, newly implemented federal initiatives to preserve the nation's cultural history and architectural heritage such as the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) and the Historic Sites Act, established in 1934 and 1935 respectively, sparked renewed interest in the fading image. In concert with the massive popularity of *Gone with the Wind*, the emerging plantation tourism industry swept the romanticized plantation house image through popular culture with far-reaching results. By the early 1940s, plantation houses had been restored by the hundreds and converted into museums, vacation homes, hunting preserves, and numerous other commercial venues.

In elevating the monumental plantation house as the symbol of the South, preservation advocates and popular consumers have adopted a symbol that bears powerful race and class markers. There are dangers of privileging the plantation house in southern history, one of which Tara McPherson associates with the risk of “eras[ing] the history of oppression that such homes could just as easily symbolize and encourag[ing] a

nostalgic form of southern history” (44). As Jessica Adams claims in *Wounds of Returning*, the plantation is “epicenter and emblem of slavery,” a place of “irreducible social strain” (4), yet the plantation house in the popular imaginary has largely been cleansed of this unseemly “peculiar institution.” The plantation house, therefore, figures the South as white and elite, actively erasing the populations that supported its enterprise—slaves, sharecroppers, and working poor of all ethnicities. Situating the plantation house as a quintessential site of southernness in the twenty-first century largely detaches the site from its original agricultural economy and relabels the plantation house as a family plantation home. Mythic representations of the plantation home in literature and tourism also obscure the oppressive system of slavery that built and sustained the plantation house.

Chapter Overview

I organize this project according to a chronological arc of the historic preservation movement. Each chapter in this study is grounded by specific moments in the historic preservation movement’s developing ethos. This organization reveals evolving concerns and resistances, and critiques of the preserved plantation house and the cultural drives that foster it. The temporal scope of the project begins in the 1930s with New Deal federal initiatives to preserve architectural heritage. This foundational stage witnessed a transition in the preservation sector from local grass roots efforts to federal recognition and popular awareness, all of which pioneered the movement’s official establishment in the 1960s. The landmark National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 not only instituted defined roles of the government, from federal to local levels in heritage conservation and

preservation of the built environment, but also conveyed widespread desires to protect and preserve place. The project's time period culminates with contemporary twenty-first-century preservation trends and the call for greater awareness of the diverse, layered history of place in application.

In my first chapter, “‘The Necessity for Ruins’ in William Faulkner’s Yoknapatawpha County,” I examine Faulkner’s depiction of plantation house ruins in resistance to early phase historic preservation enthusiasm. The 1930s witnessed a combination of cultural incentives to preserve and restore degenerating historical architecture. The noticeable neglect of architectural relics juxtaposed against an increasingly modern landscape sparked a renewed interest in saving endangered architectural structures and historical environments. The motivation for preservationist activism rested upon dual impulses: nostalgia and the growing national desire to collect and preserve historical heritage.

In the same period, Faulkner’s recurring motifs of architectural ruin offer a striking contrast to the popular investment in restoring and touring the antebellum plantation house in the 1930s. While plantation tourism, beginning with the nearby Natchez Pilgrimage and spreading throughout the South, celebrated the grand architecture and manners of the antebellum golden age in white collective memory, Faulkner’s novels “preserve” the plantation house in an image of ruin and corruption. Through these “narrative ruins,” Faulkner reframes the plantation house within the

complex histories underlying their ruined condition. His critical treatments of the plantation house work as a precursor toward later chapters's more overt models of preservation critique.

In chapter two, “A Passion for Old “Authentic” Things’: Pseudo-Authenticity in Walker Percy’s *Lancelot*,” I explore Percy’s work within the historical and cultural context of the historic preservation movement’s progression into national recognition. In the mid-century South, increasing concerns about the destruction of buildings and landscapes brought about by urban renewal, growing interstate and highway systems, and public works projects generated another significant milestone in the historic preservation movement. The National Preservation Act of 1966 and the subsequent National Register of Historic Places expanded preservation policies to include local communities and individuals in preservation activities, such as property nomination and historic districts, “expanding interest and involvement at a level never previously imagined,” thereby shaping historic preservation aesthetics into “an integral part of American society” (Tyler 47). Continuing societal shifts in this period of postwar stimulus and increasingly postmodern landscapes sanctioned new considerations of southern sense of place and the basis for reproducing, if not preserving, heritage through architecture.

In this chapter I argue that Percy’s works satirize the “southern living” restoration culture of the 1960s and 1970s promoted by the popular shelter magazine *Southern Living*, introduced in 1966, and the wave of popular historicism building toward the national bicentennial. Percy’s *Lancelot* turns the contemporaneous charismatic and seductive nostalgia for the semblance of history and authenticity into an extensive parody

of the plantation tourism industry, plantation house restoration, and plantation mythology's stock character roles. Through a fictional critique of historic preservation that amounts to "restoration fantasy," as architectural restoration reenacts plantation mythology's enduring stereotypes, Percy underscores the role of commodified southernness and uncritical historicism in the preservation movement's popular following for southern nostalgia.

In my third chapter, "'Don't bring your past into this house': Racializing the Plantation House in Alice Randall's *The Wind Done Gone* and Attica Locke's *The Cutting Season*," I argue that Randall and Locke respond to the silencing of African American and slave history within the preserved plantation. Randall's novel examines and critiques the conceptual preservation of the plantation house in dominant cultural memory. The phenomenon of *Gone with the Wind* has perpetuated plantation mythology and its appeal to widespread audiences. Randall parodies *Gone with the Wind* and plantation mythology's appropriation of neoclassical architectural elements through a logic of reappropriation. The novel reframes the plantation house by inscribing its landmark features of iconic interior and exterior architecture with symbols of slave history.

Whereas Randall critiques conceptual preservation and mythology specific to the plantation house, Locke crafts a fictional plantation tourist venue as a means of illustrating, critiquing, and circumventing actual plantation tourism practices that rely upon a selective history to minimize slavery. The novel routinely reframes the plantation through an African American narrator who oversees its tourist operations. I contextualize

Locke's novel with representations of slavery documented in the plantation tourist industry. *The Cutting Season* works to correct the historical narrative of slave experience at the fictional Belle Vie plantation and to expand reader awareness of slavery's silencing at actual historic plantations.

My fourth chapter, "Preservation and the Sentient Trap in Allan Gurganus's *Preservation News* and Godfrey Cheshire's *Moving Midway*," examines preservation and restoration narratives created within the heightened racial and historical awareness of the early twenty-first century. Although very different works and approaches, the texts compliment each other through a variety of parallels. Gurganus's and Cheshire's narratives actively engage with the physical labors and ethical concerns of plantation house preservation, Gurganus through fiction and Cheshire through documentary film. While each ultimately promote preservation, they also challenge and critique what they deem to be uncritical tendencies that arise in their projects. Gurganus satirizes the antebellum plantation house as an outrageous spectacle of conspicuous consumption and equally critiques contemporary fascination with its materiality and restoration. Cheshire's documentary chronicles the relocation of Midway Plantation's main house as a means of its preservation. He underscores the plantation as a twentieth-century media-constructed image tied to nineteenth-century plantation mythology. Cheshire juxtaposes the family romance and sentimentality for Midway's preservation against critical counter-narratives that destabilize the plantation legend's mythical underpinnings of Cavaliers and represent the plantation as a historical site of slave labor.

However, in rather uncritical ways, Gurganus's and Cheshire's narratives demonstrate a continuing desire to preserve the plantation house in a manner that does not also preserve its tainted history of slave trauma. While Gurganus and Cheshire both address ethical concerns and historical responsibilities in rather self-conscious approaches to preserving the plantation house, they each slip into sentimental and romantic directions when they consider the plantation house as a sentient space. Replicating the trends of plantation fiction, both narratives envision the plantation house as a structure consciously aligned with the antebellum plantation owner. In responding to the mythical siren call of the sentient architecture, the narratives indulge in romantic moments while sidestepping crucial opportunities for critique. Charles Chesnut's short story "Po' Sandy" offers an unparalleled counter narrative, which I use to introduce the chapter. Chesnut's story ingrains plantation architecture with a sentient connection to the traumatized slave body. Each work brings to the forefront questions of what is actually being restored and perpetuated through preservation practices.

Finally, my conclusion considers the twenty-first century New Old House architectural design movement's ability to foster alluring, sentimental, and sensory attachments to the materiality of place. Like the old plantation house that has been rehabilitated and renewed, the newly constructed house crafted with the semblance of longevity is a manifestation of preservation culture that emphasizes freshly romanticized depictions of historic architecture. Both structures, I argue, exemplify a cultural trend that assumes historical integrity and cultural significance rooted in representations of historic architectures that each of the narratives in this study problematize and complicate.

Notes

¹ Windsor Ruins was documented by the Federal Writer's Project of the WPA (Works Progress Administration) and presented in *Mississippi: A Guide to the Magnolia State*, published in 1938. The site has been administered by the Mississippi Department of Archives and History (MDAH) since 1974. The MDAH has photographs of the ruins taken in 1910. The site remains open to the public. For more information, see the National Park Service's brochure, *Vicksburg: Windsor Plantation*, viewable on the Web at <http://www.nps.gov/vick/learn/education/upload/windsor-2.pdf>

² Some versions of this striking photograph by Welty provide the date of 1942.

³ In these opening paragraphs, I carefully deliberated my own description of Windsor Ruins. At times, my portrayal mirrors the romanticized images that this opening critiques. I do this purposively in order to emphasize the contrast between typical representations of the site and Welty's distinct photograph.

CHAPTER II
THE “NECESSITY FOR RUINS” IN WILLIAM FAULKNER’S
YOKNAPATAWPHA COUNTY

It was a big, squarish frame house that had once been white, decorated with cupolas and spires and scrolled balconies in the heavily lightsome style of the cotton gins had encroached and obliterated even the august names of that neighborhood; only Miss Emily’s house was left, lifting its stubborn and coquettish decay above the cotton wagons and the gasoline pumps—an eyesore among eyesores —William Faulkner’s “A Rose for Emily”

As “A Rose for Emily” opens, all of Jefferson gathers together for the funeral of the peculiar isolated woman. The congregation of ladies, however, attend “mostly out of curiosity to see the inside of her house” (233).⁴ For more than a generation, the front door of Miss Emily Grierson’s house served as a bulwark against social mores of modern development. But time had exacted its toll on the “heavily lightsome” romantic features of the extinguished jewel, now deteriorating in “stubborn and coquettish decay” against the contemporary townscape. The story’s publication in 1930 coincided with Faulkner’s purchase of a run-down antebellum plantation house in Oxford, Mississippi. Known then as “the Old Bailey Place,” its state of disrepair and secluded owner had served as muse for the short story.⁵ Faulkner faithfully restored the old white-columned Greek Revival for years to come, renaming it Rowan Oak and maintaining it as his permanent residence. The age and style of Faulkner’s home choice seems quite fitting for the namesake of a Confederate Civil War colonel and aficionado of southern heritage. Like his short story,

Rowan Oak also fits within a contemporaneous 1930s cultural phase of intrigue with historical southern architecture as an increasing number of people wanted, like Emily's neighbors, to see inside these venerable houses, long closed from public view.⁶

Popular interest in reclaiming and restoring the South's aging domestic landmarks became increasingly prevalent throughout the 1930s. Ladies of the local garden club of Natchez, Mississippi, unlocked their private family homes for public exhibition in 1932, opening their restored antebellum plantation houses to an eagerly awaiting audience. Tourists from thirty-seven states attended the inaugural Natchez Pilgrimage Tour ("Pilgrimage Week" XX10). Touting what would later evolve into the town's motto "Step into the past with Natchez—where the 'Old South' still lives," the pilgrimage reached an even larger national audience its second year through a promotional story printed in the *New York Times* ("Pilgrimage Week" XX10).⁷ The national newspaper again offered its readers a glimpse inside the annual showcase in a 1935 article that describes the "sumptuous settings" and "unforgettable ... chaste white columns" of the pilgrimage's select mansions (Ketchum 19). The feature story briefly surveys a romantic history of the estates and foretells the many events scheduled to entertain those who went on the tour, including plantation dances, barbecues, and a "song festival by a colored choir [which] is always a high spot," all planned "to recreate the authentic color of the past" (Ketchum 19).⁸

The success of Natchez's Pilgrimage Tour kindled similar enthusiasm across the South, prompting many more owners to transform historic plantations into tourist attractions in its wake. The staggering *Gone with the Wind* phenomenon of the late 1930s

further popularized the spectacle of antebellum mansions as fans glorified its image, like Tara, in restored and ruined states.⁹ By the early 1940s, hundreds of antebellum plantation properties between North Carolina and Louisiana had been purchased,—often by wealthy northerners—restored and converted into hunting preserves and winter vacation homes (Rutledge, “The Old Plantations” 23). In this time, *The Saturday Evening Post* printed a number of feature stories about plantation life and restoration, most notably by South Carolina’s poet laureate, Archibald Rutledge. In his telling, the ancient homes, having long-since receded “into the wilderness from which they had been wrested,” (Rutledge, “The Old Plantations” 43) emerge once again and often exceed their original stateliness as much grander showplaces (Rutledge, “Return” 20). Architects and owners converted desolate, abandoned plantation properties and houses into musealized heirlooms of the past.¹⁰ One cannot help but wonder what Faulkner thought of his fellow southerners parading romantic reenactments of the Old South for passing tourists. He likely found irony in these staged glimpses of the past interspersed with contrasting signs of modern development like the gasoline pumps and commercial buildings he had imagined for Emily Grierson’s purlieu.¹¹

Since the 1930s, preservation initiatives, plantation tourism, and southern writers’s literary responses have regarded degenerating historic houses as sites of cultural treasure worthy of exploration and restoration. These registers of the past presume to have a meaningful presence in mainstream contemporary life, yet the purposeful use of that past—beyond producing rather unproductive modes of nostalgia—remains uncertain. Faulkner may have restored his own aging Greek Revival, but his narratives instead

illustrate fictional plantation houses in repugnant architectural ruins. His works repeatedly craft a grand plantation house with all the typical aesthetic appeals, such as the towering columned portico and crystal chandeliers, yet render the “genteel” image as an uninhabitable and grotesque place that cannot be preserved, restored, or even recuperated. Yoknapatawpha’s decayed plantation properties such as Thomas Sutpen’s mansion, the Old Frenchman place, and the MacCaslin house all reveal an overarching message of the corrupt history of the plantation house and expose a critical emptiness in plantation house aesthetics and tradition—the very conceptions attached to southern identity that lure people to call for the plantation house’s preservation.

Faulkner’s narratives suggest the “necessity for ruins,” to use cultural geographer John Brinckerhoff Jackson’s phrase; but rather than kindling preservation and restoration sentiments, Faulkner’s fictional ruins “preserve” the plantation house in a figurative state of material ruin, which I call “narrative ruins.” These narrative ruins signal a stark contrast to American society’s contemporaneous appeal for architectural grandeur and its indiscriminate disregard of the history and ideology encoded either stylistically or materially in its form. All together, his engagement with plantation house ruins counters romanticized portrayals of the “historical treasure.” Faulkner’s works commit to public memory this counter-image of narrative ruins in monumental fashion and, therefore, advocate a fictional critique of an uncritical ethos of restoration propagated by plantation tourism, mainstream aesthetics, and popular culture.

The meaning of place has long occupied Faulkner’s literary scholars; however, specific considerations of the recurring architectures and their impact upon interpretations

of Yoknapatawpha have been limited. Scholarly attention to home and housing in the 1980s made way for several intriguing considerations of Faulkner's use of architecture. Mark Allister's essay "Faulkner's Aristocratic Families: The Grand Design and the Plantation House" (1983) cites *Absalom, Absalom!* as the beginning of Faulkner's own grand design of the fallen plantation. Whereas prior works, he claims, mentioned the house only briefly to provide a utilitarian setting for the narrative, from *Absalom, Absalom!* onward the plantation house follows a recurring pattern of opulence, construction, and destruction (98-100).¹² William Ruzicka's *William Faulkner's Fictive Architectures* (1987) pulls together a detailed survey of the major architectures across Faulkner's work. Ruzicka's book spotlights Faulkner's architectural depictions and opens a conversation for continued analysis of their symbolism and their greater implications.¹³ Architectural historian Thomas Hines's *William Faulkner and the Tangible Past* (1997) draws connections between the actual architectures of Oxford, Mississippi, and Lafayette County while considering Faulkner's symbolic use of architecture. More recently, Brian Carpenter's essay "The Freestanding Poetry of Yoknapatawpha County" (2003) likens Faulkner's real and fictional sentiments for the county courthouse and jail to John Ruskin's call for architectural preservation against the commercial drives of Snopesism and encroaching modernity.¹⁴ Carpenter's essay relays an idea of Faulkner as preservation-minded that feels familiar to many readers and critics given the contrasting ideologies of the Sartoris and Snopes families within his works-that is, the Sartoris's respect for enduring tradition and the Snopes's drive for commercialism.

Whereas earlier studies approach Faulkner's attention to architecture through an inward search of his collective works or in relation to the actual surrounding community, my examination extends outward to the larger historical frame of architectural heritage and preservation. Faulkner may have demonstrated preservation and conservation tendencies in his own life; however, his literature, I argue, resists these impulses by employing a discerning and critical gaze toward the history and memory reposed, and also forgotten, within the structures. Placing his work within this larger frame of historic preservation contributes to a greater understanding of the complicated sentiments and histories surrounding plantation architecture's popular appeal in the 1930s. As the distinctions between historic architectures, preservation trends, and real estate developments widened in the 1960s and 1970s, southern writers such as Walker Percy, as I discuss in chapter two, overtly critique historic preservation, restoration, and reproduction. But by looking back to earlier works, we see that writers like Faulkner already were expressing an ambivalence toward early historic preservation of the South's architectural icons.

The Emergence of Historic Preservation Initiatives

Although the Historic Preservation movement as we know it today would not be formally recognized until 1966, with the National Historic Preservation Act, a growing public interest in "preserving history" through architecture was already well underway by the 1930s. The first national preservation group in the United States, the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association, formed in 1853. The association offered a common paradigm for early preservation trends as a privately-funded campaign spearheaded by women and

concerned with saving individual landmarks for patriotic purposes (Tyler 29). Beginning with their efforts, the first major phase of concerted preservation trends occurred through the 1920s, conserving national landmarks such as Mount Vernon and Civil War battlefields. Through these early endeavors, the concept of conserving landmarks and the built environment took hold and provided a model for the imperative to preserve the history housed within unmaintained landscapes and buildings through restoration (Dworsky 92-93).

Tourism offered an additional impetus for conservation of historical places, but also altered preservationist ethos. The ruined foundations and fading footprints of Colonial Williamsburg led John D. Rockefeller, Jr. to fund its reconstruction in the late-1920s for posterity; however, its anticipated attraction for tourists heavily impacted the manner of its restoration.¹⁵ By the early 1920s, “much of the original town [of Williamsburg] had been lost over the centuries,” and those buildings still standing had “accumulated” numerous architectural alterations. To “preserve” Williamsburg was actually an effort “to restore an entire city” (Tyler 36). Given the loss of original structures combined with the lack of drawings and detailed accounts of each structure, “hypothetical reconstructions” became the basis for much of this work (Tyler 36; Fitch, *Selected Writings* 188). Despite the preservationists’ best efforts, Colonial Williamsburg’s restoration was ultimately a task of re-imagining and re-constructing the past for tourists. The project became infamous for its inauthenticities in re-creating or re-imagining the past, many of which have since been corrected, but it also offered a

cautionary tale suggesting the need for recognized practices and ethics in the preservation-conservation world.¹⁶

The next phase of concerted preservation trends and policies, developing between the 1930s and WWII, heralded a new era for architectural preservation through federally supported initiatives and also a shift in focus from historical landmarks and patriotism to architectural aesthetics and cultural history. In 1931, Charleston, South Carolina, became the first city to establish a historic district. The popular marketing of “Historic Charleston,” as Stephanie Yuhl posits in *A Golden Haze of Memory*, masked the political and economic leverage over representations of history and memory as “elite white cultural refashioning of Charleston between the world wars involved the complicated interplay of modernization, social memory, and the uses of history in the construction and commodification of regional identity” (9). Focusing on cultural productions of memory revolving around elite whites, thus glossing over slavery and racial problems, increased Charleston’s popularity and, therefore, promoted this marketing approach. Through historic designation, Charleston was able to control architectural changes to the city, preventing the influx of any businesses (e.g., gas stations, factories) “which would detract from the architectural and historical setting” (Tyler 38). Beyond zoning regulations, this new precedent protected historical homes and structures with prized architectural features from demolition and led the way for other cities to follow a similar course of action, thereby spawning the establishment of historic districts nationwide.

The early twentieth century became an era of compiling and defining public history. Economic crisis prompted a federal impetus in the 1930s to catalog and preserve

national culture as reflected in its landscapes and built environments. President Roosevelt's Depression-era New Deal programs such as the Works Progress Administration (WPA) "provided employment to thousands of unemployed architects, craftspeople, artists, and photographers" (Tyler 40). Implicit within the New Deal's attempt at economic recovery was a backward and forward momentum as its initiatives looked to the past to preserve cultural heritage as a means of rebuilding the nation's economy for the future. Roosevelt's 1938 declaration that the South was "the nation's No. 1 economic problem" spurred intense scrutiny and debate about the region's conditions and its "distinct culture." Through the New Deal's investment in the labor of preservation, WPA narratives and photographs of the South, among other programs and chronicles, fostered a regional awareness of its landscapes and architectures as resources that could be self-promoted to improve its economy.

Federal initiatives such as the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) and the Historic Sites Act, established in 1934 and 1935 respectively, both sought to preserve the nation's cultural history and architectural heritage. HABS's agenda was to record "only the briefest resume of facts," such as construction dates and owners, and discouraged the collection of any "sentimental mythology" of the houses (Davidson and Perschler 65). Nationwide survey teams of previously unemployed architects and draftsmen made drawings and photographs of historic buildings to create a national architectural archive. As part of President Roosevelt's New Deal, these programs documented historical buildings constructed between the early American and postbellum periods that had become "endangered" by the 1930s due to the ravages of time, economic

hardship, and transformative real estate development. Through drawings, measurements, and photographs, these endangered historical buildings could be “preserved” for posterity. As architectural historian Lisa Pfueller Davidson and HABS collection manager Martin Perschler explain, “One of the primary concerns of HABS was the creation of a record of endangered buildings that could not be preserved through other means. By documenting the physical remains of earlier eras, the intangible qualities of early American architecture might not be lost to the forces of progress” (51).

Historic preservationist William Murtagh explains that the Historic Sites Act “heralded the real coming of age of American preservation Available at last was a coordinated policy that recognized the documentary value of buildings and sites which often combined patriotic, associative, and aesthetic content” (58). Fostered by this act was a cultural model and influential guideline that recognizes an extended range of valued criteria to be considered toward the preservation and conservation of a national heritage. In 1941, the project was put on hold as WWII loomed on the horizon, but by then HABS had produced records of 693 historic buildings (in both drawings and photographs). Additional ventures emerged during this architectural preservation milieu as well. The Carnegie Survey of the Architecture of the South, led by well-known architectural photographer Frances Benjamin Johnston, cataloged seven thousand photographs of historic architecture from 1933 through 1944 in the South alone. The structures photographed range from private to public (homes as well as courthouses, schools, and churches) and vernacular to high style (farmhouses and slave quarters to elegant plantation mansions).¹⁷ The collection’s predominant theme is domestic

dwellings constructed in the 1800s. As with HABS, Johnston's work also captured abandoned and ruined structures "as a reminder of the heritage in need of preservation or already lost" ("Carnegie Survey" par. 4). Collectively, endeavors such as HABS and Johnston's Carnegie survey generated a storehouse of cultural heritage sites and documents that would be appreciated for generations to come; however, the precise meanings of these symbols and their cultural significance remained open to interpretation.

A range of factors influenced desires to preserve particular architectural structures including the patina of antiquity, the representation of a particular style within architectural history, and its associated historical or cultural events. Who decides what is culturally and historically valuable for preservation and restoration, and who benefits from sustaining these particular symbols of history, are perhaps the most critical considerations. As Fitzhugh Brundage points out in *The Southern Past* (2005), the motives and ethics underlying this project of historical archiving commonly limited the purview to a white, and often elite, notion of a regional past (107):¹⁸

Through decisions about the appropriate focus of archives, museums, and historical agencies, white histories and their allies effectively removed competing groups and historical alternatives from the region's past. Although couched in terms of promoting civic spirit, this archival impulse in the South impeded any inclusive or democratic understanding of southern history. (Brundage 107)

Essentially, an ethics underlying preservation and restoration selection that reached beyond a political majority had yet to be developed. The hundreds of architectural structures recorded by HABS were intended to supply a history of American architecture.

However, attaining historical analysis of the structures proved to be an ongoing and heavily underestimated challenge (Davidson and Perschler 66). In an attempt to record aging structures before they incurred even further erosion, the program operated under an accelerated pace and utilized a workforce of wide-ranging levels of expertise in architecture. These factors, combined with the plethora of data accrual, meant that making sense of this historical compilation would be lacking for decades to come.¹⁹

The cultural incentive for restoration of historical environments is predicated upon ruins, neglect, and discontinuity (Jackson 102). Cultural geographer John Brinckerhoff Jackson observes a “necessity for ruins” to spark a redemption or renewal of the historical built environment (102). Structural ruins’ remoteness from everyday activity and fading from active memory forges into an emblem of the past. Coupled with desire for nostalgic escape from the present, “monuments” of the past, such as the extant plantation house, gain appeal through their antiquity and the threat of their extinction. As geographical historian David Lowenthal succinctly states, “we value our heritage most when it seems at risk” (“Heritage Crusade” 31). Enduring models of architecture appear as symbolic structures encoding history. Their contrasting image, namely modern real estate and commercial development, continues to be perceived by traditionalists as a threat to erase or obscure enduring markers of the past. Undergirding the desire to preserve and restore was an assumption that through preserving or collecting these symbols, one could preserve the idea or the spirit of the thing itself, the meaning and history retained within its physical materiality.

The southern plantation house, as antebellum relic and modern-day ruin, offered a prime symbolic setting time and again to explore notions of the South, its romantic myths, and the perpetual presence of the past in this literary period.²⁰ Given the growing cultural appeal of the plantation house as restoration project and historical tourist site, its image in ruins solicited sympathetic responses and nostalgia for the mythic golden past housed by the aging architecture. John Crowe Ransom's 1931 poem "Old Mansion" illustrates the modern individual's piqued curiosity for the antiquated house. Having passed the house often, an intruder takes closer inspection of the aging relic and implores to enter the home, "To beg their dole of a look, in simply charity, / Or crumbs of wisdom dropping from their great store" (lines 27-28). The wandering self-labeled historian identifies "crumbs of wisdom" within the heightened aesthetics of the house's age: "Stability was the character of its rectangle Decay was the tone of old brick and shingle" (lines 17-19). His courage to knock upon the door comes from his fear of its further ruination—"one had best hurry to enter it if one can" (lines 21-24). Turned away, he laments that no "annalist" or "antiquary would finger the bits of shard" of the unseen relics beyond the closed door (lines 39-40).²¹ Ransom's "historian" figure offers a prime example of the 1930s sense of attraction and attachment to ruin. As with the concurrent phase of historical preservation trends, the focus on architectural aesthetics and cultural heritage prompts the historian's interest. Individuals feel a sympathetic and romantic attraction to declining historic structures, a response evoked by perceiving a historic building's fading capability to demonstrate, by its physical demeanor, an enduring connection to the past and its associated meanings. Accordingly, declining material

conditions of historic buildings and sites drive measures to protect, conserve, or restore aging buildings and sites. This vein of uncritical historicism, of privileging antiquated aesthetics, amplifies an assumed historical value based on antiquity, yet what that history entails and how it is valued remains unspoken, even unquestioned.

Reading the Ruins of Yoknapatawpha

In his first novel of Yoknapatawpha County, *Sartoris* (1929), Faulkner depicts the only successfully restored plantation house across his works. After it had been burned down by Union troops, Colonel John Sartoris rebuilt his plantation house over the original cellar and foundation. As the novel opens in Spring 1919, old Bayard Sartoris feels the heavy spiritual weight of his deceased father's presence still residing in the family home. Within these walls hang decades of family memories and post-plantation history. The restored plantation house functions, here and in twentieth-century popular culture, as an assumed repository of artifact and memory. However, it is signature details of the plantation house that fill the scene of his arrival:

Bayard stood for a while before his house. The white simplicity of it dreamed unbroken among ancient sunshot trees. He then crossed the colonnaded veranda and entered the front hall.... The stairway with its white spindles and red carpet mounted in a tall slender curve into upper gloom. From the center of the ceiling hung a chandelier of crystal prisms and shades, fitted originally for candles but since wired for electricity. To the right of the entrance, beside folding doors rolled back upon a dim room emanating an atmosphere of solemn and seldom violated stateliness and known as the parlor, stood a tall mirror filled with grave obscurity like a still pool of evening water. (6-7)

The columned porch, curved stairway, crystal chandelier, and solemn parlor, like the image of the house itself, reflect the "unbroken" image of the plantation house in its

“white simplicity.” The narrator here controls our gaze at a superficial level. But beyond the formal entryway and beside the interior doors of privacy, the “folded doors rolled back,” stands the hyper-symbolic mirror. Designated for reflection upon the scene, it instead appears “filled with grave obscurity.” The scene suggests an ironic reflection upon the characteristic features of the plantation house, a reflection which clearly lacks insight or analysis into the meaning of these forms. Like Ransom’s poem, we see the material symbols of history, but can not decode their meaning.

Faulkner’s later novel, *The Unvanquished* (1938), supplies greater insight into the history and communal attachment to the Sartoris home not fully explored in *Sartoris*. In *The Unvanquished*, the house is attacked and burned by Union troops, leaving only four smoldering chimneys on the blackened landscape. Sartoris rebuilds the house “on the same blackened spot, over the same cellar, where the other had burned, only larger, much larger” (220). Sartoris’s rebuilding is about continuing family history, seen most visibly through the stained-glass panel Aunt Jenny had first “salvaged from the Carolina house where she and Father and Uncle Bayard were born and which [John Sartoris] had set in a fanlight about one of the drawing room windows” (235). The stained-glass window panes reflect family tradition by uniting past family houses and gatherings to the current rebuilt house. Miraculously, the glass panel is salvaged again and reset in the rebuilt house. Following John Sartoris’s death, his grandson young Bayard walks through the family home, feeling his grandfather’s absence throughout the house as the very absence of air, “as though by being dead and no longer needing air he had taken all of it, all that he had compassed and claimed and postulated between the walls which he had built, along with

him” (242-43). Despite his grandfather’s physical absence, Bayard still senses his spiritual presence, pondering “maybe what Drusilla meant by his dream [for the family and community] was not something which he possessed but something which he had bequeathed us which we could never forget” (252-53). His thought settles upon Aunt Jenny’s colored glass window, shedding the only light into the drawing room, and thus reiterating a notion of the Sartoris house, its family and community ties, as a positive and redeeming symbol.

The house “was the aura of [John Sartoris’s] dream” (220), but its reconstruction is performed in the spirit of rebuilding the community. As Drusilla explains to young Bayard, “He is thinking of this whole country which he is trying to raise by its bootstraps, so that all the people in it, not just his kind nor his old regiment, but all the people, black and white, the women and children back in the hills who don’t even have shoes” (223). All can benefit from the sight of its return, a positive vision against a ruined wasteland. Even their former slave Ringo attempts to “restore” Sartoris’s ruined house to its original condition. Sitting before the meadow where “the chimneys rose out of the pile of rubble and ashes,” Ringo sketches the original image of the house from memory (141). The Union lieutenant watches, perplexed that Ringo is not drawing the ruin he sees before him. Ringo responds, “What I want to draw hit like hit is now for? I can walk down here ten times a day and look at it like hit is now” (141). Given his enslavement, Ringo has great cause to rejoice in the destroyed plantation house; however, he finds no glory in the plantation mansion’s ruins. As the aura of John Sartoris’s dream, the house retains his integrity and character, even for Ringo.

Faulkner invested particular significance in reconstruction and preservation of the Sartoris house for its family and community; however, consideration of the same treatment does not extend to his other fictional plantation houses.²² Rather, many of his novels position narrative ruins of the plantation house as their central focus. Major examples include the McCaslin house of *The Unvanquished* (1938) and *Go Down, Moses* (1942); the Old Frenchman place of *Sanctuary* (1931) and *The Hamlet* (1940); and Thomas Sutpen's mansion of *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936).²³ In each case, his narratives assemble these plantation houses through histories of intrusive construction and corrupt practices. As Guy Cardwell explains, "The system that supported the house is, in Faulkner, stained by craft, arrogance, hypocrisy, and force; and the history of the house is marred by evidences of cupidity, pride, miscegenation, incestuous love, and bloodshed" (13), all of which arouse tension between the larger community and the architectural structures. One could argue that the once decadent antebellum homes in twentieth-century modern-day ruins contribute to Faulkner's larger critique against holding onto a stagnant past. As Richard Gray attests, Faulkner describes the myth of the old plantation as one located "spatially" and temporally in "the special preserve of memory" (236). Thus, Gray finds that the plantation dream remains closely associated with the past in Faulkner's novels. This circumstance "creates real problems for those—like Bayard Sartoris III or his grandfather 'Colonel' Bayard Sartoris II—who live in the present" (Gray 236). Perhaps images of Yoknapatawpha ruin are indicative of the southern region's poor economic conditions—a metaphor for the Reconstruction- and Depression-era southern wasteland. However, I argue that Faulkner's narrative ruins illustrate a

counter-narrative to cultural nostalgia and accelerating plantation preservation aesthetics. In detailing not only the historical grounding of each house but also the aesthetic incongruity between the surrounding community and the grandiose plantation mansions, Faulkner's narrative ruins exemplify the iconic architectures's failure to warrant restoration and preservation, thus justifying their perpetual ruined condition.

The McCaslin Plantation manor house as described in *The Unvanquished* "was still one of the finest houses in the country" when brothers Buck and Buddy McCaslin inherited it following their father's death in 1833 (46-47). However, the mansion quickly falls to decay when the brothers refuse to live in its confines, regarding the acclaimed plantation manor house a lasting symbol of the evils of slavery inherited from their ancestors.²⁴ Instead, the brothers reverse order, forcing the field slaves to live in the plantation house while they take a two room log house, a former slave cabin, as their own homestead.²⁵ The plantation house proposes to control slaves through confinement, yet "It didn't have any windows now and a child with a hairpin could unlock any lock in it" (47). The brothers continue to "drive them into the house and lock the door with a key almost as big as a horse pistol," only to "hang the key on a nail beside the door" (46-47). The nightly ritual is a well-understood charade between them all, "a game with rules," in which slaves discretely escape out the back each night and return the next morning.

Faulkner's depiction of narrative ruins upends popular culture's reverence for the plantation house as a refined image of gentility. In his treatment, the iconic structure's architectural aesthetics are exchanged for squalor as the manor house erodes from "one of the finest houses in the country" into dilapidated slave quarters. Its narrative ruins

challenge contemporaneous popular perceptions of the architecture's simple elegance and its protected realm of white gentility.²⁶ The McCaslin narrative ruins insist upon reframing the refined plantation house within the squalor of slavery from which the plantation house image or idealization attempts to distance itself.

Whereas narrative ruins recall slavery in the McCaslin plantation house, “the Old Frenchman place” mansion’s narrative ruins project extravagantly wasteful displays of greed and vanity incongruous with the surrounding community’s architectural aesthetics. In both *Sanctuary* and *The Hamlet*, the Old Frenchman place appears as a “gutted ruin” having been ravaged “piecemeal for firewood for fifty years” by the surrounding community of Frenchman’s Bend (S 8). Descriptions of the house in *The Hamlet* express its grandeur in Yoknapatawpha County: “walnut newel posts and stair spindles, oak floors which fifty years later would have been almost priceless” (4). The tactile opulence of the mansion—its crystal chandeliers hung from fourteen foot ceilings framed by gilt filigree cornices (386)—never appear in their full grandeur. Rather, their presence in the novel’s time period, roughly 1907, is marked by ruin: “the skeleton of the tremendous house” (4); “the skeleton of what had been once a crystal chandelier” (386); “the remains of a once-gilt filigree of cornice above the gutted windows and the ribbed and serrated grin of lathing from which the plaster had fallen” (386); “jagged flecks and scraps” of sunlight creeping “through the broken roof and the two rotted floors overhead” (397).²⁷ In each description, across various texts, the mansion appears as a gutted wasteland, never in a depiction of living splendor. Faulkner’s prediction that “fifty years later” the

mansion's interior remains "would have been almost priceless" reflects the increasing capital of historic materials and presciently nods towards its amplified desirability as the Civil War centennial approaches.

The ruined mansion materializes in the opening scenes of both *Sanctuary* (1931) and *The Hamlet* (1942) as the "site of a tremendous pre-Civil War plantation, ... the gutted shell of an enormous house with its fallen stables and slave quarters and overgrown gardens and brick terraces and promenades" (H 3). Directly following this opening image of manorial ruins begins the story of its original owner, Louis Grenier, a man immediately deemed a foreigner by the community. "[A]nyone speaking the tongue with a foreign flavor or whose appearance or even occupation was strange, would have been a Frenchman regardless of what nationality he might affirm...But nobody knew what he had actually been" (H 4), nor, apparently, does his actual nationality matter to the community. Whereas Yoknapatawpha County is populated by yeomen, Grenier is a vast plantation owner, the first to bring slaves to the county and the first to plant cotton (Fagnoli, et al 123). His difference from the community norm marks him as an excluded foreigner in Yoknapatawpha. Despite the once-evident grandeur of his mansion, "even his name was forgotten" (4). What remained, beyond the gutted ruins, was a legend of his pride:

a legend about the land he had wrested from the jungle and tamed as a monument to that appellation which those who came after him in battered wagons and on mule-back and even on foot...could not even read, let alone pronounce, and which now had nothing to do with any once-living man at all—his dream and his pride now dust with the lost dust of his anonymous bones. (4)

The prideful rationale of his cultivation of wilderness into a refined mansion, expressed in his terms of material value and aesthetics, is so far beyond the language and understandable values of Yoknapatawpha's yeomen that his name and legend is silenced, forgotten, buried anonymously, and overshadowed by the rumor of monetary value hidden within the land.

The vacant mansion's only appreciable value to the community is its most basic component: lumber. The community deconstructs the once-opulent home according to its own needs: "its sweep of stairs whose treads had long since been prized off and carried away to patch barns and chicken-houses and privies, whose spindles and walnut railings and newel-posts had long ago been chopped up and burned as firewood" (386). The once-prized wood is now "prized off" for utilitarian functions and basic needs. The architectural aesthetics of the plantation mansion have no meaning for the small farming community of Frenchman's Bend because it cannot be recuperated as the everyday or vernacular style of their own modest dwellings. They repurpose the priceless wood piecemeal into rudimentary vernacular architectures: barns, chicken coops, and outhouses. The irony of the priceless wood pried off the mansion's grand staircase and now holding together the outhouse is hard to miss. Faulkner transforms the mansion's priceless materiality from the filthy rich to filthy waste and livestock, thereby intensifying the critique against the plantation mansion's grandiose presence among the rural agricultural landscape and community. Even the community's wealthiest capitalist entrepreneur, Will Varner, finds the mansion's grandeur absurdly excessive. His meditation upon the ruined porch makes even more evident the financial waste of the

structure. Overlooking the “fallen baronial splendor” of the Old Frenchman place, he says, “I’m trying to find out what it must have felt like to be the fool that would need all this . . . just to eat and sleep in” (7). Varner’s perspective reiterates the novel’s translation of wasteful conspicuous consumption into conspicuous waste.

Joseph Urgo argues that the Old Frenchman place becomes valuable “only once it is invested with narrative significance” (445), but its story is one of the money rumored to be buried in the land, a rumor which Flem Snopes has reignited to increase his own gains.²⁸ Henry Armstid’s continual digging for buried money generates a spectacle, a tourist destination even, for onlookers who arrive to watch his efforts. The road to the mansion, which had been a nearly healed “scar” upon the land, again becomes prominently rutted: “That road was no longer a fading and almost healed scar. It was rutted now, . . . the untroubled grass and weeds of almost thirty years bore four distinct paths . . . the weathered and creaking wagons, the plow-galled horses and mules, the men and women and children entering another world, traversing another land, moving in another time” (403). The novel, therefore, suggests that the architectural ruins of the southern landscape have commercial and monetary value in myth only. Playing upon the desires of others to find treasure within the once-grand estate, Flem becomes a restorationist of sorts by “reinvesting” in the property. However, it serves as a poor man’s attraction as spectators fixate on Armstid’s relentless and futile search.

Faulkner’s depictions of the McCaslin house and the Old Frenchman place reveal significant critiques of the plantation house that justify their ruinous state in the present day. However, in *Absalom, Absalom!* we see Faulkner’s most complex critique of empty

aesthetics and traditions associated with the *idea* of the southern plantation house. Appearing in a time of great cultural conversation about the continued presence, and questioned resonance, of the southern plantation, *Absalom, Absalom!* is quite fittingly a novel deeply concerned with the construction, downfall, and destruction of Yoknapatawpha's most infamous antebellum mansion. With the novel's release soon following the upstart of the Natchez Pilgrimage and the concurrent publication of best-selling southern plantation romances, Stark Young's *So Red the Rose* (1934) and Margaret Mitchell's *Gone with the Wind* (1936), Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!* had a very different story to tell—one that does not sentimentalize the plantation's disintegration or its coveted architectural splendor. Instead, the plantation house's grand aesthetics and ornamentation impart great offense to the Yoknapatawpha community of simple yeoman farmers.

One of the novel's most memorable lines, "*Tell about the South*" (142, italics original), provides the impetus for the story as Quentin Compson realizes: "*It's because she wants it told*" (5, italics original). When Rosa Coldfield summons Quentin, she wants Thomas Sutpen's story preserved through written narrative as she tells him, "So maybe you will enter the literary profession as so many Southern gentlemen and gentlewomen too are doing now and maybe some day you will remember this and write about it" (5). Rosa's strong ties to the South and her adherence to the Old South's social traditions are a crucial element in her demand for Sutpen's story to be remembered. Through Quentin we come to understand just how integral Sutpen's history is to an understanding of the

South, its histories, and its myths as the narrator designates Sutpen's rise and fall as part of Jefferson's heritage:

It was a part of his twenty years' heritage... a part of the town's—Jefferson's—eighty years' heritage of the same air which the man himself had breathed between this September afternoon in 1909 and that Sunday morning in June in 1833 when he first rode into town out of no discernible past and acquired his land no one knew how and built his house, his mansion, apparently out of nothing... and so accomplished his allotted course to its violent end. (7)

Sutpen's rise contrasts so sharply against an implied notion of "natural" development and adherence to tradition in Yoknapatawpha, underscored in Rosa's beliefs, that his story perplexes her and Quentin. The tension between Yoknapatawpha traditionalists like Rosa and all that Sutpen represents exposes a fracture between a twentieth-century *idea* of the southern plantation and the historical realities of their construction.

The *idea* of the southern plantation house comprises a range of cultural myths utilized by literature and society that form its associated aesthetics and traditions. Included in this romantic notion of the plantation house, as I discuss in the Introduction, are an assumed sense of order, simplicity, harmony with nature and spirit of place, in addition to a gentlemanly owner deeply rooted to the land and the community. Sutpen's mansion, however, entails a critical emptiness in each of these traditions. Rather than evoking harmony with nature, his mansion ruptures the landscape physically and figuratively. Neither a gentleman nor attached to the community, Sutpen becomes characterized by his foreignness as a nonconforming outlander. The most striking

difference, and offense, of Sutpen's mansion is grandiose ornamentation. Contrary characteristics of foreignness and overt ornamentation can best be understood in relation to *genius loci* of the mythical plantation house.

The ancient concept of *genius loci*, or “*the spirit of place*,” rooted in the protective spirit which provides character and essence to people and place, nurtures an existential understanding of a definitive character of place and an essence of its people (Norberg-Schulz 18). *Genius loci* has maintained a stronghold in numerous eras from its ancient Roman beginnings to a contemporary credence stemming from late-twentieth-century phenomenological studies about the meaning and indeed the crisis of place. Respect for *genius loci* was a prevalent concept in the major influential designs of Thomas Jefferson and Andrew Jackson Downing in the 1800s. Jefferson's architectural principles exhibited an appreciation for the spirit of place through classic architectural details intended to reflect virtue and classical Greek democracy. Although prominent in a later architectural period encouraging romantic and Gothic styles, Downing also emphasized harmony between landscape, environment, and architectural style, claiming “not only must [they] compliment each other—they must be virtually indistinguishable” (Sweeting 46).

Popularized pastoral domestic images express a harmonious relationship between the built and natural environment understood through *genius loci*. John Pendleton Kennedy's southern plantation romance *Swallow Barn* (1831) “is often credited with being the first [of many] to use the plantation house as an analogue of the Old South's ‘Paradisaical’ order” (MacKethan, Introduction xxii). Named “Swallow Barn,” the

Meriweather plantation's "time-honored mansion" gains its namesake from an accord with surrounding agriculture and wildlife. Initial descriptions of the house focus upon its intimacy with the natural landscape: a willow tree draping the lawn between the gate and house (28); a brook and "a wilderness of laurel and alder" just beyond the house (29). Much like its literary forebears, Swallow Barn's house and gardens reflect the order and symmetry of nature. In contrast, more modern additions to the house, built "as the wants or ambitions of the family have expanded," have been "built in defiance of all laws of congruity, just as convenience required" (28).²⁹ Plantation fiction's positive portrayals of aristocratic planters entail a respectful balance between the natural and built environments as a means of justifying that "an estate in harmony with nature will also be at peace with man" (Cardwell 6).

In contrast to this ideal, fictional plantation houses designed without regard for their surroundings have, as a result, paid a fateful price for their builders' misconceptions. Roderick Usher's "mansion of gloom" in Edgar Allan Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher" (1839) with its "decayed trees" and "pestilent" lake (233) spawned the notorious motif of the Gothic plantation house doomed to collapse.³⁰ Thomas Nelson Page's "No Haid Pawn" (1887) utilized similar motifs in its depiction of the ominous plantation: "the very name inspired dread, and the place was our terror" (166). The mansion had been built upon a "primeval swamp" (167):

Why this spot was selected for a mansion was always a mystery unless it was that the new-comer desired to isolate himself completely. Instead of following the custom of those who were native and to the manner born, who always chose some eminence for their seats, he had selected for his spot in the middle of the wide flat which lay in the horseshoe of the river. (166).

According to Lucinda MacKethan, “Page wants to show here what happens to the plantation ideal when unworthy beings attempt to imitate its concepts” (*Dream of Arcady* 45). Constructed by a stranger with no desired connection to the community or the land, the property evokes an immediate sense of the unnatural. Rooted in isolation, foreignness, and the brutalities enacted against slaves, the home becomes subsumed by evil spirits and succumbs to a hellish annihilation.³¹

We see, then, two recurring and polarizing patterns for the literary plantation house: the first, a dwelling associated with nature and simplicity as a romanticized symbol of harmonious order; the second, a self-aggrandizing architecture as a reprehensible conquest of place. Both patterns emerge in *Absalom, Absalom!*. First, Faulkner defies the romantic image of house and owner by crafting Sutpen to brutally rupture the land’s tranquil and simple spirit through home construction. Second, Sutpen amplifies the offense through his ostentatious design.

Faulkner departs from the literary tradition of an idealized plantation house and owner respectful of *genius loci* by casting Sutpen as the figure of outland invasion.³² As in historical reality, the northern Mississippi of Faulkner’s fiction remained mostly frontier land until the cotton gin prompted an influx of new settlers to take advantage of emerging plantation profitability.³³ A stable gentry would not have existed then in the fictional Yoknapatawpha or in the actual northern Mississippi territory. A figure like Sutpen, therefore, would be the norm, not the unpolished outsider. Sutpen’s hasty rise from stranger to “the biggest single landowner and cotton-planter in the county” (56) seems anachronistic to the romantic plantation myth, particularly given the narrative’s

emphasis upon his vengeance to overcome the original insult, yet historically his settlement and prosperity would have been common between 1830 and 1860.

Rosa's adherence to a particular conception of the Old South's social traditions is a crucial element in her demand for Sutpen's story to be remembered and for his "narrative ruins" to be preserved. As Rosa Coldfield and Mr. Compson relay Sutpen's life story to Quentin in the early 1900s, they critique Sutpen's behavior in the 1830s according to their own understanding of Old South traditions based on a later logic. Idealized notions of the plantation's organic development by "native" individuals of shared manners appear in Page's writing in the 1880s—which is atrociously violated in "No Haid Pawn" in the quotation above—and also are reflected in plantation tourism as a means of "naturalizing" the plantation as a benevolent institution and a family home. The critiques against Sutpen reflect an attempt to distinguish between romanticized old Virginia plantation histories prior to 1830 and the Deep South's more controversial plantation histories after the 1850s, which were more overtly entangled with the brutalities of slavery and the material display of wealth through the plantation mansion. Therefore, portrayals of Sutpen's "uncommon" practices illuminate the durability of plantation mythology as the narrative manages to decry the "unprecedented" ways of recent settlers of frontier expansion like Thomas Sutpen, a man who seemingly comes from no past and no place and yet establishes a plantation legacy out of "nothing." As an outsider without communal ties and a man lacking a respectable family heritage, Sutpen figures as the perennial outcast and nemesis through what Mr. Compson calls his "innocence," or rather, an ignorance of social custom and sense of place in the outskirts

of Yoknapatawpha. His foreign status is a perpetual reproach among the community, particularly for “that league of Jefferson women who on the second day after the town saw him five years ago, had agreed never to forgive him for not having any past” (AA 40).

Sutpen’s excluded status began long before he came to Yoknapatawpha County. As Mr. Compson explains it, Sutpen’s design of a grand plantation—of house, property, and slaves—originated from a position of exclusion and, therefore, in the absence of knowledge rather than in a traditional progression rooted in place:

he was just fourteen then...[when he] set out into a world which even in theory, the average geographical schooling of the normal boy of fourteen, he knew nothing about, and with a fixed goal in his mind which most men do not set up until the blood begins to slow at thirty or more and then only because the image represents peace and indolence or at least a crowning of vanity, not the vindication of a past affront in the person of a son whose seed is not yet, and would not be for years, planted. (AA 40)

Conventionally the grand plantation would be designed after investing numerous years in the community’s agricultural plantation industry, thus associating the image of the plantation manor with an accomplished career rewarded with “peace and indolence.” However, sparked by the childhood insult when a house slave, better dressed than himself, directs him to the back door, Sutpen’s ambition for a grand plantation was conjured by “the vindication of a past affront.” His design, therefore, lacks the foundational knowledge, experience, and perspective of the conventional path and is embarked upon, as Mr. Compson explains, “in a country and among a people whose very

language he had to learn” (41). Sutpen’s exclusionary position and his “innocence” underly the crux of each perceived flaw in his overall design.

As an outsider and intruder, Sutpen violates the myth of *genius loci* that unites people in Yoknapatawpha within Rosa’s and Mr. Compson’s telling. Community affront to Sutpen’s presence evinces a sense of sameness and belonging tied by a past and connection to the land, all of which he noticeably lacks by comparison. His accompanying band of wild negroes and his captive architect differentiate him even further from the agrarian farmers. His presence in the town quickly raises suspicions among the townspeople as Mr. Compson relays: “So they [townspeople] would catch him, run him to earth, in the lounge between the supper table and his locked door to give him the opportunity to tell them who he was and where he came from and what he was up to” (25).³⁴ Their efforts are to no avail, as Rosa explains, “anyone could have looked at him once and known that he would be lying about who and where and why he came from by the very fact that apparently he had refused to say at all” (11). Upon learning that “he owned land among them now” (26), “parties of horsemen” would regularly ride out to survey Sutpen’s land and his progress; gathered together “they would sit in a curious quiet clump as though for mutual protection and watch his mansion rise, carried plank by plank and brick by brick out of the swamp where the clay and timber waited” (27-28). “[R]eports and rumors” of progress on the house ripple through the community as “the town and the county watched him with more puzzlement yet” (29).

His presence may be seen as an unwelcome intrusion, but his construction of a house is perceived as a violent invasion. In 1909, Quentin Compson imagines Sutpen’s

emergence in 1833 as violating a once-tranquil landscape, overtaking nature, and pillaging Eden of its clay and lumber. In his first vision, Sutpen ruptures the landscape: “Out of quiet thunderclap he would abrupt (man-horse-demon) upon a scene peaceful and decorous as a schoolprize water color” (4). Like a “demon brood” marked with “faint sulphur-reek” (4), Sutpen and his men conquer the land as “Quentin seemed to watch them overrun suddenly the hundred square miles of tranquil and astonished earth and drag house and formal gardens violently out of the soundless Nothing” (4). Sutpen’s brutal conquest of the land comes as the epitome of his violation of Yoknapatawpha’s tranquility and innocence.³⁵ Though Sutpen’s rise to prosperity in Yoknapatawpha followed great historical precedence, it sharply contrasted against romanticized notions of the plantation as that harmonious agrarian home and landscape that had become so familiar to readers by the 1930s.

The Corrupting Influence of Architecture

Like many of his real life outland immigrant counterparts, Sutpen supplants lineage and belonging with the gran plantation house. Through his design, he intends to build a semblance of history, constructing the veneer of a past rooted in the land that will offer the foundation for his legacy. Having failed in his design once in the West Indies, he returns to the South still intent to overcome the original insult. Sutpen demands the skills of an architect from Martinique, the Caribbean hub of high fashion, to design his plantation dynasty. In its prime, Sutpen’s mansion was the grandest and most stylish architectural edifice of Yoknapatawpha; however, such splendor was never admired by

the community. Sutpen's Hundred, rising in stark contrast to the simple nature of its surroundings, is perceived with skepticism and disillusionment during construction and with outrage after completion.

We can easily recognize Sutpen's character within architectural historian Talbot Hamlin's description of the late antebellum *nouveau riche*. As Hamlin explains,

[the millionaire] concealed his ignorance and his lack of background and education behind his love of display. He was profoundly envious of culture, but he could not understand the deep roots of the American culture which had preceded him. He wanted change, he envied Europe; what architecture was possible for such a man but eclecticism? (335)

Ornament and monumentality was certainly a strategic disguise for Thomas Sutpen who, according to Rosa Coldfield, "concealed himself behind respectability, behind that hundred miles of land ... and a house the size of a courthouse" (AA 10). His overall "design" to outbuild the plantation estate of his past affront makes evident that his mansion is not commensurate with the presumed culture of deep-rooted traditions associated with Yoknapatawpha, much less ideas of the plantation house. Like the millionaire, Sutpen attempts to build his character and identity through an architectural façade.³⁶ As Rosa explains, he "called it Sutpen's Hundred as if it had been a King's grant in unbroken perpetuity from his great grandfather" (AA 10), despite having developed it out of no past or local lineage at all. It is this immense absence, not only of a past but also of architectural knowledge, that mandates the architect's presence, indeed his captivity. Guy Cardwell claims that plantation mansions appearing in the "youth" in Faulkner's works may be "expressive of a hard-driving ungentlemanly builder who, more

rigorously than Thomas Nelson Page, improved on the Virginia original by elaborating the ideal into a hypertrophied fiction of perfumed grace, harmony, and grandeur” (13). While Thomas Sutpen may seem to be the “ungentlemanly builder” Cardwell envisions, Sutpen’s Hundred falls short of surpassing ideals of “the Virginia original” despite his attempts to do so through monumentality alone. Rather than elaborating the “fiction of perfumed grace, harmony, and grandeur” of the plantation ideal, Sutpen’s monumental and eclectic design generates a barrier of exclusion between himself and the community.

General Compson appraises the architect as an “artist” because, he says, “only an artist could have borne Sutpen’s ruthlessness and hurry and still manage to curb the dream of grim and castlelike magnificence at which Sutpen obviously aimed, since the place as Sutpen planned it would have been almost as large as Jefferson itself at the time” (AA 29). Yet the mansion still holds an enormous presence. Faulkner’s later novel *Requiem for a Nun* (1951) depicts Sutpen’s mansion as “something like a wing of Versailles glimpsed in Lilliput’s gothic nightmare” (500), thus an excessively ornamented, baroque palace of overindulgent taste and monstrous proportions within a small place of small things and small people.³⁷ The narrative voice here, speaking with historical authority on the town of Jefferson, functions as “the town’s communal memory” and as mouthpiece for “the community’s attitudes and feelings” summarized over time (Ruppersburg 134, 137). Dreaming of “colonnades and porticoes” (RN 498), the French architect creates for Sutpen an elaborately detailed architectural style associated with the nineteenth-century Parisian Beaux-Arts movement. The elaborate, eclectic, and monumental style often “freely adapt[ed] features of French architecture of

the 16th, 17th, and 18th centuries and ha[d] considerable influence on American architecture” (Harris 27). This formal, symmetrical, and heavily ornamented style (typified by paired columns and balustrades) inspired American architecture from the 1880s to 1930s in the design and construction of public buildings such as courthouses, libraries, museums, and even affluent, if not pretentious, residences (Harris 27-28). The foreign architect employs a design that echoes the past even as it is projects a highly modernized form that would not be popular, much less common, for another fifty years in the U.S.³⁸ To temper Sutpen’s demands with his own high-fashion taste, he pulls inspiration from Versailles’s baroque embellishments.

Although the architect succeeds in taming Sutpen’s outrageous notions of design, Sutpen’s Hundred displays a grandeur and opulence unseen and unvalued in Yoknapatawpha. Like the more reserved Virginia Tidewater gentry, the townspeople observe a similar “cultural taboo against ostentatious display” and likewise favor a more “unified landscape” (Ellis 14). Once again, this anachronistic condemnation of Sutpen reflects a cultural critique of the *nouveau riche* tendency to display wealth through architecture and the ensuing result in which “ostentation became a new ideal in design” (Hamlin 334).

Beyond the foreign intrusion of Sutpen and his gang, one thing strikes the community as an ultimate emblem of Sutpen as the public enemy: the ornamentation of the house, which converts the structural shell into a manorial estate. As Mr. Compson explains, “it was a little more involved than the sheer value of his chandeliers and mahogany and rugs. I think the affront was born of the town’s realization that he was

getting it involved with himself; that whatever the felony which produced the mahogany and crystal, he was forcing the town to compound it” (AA 33). Between the future father-in-law’s modest finances and Sutpen’s own lack of capital, the material ornamentation for Sutpen’s home suggests criminal acquisition as well as a sense that this unknown crime has been forced upon them. Although the outlying community of Jefferson has been skeptical of Sutpen all along, it is only when he completes the empty shell of his home with ornament that they outright rebel and turn against him.³⁹

Yoknapatawpha’s provincial distrust of ornament follows a literary motif of egregious opulence indicative of immorality and greed as seen in nineteenth-century works like Edgar Allan Poe’s “The Fall of the House of Usher,” Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*, and Thomas Nelson Page’s “No Haid Pawn.” In each case, the narrator or community associates architectural ornamentation and opulence with the corrupting force of its owner.⁴⁰ Perceiving ornament as a treacherous and untrustworthy foreign intrusion, the Yoknapatawpha community resists Sutpen’s grand plantation mansion at numerous stages of its development. Sutpen’s difference from the community, even his house’s difference from its surroundings, suggests that the man and the architecture uphold an ideology of power and corruption incompatible with the existing community’s ideal of agrarian simplicity.

Despite being filled with wagonloads of furnishings, the mansion is haunted by a motif of emptiness. As Allister explains, Sutpen’s grand architecture and landscape, complete with “formal beds, porticoes, columns, promenades, and terraces” (97) project an image of polished plantocracy. But inside the house, the rooms “in which to fulfill the

functions of an aristocrat: to entertain, conduct business, and gain knowledge” — the ballroom, office, library, and sitting rooms — all “went unused” (97). Even once completed and fully decorated, the grand mansion remained, at least symbolically, the same empty shell it began. Here again, Sutpen’s design fails through his assumption that architectural grandeur and ornament will suffice.

If Sutpen’s story is, in some way, a story about the rise and fall of the South’s plantations, then it also reflects the tension between its architectural representations. To return to architectural trends discussed in my Introductory chapter, the Greek Revival style was elevated as a “native” or “natural” plantation house architecture of the South for its symbolic portrayal of classic ideals, order, and symmetry. More ornate architectural styles, which grew prominent after 1850, satisfied the extravagant desires of the *nouveau riche*. Grandiose mansions, like Sutpen’s Hundred, project the conspicuous consumption of plantation owners rather than the romanticized image of order and harmony associated with the Greek Revival.

The sense of architecture as capable of exercising a corrupting influence extends beyond Sutpen alone. Charles Bon, the assumed estranged son of Thomas Sutpen, has his own “design” in Quentin and Shreve’s modern-day telling that also relies heavily upon the influence of architecture. Quentin and Shreve repeatedly associate architectural metaphors with their vision of Bon corrupting Henry. As Bon exposes Henry to the different appearances and customs of New Orleans, they “can see him corrupting Henry gradually into the purlieus of elegance...exposing Henry slowly to the surface aspect—the architecture a little curious, a little femininely flamboyant and therefore to Henry opulent,

sensuous, sinful” (87-88). Bon allows the foreign architecture to play the siren song, luring Henry into an intimate homosocial bond. Quentin and Shreve theorize that Henry’s “puritan” and Anglo-Saxon heritage would be in utter contrast to the houses of New Orleans where “even the houses, let alone clothing and conduct, are built in the image of a jealous and Sadistic Jehovah, put suddenly down in a place whose denizens had created their All-Powerful and His supporting hierarchy-chorus of beautiful saints and handsome angels in the image of their houses and personal ornaments and voluptuous lives” (86).

The New Orleans architecture evokes a sensuality, vanity, and grandeur far exceeding Yoknapatawpha’s own landscape and ultimately lures Henry into Bon’s scheme. The entryway leading to the pinnacle of Bon’s design—in which he will teach Henry the skill of dueling and lead him to the inevitable patricide—is crafted too in architectural detail:

the instant for which Bon had builded:—a wall, unscalable, a gate ponderously locked..the gate of solid beams in place of the lacelike iron grilling and they passing on...the labyrinthine mass of oleander and jasmine, lantana and mimosa walling yet again the strip of bare earth combed and curried with powdered shell. (89-90)

The barriers of iron and vine, of man-made and nature-made instruments, intend to form an inaccessible interior. The “labyrinthine mass” of flowering vines create a wall built by nature that should not be penetrated. Yet this proves to be a setting Bon has drafted if only to break through the barricade with Henry in tow.

Bon’s design evokes architecture’s power to influence and corrupt through motifs of accessibility, exclusion, and rupture with methods even more conspicuous and

consequential than Sutpen's. As such, it suggests a generational shift in awareness of how architecture's power can be harnessed and used for ulterior motives. Whereas Sutpen uses architecture to simulate lineage and belonging, to create a space for himself within plantation society, Bon uses architecture to influence, change, and corrupt—to rupture Henry's provincial innocence. Quentin's and Shreve's depiction of architecturally-influenced corruption advances Faulkner's fictional resistance to the 1930s piquing intrigue for historical architecture and an uncritical ethos of preservation associated with mainstream aesthetics and plantation tourism. Its vanity and grandeur, while appealing, leads to unforeseen and irrevocable consequences. As with Ransom's historian in "Old Mansion," antiquated architectures are assumed to have great value because of their age, but uncritical focus upon aesthetics may neglect to explore the history and memories reposed within the architecture.

Architecture retains its power, *Absalom, Absalom!* suggests, even in incomplete or decrepit form. Motifs of shell and emptiness often surround Sutpen's mansion in narrative. Sutpen's mansion continues to erode; the ornamentation and opulence that once defined it sold off piecemeal through economic downfall. With Sutpen's one hundred square miles reduced to one, "he would at least retain the shell of Sutpen's Hundred" (AA 136). Following the War, the house retains "an incontrovertible affirmation for emptiness, desertion; an insurmountable resistance to occupancy" (AA 67). But even in its decayed state, a shell of its former grandeur, Sutpen's mansion still poses a significant threat. For Rosa, the house will always be an empty shell of Sutpen, a repository of his sentience. As Rosa and Quentin approach, he shares her insight:

It loomed, bulked, square and enormous, with jagged half-toppled chimneys, its roofline sagging a little; for an instant as they moved, hurried, toward it Quentin saw completely through it a ragged segment of sky with three hot stars in it as if the house were of one dimension, painted on a canvas curtain in which there was a tear; now, almost beneath it, the dead furnace-breath of air in which they moved seemed to reek in slow and protracted violence with a smell of desolation and decay as if the wood of which it was built were flesh. (293)

The monstrous shell, once seemingly impenetrable and now frayed by fenestrations of the night sky, still marks an “enormous” footprint. Its chimneys, once the apex of the mansion, now stand “jagged” and “half-toppled.” Despite the mansion’s vulnerabilities and obvious decline, Sutpen’s sentience emanates from the “dead furnace-breath of air” surrounding the ruins. The house itself reflects a rotting corpse with “a smell of desolation and decay as if the wood of which it was built were flesh.”

Rosa’s fearful conception of the house, like that of Quentin and his childhood friends, rests upon a phenomenological understanding of place, an understanding of how we experience the physical and psychical presence of place. Her conception bears semblance to the dynamic power and lived experience of architecture, namely houses, that Gaston Bachelard would later discuss in *The Poetics of Space*.⁴¹ Although now only a shell of what it once had been, Sutpen’s skeletal house transmits a near-palpable evocation of the corruption brooding beneath its origination. Even in ruins during the present day of the novel, Sutpen’s mansion continues to evoke fear among the town. As Quentin confronts the house with Rosa, “it seemed to him that if he stopped the buggy and listened, he might even hear the galloping hooves” (290). Quentin visualizes its history of patricide rise again from the architectural ruins: “He looked at the two huge rotting gate posts in the starlight, between which no gates swung now, wondering from

which direction Bon and Henry had ridden that day, wondering what had cast the shadow which Bon was not to pass alive” (291). Like Ransom’s historian, Quentin’s visit to the “old mansion” leads him to imagine cultural and historical treasure clinging to its decrepit material form.

The extant shell of Sutpen’s Hundred portends a continuing threat when considered in relation to plantation house restoration and tourism popularity in the mid-1930s. Analogous to Bachelard’s phenomenological sense of place, the shell evokes a dream of restoration, of wholeness again.⁴² Not only must Sutpen’s house be seen in ruins, it must also be utterly destroyed to prevent any chance of a second restoration or reconstruction. Its destruction would prevent a curious onlooker, like Ransom’s “antiquarian/historian” of “Old Mansion,” from peering further into its confines and being corrupted by its architecture (as Charles Bon corrupted Henry with New Orleans’s architectures). Even if the physical structure has been destroyed by novel’s end, Sutpen’s mansion and its history has been deliberately “preserved” in “narrative ruins,” as commissioned by Rosa and recorded by Quentin. The story of Sutpen’s Hundred, once the grandest of Yoknapatawpha’s plantation mansions, becomes then not a romance nor an elegy for the architectural treasure lost, but rather, an allegory of the necessity for ruins, a tale pointedly at odds with mainstream restoration and tourism aesthetics. As the Natchez Pilgrimage lures wider audiences to re-imagine the plantation house as an arcadian dream, Faulkner guides his readers through a plantation’s history as large and grotesque as the mansion itself.

Concluding Thoughts on Restoration and Reproduction

Conceptualization of a southern tradition developed between post-Reconstruction and 1930 leading to “a southern style that emphasized the past” (Wilson 37), which could be found readily in architectural styles such as the southern Greek Revival. Similarly, the effort to preserve “endangered” architectures stimulated a growing commercial and public desire for new residential construction modeled on traditional “style” houses of an earlier era. According to Davidson and Perschler, “Even HABS’s founders underestimated the nationwide interest in American architecture that grew out of popular enthusiasm for history” (Davidson and Perschler 68). The popular allure of stepping inside the old plantation house transcended the boundaries of antebellum structures as new housing construction replicated its aesthetic appeals.⁴³ Architectural historian Catherine Bishir claims that between 1890 and 1930 the “Southern Colonial” home, merging the symmetry and classical themes of the Colonial with the sweeping columns and porticoes of the earlier Greek Revival antebellum mansions, “came to dominate upper- and middle-class housing throughout the South” (“Landmarks” 34). As Bishir explains, “That the Southern Colonial house was built more often for an urban businessman than for a cotton planter only confirmed its power” (“Landmarks” 29).

The style once so commonly associated with the rural southern plantation had shifted by the 1930s from agrarian to suburban settings, but also would shift from prosperous to mainstream housing. Although newly constructed and far removed from their conventional rural settings, these houses offered the semblance of “traditional domesticity, respectability, and continuity” through their classical imagery reminiscent of

antebellum landmarks.⁴⁴ Architect and preservationist James Marston Fitch editorialized in 1933 the frequent demand of wealthy clients for new-construction homes of Colonial, Georgian, and “Southern Plantation” designs as opposed to the architectural field’s trending toward more modern and functional styles. “The plain truth seems thus to me,” he lamented, “the ‘style’ house of today is hopelessly antiquated, a deceitful and patched-up old wench dressed in the trappings of another day and looking always to the past for more tricks of allure” (*Selected Writings* 29).⁴⁵ Case in point, between 1930 and 1931, Fitch was commissioned to design and build a replica of Auburn, built circa 1812, one of Natchez’s most paradigmatic antebellum plantation manor houses. Once completed, the newly constructed private residence in Nashville, Tennessee, replicated each detail of the original mansion, including its colossal columns, free-standing spiral staircase, and intricate moldings.⁴⁶ The major architectural exception in the design was the addition of modern-day innovations, all of which had to be concealed and disguised so as not to disrupt the replicated image (Fitch, *Selected Writings* 26-27). Perhaps the greater illusion is that Auburn’s Nashville replica can project the original’s structural grandiosity and yet refuse to acknowledge the social relations and enslavement that empowered such stateliness. Mainstream fancy for the plantation house often privileges recognizable signs of history over actual history, a paradoxical and superficial tendency that essentially disregards the slave system underpinning the grand architectures. As John Brinckerhoff Jackson observed, the neglect and ruin of historical environments provided the cultural incentive for their restoration and even reproduction (102). Their temporal remoteness

and distance from the modern day allowed for a nostalgic return lacking the critical insight of plantation architecture's real history encoded within the structures.

Faulkner's narratives re-historicize the antebellum plantation house for modern-day audiences, returning a complex under-articulated history to the revered iconic architecture. He continued to explore this theme long after the 1930s as architectural trends reflecting historical and antebellum styles grew. In his late career, he emphasized the emptiness within antebellum-inspired renovation and reproduction housing in the Snopes trilogy. When Flem Snopes assumes the role of bank president, he swiftly remodels the bank's presidential house.⁴⁷ In his grand attempt to build respectability, he has the front of the house remodeled to resemble "an ante-bellum Southern mansion" (*T* 360). As the residence for each succeeding bank president, the house has been linked with wealth and respectability. However, "The house...wouldn't be enough for Flem Snopes. [It] would have to be the physical symbol of all them generations of respectability and aristocracy" (*M* 153). Utilizing prominent features of the antebellum plantation mansion, Flem replaces the front gallery with a two-story portico and tall white columns (*M* 154).⁴⁸ Yet, despite his efforts, "it was jest the house that was altered and transmogrified and symbolized: not him" [sic] (*M* 154).

Flem Snopes resembles a modern-day Thomas Sutpen, designing the grand house but lacking the correlated tradition or rooted lineage. Characterized most notably for his unscrupulous rise to economic wealth, he builds his legendary persona and grand house "out of nothing," completes the house with interior decor and ornamentation fitting of his position, and yet, as with Sutpen, the rooms remain unused and guests remain uninvited

(*M* 155). Flem's renovated house magnifies the dissonance between long-standing notions of virtue and honor associated with the Greek Revival and the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century mainstream trend of reproducing antebellum-style facades. Faulkner uses his most despised character to reflect upon the contemporary trend of reproducing historical designs in housing. Through such an association we see a continuing critical commentary regarding twentieth-century cultural appeal for the plantation house. The grand houses of Thomas Sutpen and Flem Snopes are little more than a shell, a facade, of all that they aspire to represent.

Faulkner's works, therefore, challenge the era's growing embrace of restoring the ornate manor house or reproducing its features by suggesting that the associated history was far more corrupt, sinister, and empty than the pageantry of the early Natchez Pilgrimage and similar popular imagery confessed. This strategy aligns with Faulkner's penchant for sorting between southern myths and realities as he deconstructs the image of the ostentatious plantation mansion. Thus, the author considered a "contentious supporter of historic preservation," (Carpenter, "Freestanding Poetry" 617) proves to be very selective in his sense of architecture's historical value for preservation. Rather than promoting preservation or restoration of the plantation mansion like his literary contemporaries, Faulkner instead promotes its abandonment and eventual disintegration. Through narrative, he preserves the structure in material ruins, paradoxically monumentalizing the monumental icon in its most decrepit state. In this grand depiction of ruin, the Old Frenchman place and Sutpen's Hundred reflect their real value as symbols of waste, greed, and corruption concealed through ornamentation and grandeur.

Like Ransom's "Old Mansion," cultural treasure awaits within if one can access it, yet the real shards of history are embedded in the narrative, not in the material structure. This kind of realization has the power to reshape attitudes toward the iconic antebellum white-columned house as well as its continued reproduction and utilization in more contemporary design.

Notes

⁴This quotation as well as the opening epigraph have been taken from the story's first publication in *Forum* LXXXIII.4 (April 1930): 233-38.

⁵I credit similarities between Emily Grierson and Ms. Bailey to Rowan Oak curator William Griffith, who also discussed with me the prevalent local reference to the property as the "old Bailey Place." Many scholarly sources, however, continue to call it the "old Sheegog place" in reference to its original owner, Robert Sheegog. Joel Williamson's *William Faulkner and Southern History* also discusses Rowan Oak's pre-Faulkner years as the "old Bailey Place" (228). According to Griffith, Faulkner was "more sensitive" to restoring the home in honor of Ms. Bailey than Sheegog because of the ruined state in which he acquired the property.

⁶ John Crowe Ransom's poem "Old Mansion" (1924) precedes Faulkner's story and this element of domestic voyeurism as the curious historian.

⁷ The phrase "Where the Old South Still Lives" appeared on Natchez highway billboards until nearly the end of the twentieth century according to Jack Davis in *Race Against Time: Culture and Separation in Natchez Since 1930* (15).

⁸ For a detailed history of the Natchez Pilgrimage, see Jack Davis's "Pilgrimage to the Past Public History, Women, and the Racial Order" in his book-length study *Race Against Time: Culture and Separation in Natchez Since 1930*. "The Grecian columns and white porticoes had become a mere facade behind which families survived without the usual platoon of servants and with, instead, plenty of bare cupboard space and tax bills. The image that was projected smacked of modern-day Lost Cause comparable to the suffering of ancestors who forfeited their slaves and fortunes during the Civil War. It was another chapter of pathos in the South's beleaguered history, one that ignored the perpetual economic instability of blacks and many whites" (Davis 69).

⁹ James Michener offers perspective on *Gone with the Wind*'s immense popular reception: "It is difficult even now to comprehend what a staggering event *Gone with the Wind* was in that post-depression year of 1936" (71). Statistically, he breaks down the numbers in relation to contemporary 1980s book sales.

Within a mere three weeks *Gone with the Wind* had already sold 176,000 copies, more than four times the number of copies that would be considered a leading bestseller fifty years later, and this, astonishingly, through “word-of-mouth publicity” (72). Within one year of publication, the novel sold nearly 1.4 million copies (72). The film also had an enormous following during its roll-out release to theaters in 1939 and 1940. In the Depression and post-Depression era the South emerged “as a popular cinematic subject (Campbell 75). Movies of the South and the antebellum plantation appealed to 1930s audiences as stories “which recalled a better time” (Campbell 75).

¹⁰ German philosopher Hermann Lübbe’s term “musealization” extends the idea of the museum to the everyday. Andreas Huyssen summarizes that Lübbe’s “diagnosis” of musealization “posited an expansive historicism of our contemporary culture, a cultural present gripped with an unprecedented obsession with the past” (32).

¹¹ In Sally Wolff’s *Ledgers of History*, Dr. Edgar Wiggin Francisco III (who, as a youth, came to know Faulkner over his visits for quail hunting with Francisco’s father in the 1920s and 1930s) offers us a glimpse of Faulkner’s thoughts on the Pilgrimage. According to Francisco, Faulkner was infuriated by the Natchez Pilgrimage and similar events spawned by the new wave of southern plantation tourism. In 1936, Francisco’s mother was involved in spearheading a pilgrimage tour in her own town of Holly Springs, Mississippi, just thirty miles north of Oxford, following a trip to the Natchez Pilgrimage. Faulkner often expressed his disdain for the events with Francisco’s father. He recalls, “It was, as he called it, dressing up a past that lived in most people’s imaginations and had not really occurred....The Pilgrimage promoted a picture of the past that Will was opposed to displaying” (87). Despite his conflicted conversations with the Francisco’s, the Holly Springs Pilgrimage was a success and became an annual event. Francisco recounts Faulkner’s criticism of the pilgrimage in conversations with his father: “Will took his text on the subject of the Pilgrimage. ‘It’s a bunch of damned foolishness, Edgar,’ he would say. ‘Most houses before the [Civil] War were not painted, and there was little landscaping. These women are beautifying history--and the hoop skirts--it’s fake, Edgar’” (88). “Will would say: ‘...This Pilgrimage invites folks to look through rose-colored glasses at one hundred years ago, rather than face up to doing something about the economic and social problems right here today’” (88).

¹² More important to Allister's argument, he argues that none of the plantation founders of Yoknapatawpha County had aristocratic backgrounds, but were, like Sutpen, hard working men that came to the frontier land to realize their own grand designs through the plantation (94). Sutpen's "design flaw," according to Allister, is that "Sutpen confused the form with the content," believing that the house alone would represent aristocracy, and forgetting to observe the aristocrat's way of life: "The splendid mansion of an aristocrat is not only an outward symbol of social position, but a luxurious home in which to fulfill the functions of an aristocrat: to entertain, conduct business, and gain knowledge....Sutpen's house had a ballroom, offices, a library, and sitting rooms: all places in which a gentleman could spend...They went unused" (97).

¹³ Also worth mentioning is Dirk Kuyk's *Sutpen's Design: Interpreting Faulkner's Absalom, Absalom!* (1990), which unpacks Sutpen's "design": "not merely to acquire a dynasty but to acquire it so that he could turn it against dynastic society itself"...to open the door to the stranger (to reverse the original insult to him) (17). Kuyk's text does not address home, housing, or architecture exclusively as other works that I mention above.

¹⁴ In his *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*, particularly Chapter 6 "Lamp of Memory," Ruskin lays out his philosophy on historic architecture and its preservation. Ruskin argues for monumental architecture to be sustained through routine maintenance and minimal alteration in its preservation. Restoration, according to Ruskin, "is a Lie from beginning to end," a destruction and false reproduction of the original character (162, 161). Instead, he argues that buildings, particularly dwellings and monuments, should be "built to last, and built to be lovely" (151). For Ruskin, there is a moral duty to respect historic architecture, for its destruction and replacement with newer forms is a dishonor to the history of its builders and inhabitants (149). Carpenter's essay similarly aligns preservation with tradition's endurance and longevity as he discusses Faulkner's fictional and real treatment of the county courthouse in relation to Ruskin. The Sartoris and the Snopes families appear as diametrically opposed clans across Faulkner's oeuvre. Faulkner modeled the fictional Sartoris patriarch, Colonel John Sartoris, after his own great-grandfather. His narratives commonly associate the Sartoris family with upper-class Old South planter ideals, aristocracy, tradition, and community ties. The Snopes clan, representative of the poor white class rising in prosperity

and power, is often associated with unscrupulous self-interest for economic gain. Cleanth Brooks proposes, “One could even argue that Faulkner’s most pertinent account of the fall of the Old South is set forth in his story of the rise of the Snopes clan” (307). Yet, as Brooks also notes, “Flem Snopes is a kind of success story,” (307), albeit one that forebodes moral impotence and corruption. Snopesism, a term emerging from Faulkner’s Snopes Trilogy (*The Hamlet*, *The Town*, and *The Mansion*, which collectively narrate the Snopes saga), refers to “the disruptive and invasive force embodied in the Snopes clan” (Fargnoli, et al, 442).

¹⁵ Dr. William Godwin, rector of the Bruton Parish Church, initiated the campaign to restore Williamsburg and actively appealed to philanthropists for financial funding, explaining “Williamsburg is the one remaining colonial village any man could buy” (Tyler 36).

¹⁶ Colonial Williamsburg is likely the most well-known early restoration project of this scale, in part because of the associated criticisms and corresponding efforts for improvement. There are others worth briefly mentioning as well. Historic Deerfield in Massachusetts and Greenfield Village in Michigan also gained recognition for their preservation efforts. Like Williamsburg, each were intended to educate through the form of an outdoor museum. Greenfield Village, spearheaded by Henry Ford in 1924, preceded Williamsburg in planning although its public opening came afterwards in 1933. Ford’s educational village was a large outdoor complex of material culture and national heritage, including a replica of Philadelphia’s Independence Hall (Murtagh 96-97). Buildings were transported to the site to reflect a variety of places and times, a heterogenous blend of spaces, exemplifying an “American Village.” A jewelry shop from London, a Michigan railroad station, even Thomas Edison’s personal laboratory, were all uprooted, transported, and re-erected in Greenfield Village (Murtagh 97-98). On a smaller scale, beginning in 1945, Historic Deerfield was preserved as a “living community” that could be interpreted through its material culture, including its architectures, industries, and even its everyday objects (Murtagh 101). All three sites serve as significant case studies in the preservation realm for the challenges and solutions they presented, all with varying degrees of criticism for the assumptions taken in their planning.

¹⁷ Her collection is housed by the Library of Congress as designated by conditions set forth by her primary financial supporter, the Carnegie Corporation. See <http://www.loc.gov/pictures/collection/csas/background.html>

¹⁸ A racial consideration of preservation practices will be discussed at length in chapter 4 as I examine works by Alice Randall and Attica Locke.

¹⁹ While the efforts proposed to capture a collective history of the nation and its regions, such as the “southern past,” Fitzhugh Brundage points out in *The Southern Past* (2005) that the motives and ethics underlying this archival of history in the early twentieth century commonly limited the purview to a white, and often elite, notion of a regional past. Of course, what counts as history continues to be a process of rediscovery through historical consciousness. Despite limited perspectives of the time, the idea of preserving history, which permeated the early twentieth century in the United States, manifested itself in a plethora of material forms.

²⁰ This greater cultural interest in the South’s aging architecture coincided with the Southern Renaissance (1930-1955) in which the South’s literary writers and critics reconsidered “the South,” its past, its myths, and its legacy. Through the defining characteristic of the “backward glance,” southern writers explored the continued pull of history and memory in the modern day. In *A Southern Renaissance: The Cultural Awakening of the American South, 1930-1955* (1980), Richard King observes the underlying convention of the Southern Renaissance as a process of deciphering how a sense of the past, cultural and historical, continues to register within and inform contemporary life and thought [the resonance of the past and historical consciousness within the broadly-perceived present temporal moment]: “the writers and intellectuals of the South after the late 1920s were engaged in an attempt to come to terms not only with the inherited values of the Southern tradition but also with a certain way of perceiving and dealing with the past....It was vitally important for them to decide whether the past was of any use at all in the present; and if so, in what ways?” (7).

²¹ While Ransom’s poem recalls the popular desire to see inside the venerable old house as in Faulkner’s “A Rose for Emily,” it also illustrates the appeal for recording a vision of the decaying mansion as well as an inability to make sense of its inner meaning.

²² Rebuilding of the courthouse is the only other occurrence of similarity across the Yoknapatawpha novels. The rebuilding of Sartoris's plantation mansion offers crucial contrasts to Sutpen's attempts. After all, Sutpen "came back home and set out singlehanded to rebuild his plantation. He had no friends to borrow from and he had nobody to leave it to and he was past sixty years old, yet he set out to rebuild his place like it used to be; they told how he was too busy to bother with politics or anything" (*U* 222). Sartoris benefits from community support and appreciation for his efforts to restore the ruined property. His rebuilding, and his dream, is for the sake of the community and is symbolic of rebuilding the region. However, "[Sutpen's] dream is just Sutpen" (*U* 223), and his rebuilding is a continuation of his initial flawed design and self-aggrandizement. Rosa Coldfield sees within Sutpen "a madman who creates within his very coffin walls his fabulous immeasurable Camelots and Carcassonnes," the latter of which being the French castle so grand that it is in itself an entire city within fortress walls (*AA* 129). Therefore, the adamancy of its final and irrevocable destruction, for all its violations against place and people, should be considered in stark contrast to Sartoris's architectural heritage.

²³ When needed, parenthetical references to a specific Faulkner novel will be abbreviated following the definitive abbreviation used by *The Faulkner Journal* as follows: *Absalom, Absalom!* (*AA*), *Go Down, Moses* (*GDM*), *The Hamlet* (*H*), *The Mansion* (*M*), *Requiem for a Nun* (*RN*), *Sanctuary* (*S*), *Sartoris* (*SAR*), *The Town* (*T*), *The Unvanquished* (*U*).

²⁴ In addition to being a symbol of the evils of slavery, Buck and Buddy also consider the plantation house to be a corruption of space as it has dissolved the precious wilderness of the Delta landscape. Buck and Buddy "were ahead of their time" with their beliefs about slavery and land ownership that "put into practice" precursory sharecropping and contractual manumission (48). They also believed that no individual could own the land; only the land could own an individual.

²⁵ This is the scene of *The Unvanquished* published in 1938. However, in *Go Down Moses*, published in 1942, the brothers' log cabin house is actually no longer represented as a slave cabin. Instead, the brothers live in a house of "two log wings which Carothers McCaslin had built" (44). The simple structure was renovated by Cass Edmonds "as his pride's monument and epitaph" by enclosing the structure and building a second story to the home as well as a front portico (44). Numerous critics have

commented on the inconsistencies across Faulkner's works, often concurring that slight changes were made not so much by failure to cross-reference texts as it was authorial choices most fitting for a particular narrative.

²⁶ Hines claims "To his grandest characters, as to Faulkner himself, the most favored architecture was the neoclassical, especially the local variants of the international Greek Revival, the symbol, even in decay, of what Faulkner believed were the better impulses of Southern civilization" (45). Faulkner's own real-life restoration of Rowan Oak may fall within Hines' observation here, yet Faulkner's critical attention to plantation houses extends beyond this realm. Descriptions of the McCaslin plantation house as representative of the "Colonial-style" comes close with its simple elegance, yet even this plantation house, as shown above, fails to epitomize the dignity and honor implied by the neoclassical style.

²⁷ *The Critical Companion to William Faulkner* states the present time period of *The Hamlet*, suggesting it "takes place about 1907" (117).

²⁸ Flem buries a cache of coins on the property, which he then "discovers" while a not-so-clandestine audience secretly watches from the distance. His trickery raises the market value of the house and leads to its quick sale as Armstid and others anticipate reaping the fabled buried treasure. The rumor of money buried in the land is the only narrative or history that gives meaning to the estate, albeit a false meaning.

²⁹ Kennedy conveys the picturesque Virginia plantation society as a pastoral oasis, but not without ironic tensions even in opening chapters as the house reflects "incongruities in the southern garden world" (MacKethan, 1986, xxii). The house and land, already an aging Eden, at times appear on the verge of being reclaimed by natural eminent domain of weeds and swamp.

³⁰ The association between Poe's tale and the plantation house appears in Lewis P. Simpson's essay, "The Southern Recovery of Memory and History" in which he addresses Roderick Usher's estate as "a fantasy of the plantation homeland of the antebellum literary mind," that is, a pervasive sense of a "culture of alienation" (3). Simpson suggests that Poe's fictional mansion doomed by self-alienation and solipsism developed into a symbol of "the self-destruction of southern aristocracy" (2).

³¹ Given their many similarities, Page's "No Haid Pawn" suggests an uncanny precursor to *Absalom, Absalom!* Thomas Sutpen's mansion is mired in a similar struggle with the protective and redemptive spirit of the land attributable to its disregard for the *genius loci*.

³² In *Requiem for a Nun*, Faulkner refers to people moving to the outer edges of Yoknapatawpha County plantation lands as the "first and second outland invasion" (643).

³³ Thomas Hines explains in *William Faulkner and the Tangible Past: The Architecture of Yoknapatawpha*, actual houses in Oxford and Lafayette County, Mississippi served as models for many of the fictional homes Faulkner created for his characters (52), including the "romantic ruin" of the "Old Shipp Place," preyed upon by vandals and antique hunters which Hines links to the "Old Frenchmen's Place" by way of description and Faulkner's cartography (62). Faulkner scholar Noel Polk expressed vision of this communion in greater magnitude when he claimed that in many of his works Faulkner juxtaposed the history of Mississippi with the history of his fictional Yoknapatawpha County (102).

³⁴ Mr Compson's narrative history of Sutpen is all tainted with a sense of community suspicion for the foreigner.

³⁵ We read this interpretation of violence through Rosa Coldfield and Quentin Compson, characters with their own place and class-based biases—Rosa's adherence to self-proclaimed ideals of the Old South and the Compsons ties to Virginia Tidewater aristocracy and Confederate heroes. Even more interesting, however, is the layering of time at play as Quentin, in the early 1900s, imagines Sutpen laying a foundation in Yoknapatawpha as a violation of place in the antebellum period, despite it being, at least historically, a common occurrence in that region and time. Through his reflection upon the legendary history of Sutpen, a man preceding him by at least two generations, young Quentin also underscores the effect of time upon interpretation.

³⁶ Sutpen's attempt to prove gentility through architecture reflects an idea embedded within early-American tradition and inherited from Western European tradition. In *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities* (1992), Richard Bushman surveys the tradition and its practice, beginning as early as 1690, as individuals designed a material, domestic space to express "the ideal of a cultivated and refined inward life" (xii). Perhaps even more importantly, these individuals "wished to transform themselves along with

their environments” (xii). What began as a tradition and practice only among the upper echelon expanded across American society, Bushman claims, into the middle class: “By the middle of the nineteenth century, a vernacular gentility had become the possession of the American middle class. All who aspired to simple respectability had to embody the marks of the genteel style in their persons and their houses” (xiii). Sutpen’s character dramatizes this societal current toward refinement and gentility through architecture.

³⁷ Containing the first and only chronological history of Yoknapatawpha County, *Requiem for a Nun* (1951) was completed in a period of Faulkner’s career which Noel Polk classifies as a time of “clarifying its, and his, enormous complexities into a fairly consistent ... unified narrative and philosophical structure” (1). But, as Polk has shown, Faulkner’s creation of Jefferson—its people, places, and history—existed long before *Requiem*, long before even *Absalom, Absalom!*

³⁸ As Faulkner is writing *Absalom, Absalom!* in the mid-1930s and *Requiem for a Nun* in 1951, the Beaux-Arts movement’s eclectic blend of classic historical forms is challenged by another incoming architectural school of European influence. Modern architecture, breaking from attention to form, which was so heavily attended to in the past, centers instead on architectural forms that reflect functions, not facades.

³⁹ Perhaps the most intriguing “ornament” of Sutpen’s mansion appears during its construction—his band of wild negroes. The dominating presence of Sutpen’s wild slaves makes conspicuous the slave industry underpinning the plantation house. Their visibility and perceived vulgarity breaks through any idealized notions of the opulent plantation mansion. In addition, the text alludes to the South’s anxiety about slavery and the Haitian Revolution.

⁴⁰ Given the time period in which Faulkner was writing and his attention to architecture, one could observe a modernist condemnation of ornament within the novel. In the essay “Ornament and Crime,” delivered in 1908 and published in English translation in 1929, Austrian architect Adolf Loos expresses the Modernist architectural aesthetic rejection of Victorian ornamentation. Loos argues that ornament no longer has a relationship or connection to the current culture of the time. Emphasizing functional form, Modern architecture was opposed to the fleeting and antiquated styles reflected in ornamentation; Loos found that the antiquated feature of Victorian aesthetics was “no longer a natural product of our culture” (172, 170).

Rather, Loos associated ornament with depictions suggestive of crime, notably that ornamentation functioned to disguise deficiencies such as poor workmanship or lesser products. Though there is no evidence that Faulkner was familiar with Loos's essay, the title "Ornament and Crime" became an important cultural catchphrase and precept of modern architectural theory and design. Early twentieth-century America witnessed a rejection of ornamentation, particularly Victorian design, as it was considered an emblematic bulwark against cultural progress. Against the current of stripped down modern aesthetics, ornate design reflected a backward glance toward past traditions of grandeur and a focus upon what modernists recognized to be superficial forms in contrast to new concerns for function and functionality.

⁴¹ Bachelard's *Poetics of Space*, first published in French in 1958, was published in English translation in 1969.

⁴² The shell, in many forms, has been a long-standing literary medium for its use in "allegories and symbols of resurrection" (Bachelard 117).

⁴³ As HABS discovered, "The interest in the 1930s in a systematic effort to collect information about American culture," Davidson and Perschler explain, "placed HABS at a transition between the commercial practice of studying historic buildings for new design ideas and public interest in building a permanent record of early American architecture" (68).

⁴⁴ Dislocations abound for the southern plantation from nostalgically enhanced memories of yesterdays to misremembered social conditions under which the plantation operated. Tara McPherson notes that the plantation home is the quintessential site of southernness unhinged from its agrarian economic past (12).

⁴⁵ Later in the essay, Fitch reveals that his qualm with the style houses is the ornament and false patina, the "architectural coquetry of the exterior" (32) as the structure appeals to the senses, despite its utter lack of "authenticity." Fitch's distaste for architectural imitation of "styles" and style houses follows Viollet-le-Duc's approach to Modern architecture. Viollet-le-Duc believed that much of the pre-Modern architecture had been performed through copying existing Greek and Roman orders. Rather than continuing the "intolerable burden of 'the styles,'" he promoted a more "rationalist" construction to address the relationship between architecture and life (Summerson 199-200).

⁴⁶ Coincidentally, Nashville, Tennessee, also houses the only full-scale replica of the Greek Parthenon. First erected in 1897, the original structure was demolished in 1921 to be rebuilt with more durable materials. The reconstructed reproduction building was completed in 1931 and listed in the National Register of Historic Places in 1972. According to its on-site historic marker, the building “serve[s] as a reminder of Nashville’s long-standing reputation as the Athens of the South.”

⁴⁷ Manfred De Spain’s house is clearly a rather ironic choice on Faulkner’s part. Though he may be president of the local bank, a position to which Flem greedily aspires, he is also widely known as the man who has an eighteen year long affair with Flem’s wife.

⁴⁸ “When Flem builds his own place, he decides on something straight out of *Gone with the Wind*: in Ratliff’s words, a mansion with ‘extry big’ ‘colyums’ across the front, ‘like in photographs where the Confedrit [*sic*] sweetheart in a hoop skirt and a magnolia is saying good-bye to her Confedrit [*sic*] beau” (Matthews 250).

CHAPTER III

“A PASSION FOR OLD ‘AUTHENTIC’ THINGS”: PSEUDO-AUTHENTICITY IN WALKER PERCY’S *LANCELOT*

On a “warm, gray January day” in 1987, Walker Percy and his wife, affectionately called “Bunt,” wandered through the house tour of Greenwood Plantation in Louisiana (Malcolm Jones A42). Greenwood had only recently been restored to its original condition. Built in 1830 as a 3,000 acre cotton plantation, by 1850 the plantation had switched to sugarcane and quadrupled its size to 12,000 acres and 750 slaves (*Greenwood Plantation*).⁴⁹ Greenwood welcomed tourists from 1940 until 1960, when a fire sparked by lightning destroyed the house. The ruined house and property were purchased in 1968 by the Barnes family, who then spent years researching photographs and remaining evidence of the house, rebuilding most of the house to its original design by 1984. Photographs of Greenwood in ruins after the fire are displayed in the back parlor along with “blueprints quilted together from evidence in old photos, and news clippings of the years of meticulous restoration” (Malcom Jones A42). The property debuted on the tourist trail more than four decades earlier. However, its reopening drew a new dimension of fanfare. Soon after its reconstruction, filmmakers sought Greenwood as a setting for movies including *North and South* (1985), one of the top ranking televised mini-series of all time (Mary Ellen Jones 3). Malcolm Jones, an interviewer and book critic who accompanied the Percys, noted that “Percy grins sardonically as he learns that

some of the outbuildings, including the mausoleum and its surrounding cemetery, were built by visitors from Hollywood” (Malcolm Jones A42).

Hollywood’s reproduction of the hallowed burial ground typifies a particular drive to stage the plantation with structures and images that register its authenticity for spectators, particularly those that authenticate the space as a sacred realm of white history and memory. In contrast to the replicas constructed for Greenwood’s film debut, what seemed very real to Percy was the “odd and troubling list” he studied from the same table display, “an inventory of the plantation property, drawn up in 1862...includ[ing] each of the plantation’s 553 slaves” listed by sex, name, age, color, and appraisal value (Malcolm Jones A42). Afterwards, Jones drove the Percys back to their home in Covington. Along the two-hour drive, Percy reflected back on the plantation tour: ““The whole thing’s like a movie set”” (Malcolm Jones A42). Jones recalls Percy’s pause before he continued on to say “I’ll tell you one thing that wasn’t phony: the list of those slaves. That thing gets to you,”” in a voice that “sound[ed] bewildered and awed and a little angry” (Malcolm Jones A42).

Percy’s novels and philosophical essays reflect on American society’s late-twentieth-century preoccupation with the semblance of authenticity in southern spaces. This becomes especially clear in *Lancelot* (1977), which demonstrates his most direct engagement with the historic preservation movement and the restored plantation house. Percy satirizes the charisma of cultural nostalgia and pseudo-authenticity cultivated within the peaking restoration culture of the 1960s and 1970s. Positioning a satirical lens over the plantation tourism industry, he crafts an extensive parody of plantation house

restoration through a fictional critique of “restoration fantasy,” based upon commodified southernness and uncritical historicism.

Lancelot presents a lengthy first-person confession spoken by Lancelot Andrewes Lamar, a half-mad scion of Old South gentry, to Father John, an old friend and priest who, until the very end of the novel, silently listens.⁵⁰ Lancelot has spent the past year institutionalized in a “Center for Aberrant Behavior,” which functions as a prison psychiatric ward. He murdered his wife’s lover and incidentally killed three others, including his wife, Margot, when he sparked an explosion in his family home. The confession, a fragmented narrative, relays his life story up to the deadly fire in the late 1960s. Percy’s protagonist owns Belle Isle, the Lamar family plantation, which began admitting tourists two generations prior. The half-ruined plantation house had little meaning for Lancelot’s first wife, Lucy, a graceful southern girl. However, his second wife, Margot, a newcomer from west Texas, “settles on Lance, chiefly for his real estate” (Ford 563). Margot, who “wanted everything authentic,” aims to authenticate place as well as person through the practice of historic restoration and home staging. She restores Lancelot’s plantation house to “a splendor it had never known,” all the while transforming herself into an ersatz Louisiana plantation “mistress” and him into a “proper” southern gentleman, at least “according to [her] Texas-conceived image of the River Road gentry” (77, 117, 120). Lancelot enjoys moderate happiness as Belle Isle’s master until he discovers a sign of Margot’s infidelity. As an ironic reversal of his Arthurian namesake, the cuckolded Lancelot undertakes what he calls a quest for the “Unholy Grail” to validate his suspicions. The quest and subsequent confession render a

complex parody through which Percy critiques plantation house restoration as a fantasy grounded in commodified southernness, tourism, and uncritical historicism.

The fictional Belle Isle represents one of an actual few remaining grand restored plantation houses along Louisiana's fabled River Road, lining the Mississippi River between Baton Rouge and New Orleans. As the scion of Old South gentry, Lancelot speaks for his ancestors when he says "we regarded ourselves as an enclave of the English gentry set down among hordes of good docile Negroes and comical French peasants. Our families were the original Tory English colonials" (14). The Lamars, however, were far less prosperous than their family home along River Road would suggest. Following his father's bankruptcy, "the usual story of the honorable man besmirched by dirty politicians" which ultimately proves true, the Lamar family had become "old broke River Road gentry" and Belle Isle "was half in ruins" (41, 71). Nevertheless, they retained the house and by the late 1960s, the novel's central time period, Lancelot "depended on the tourist dollar" to stay afloat (71).

Once a prominent landmark of the region's agricultural prosperity, the Belle Isle mansion now wanes in contrast to the surrounding pipelines, towers, and flaming gas stacks—conspicuous signs of the oil and gas industry leaders: "Belle Isle looked like an isle, a small dark islet hemmed in by Ethyl pipery, Dow towers, Kaiser stacks, all humming away. Farther away, near the highway, gas burn-offs flared in the night as if giant hunters still stalked the old swamp" (56). The commercialism and reaping of natural resources in a late-capitalist market appear all too visibly with the branded structures. Belle Isle's image is a study in contrasts as the contemporary setting highlights the

economic shifts surrounding the plantation. Once the symbol of an agrarian society that resisted industrialization, the plantation house now appears as an isolated and antiquated museum surrounded by industrial capitalism. As critic Robert Towers argues, “Percy occupies an almost symbolically pivotal position from which to observe and respond to the metamorphosis of South into Sunbelt” (6). Although Percy descends from the South’s plantation culture, his works maintain a critical distance from this nostalgic South that expired long ago.

Percy’s depiction of the preserved plantation house in a landscape that has become increasingly modernized and industrialized speaks to the social and legislative changes that had recently impacted landscapes and historic spaces like the fictional Belle Isle by the late 1960s. The National Interstate and Defense Highway Act of 1956 launched the interstate and highway system. The interstate and highway system transformed the American landscape; as a consequence, many historic properties were destroyed during the construction period. Ten years later, the landmark National Historic Preservation Act emphasized the importance of preserving historic heritage, beyond established landmarks, in a time of increasing urban, commercial, and industrial development. The NHPA sparked “expanding interest and involvement at a level never previously imagined” (Tyler 47). The act created the National Register of Historic Places, a national inventory of recognized historic structures. The National Trust, a private organization linked to the NHPA, more than quadrupled its membership shortly after the act went into effect, climbing to over 100,000 members (Murtagh 46). Interest in preservation and historic heritage was greater than ever before.

Historical enthusiasts found the South a ready and willing place in which to explore the perpetual presence of the past. As Fitzhugh Brundage explains in *The Southern Past*, the “self-conscious commercialization of the southern past” increasingly evolved through tourism following the interwar period in response to the region’s “struggle to cultivate and perpetuate historical memory in the South” (184). In the post-Civil Rights era of the late-1960s and 1970s Sunbelt, racial tensions shifted from South to North and prosperity shifted from North to South. What had previously been such defining and oppositional circumstances in each region no longer easily distinguished the South from the North, explains southern historian James Cobb (219-21). While middle class and white-collar southern whites became less distinctly southern to others, they became “more aware of being southern themselves” and sought ways to retain and project their southern identity (Cobb 221).

The region was quick to capitalize on its emerging popularity by marketing its historical assets: “tourism promoters splurged on the most expensive advertising campaign in the region’s history, invoking images of the South that were little changed from those presented in the early twentieth century” (Brundage 310). “Gentility and historical romance” ranked high among tourism advertisements, particularly in Natchez, Mississippi, which boasted the motto “Where the Old South Still Lives,” and Alabama where tourists were urged to visit “‘elegant, stately, ornate’ antebellum homes where they would ‘see why our ancestors went to war to save the Old South’” (Brundage 310). The recycled images of the past promoted through 1970s southern tourism reinforced their perception as lasting paragons of southernness: “Columned mansions, white belles in

hoop skirts, Civil War shrines—these were the icons of southern tourism during the 1970s” (Brundage 309-10). With the exception of the meager souvenir, the coveted plantation lifestyle remained for most within the exclusive confines of the tourist South.

“Desperately Restoring and Preserving *Places*”: Women and Preservation

Percy’s narratives thematize and critique contemporary trending toward “southern living” cultural nostalgia. *Lancelot* portrays and critiques this popular move through distinct portrayals of Lancelot’s first and second wives, particularly through Lucy’s muted death and Margot’s bold emergence. Percy presents Lucy as the ideal southern woman in Lancelot’s memory. Through her character and Lancelot’s reflections on her, Percy figures Lucy as a symbolic idealization of the southern woman in cultural nostalgia. Uncorrupted in Lancelot’s recollections, she is ultra-feminine, beautiful, and virginal. Lucy derives from Georgia’s “muted manners of the east South” where people live by “agreed-upon but unspoken rules” (82). He most highly values attributes tying her to classic ideals of the southern gentlewoman: her origins, “her purity and her insubstantiality” (Blair 88). Lucy appears imaginary, even ghostly, as she represents an idealized abstract rather than a palpable being. Moreover, the attributes Lancelot has most valued in her serve as symbols of tradition that, like her image, are fading from reality in the 1960s South. In the “post-traditional world” of Lancelot, aristocratic traditions and heritage have lost their “effectiveness as a moral force” (Leenhouts 51). He feels no great sense of loss following Lucy’s death because it merely echoes extinction. However, he continues to value what Lucy represented. In his memory, she appears as an ornamental figure of the pre-modern southern lady: “Lucy was a dream, a slim brown dancer in a bell

jar spinning round and round in the ‘Limelight’ music of old gone Carolina long ago” (119). Lancelot memorializes Lucy in his imagination as an untouchable figurine sealed within the glass chamber of a bell jar—a music-box ballerina “spinning round and round” to a famed and nostalgic melody.⁵¹

Whereas Lucy reflected a diminishing ideal of the past, Lancelot’s second wife, Margot, exhibits a bold corporeal personification of the present: “Margot was life itself as if all Louisiana, its fecund oil-rich ark greens and haunted twilights, its very fakery and money-loving and comicalness, had all been gathered and fleshed out in one creature. It meant having her and not being haunted, holding all of goldgreen Louisiana in my arms” (119). Lancelot perceives Margot as a “fleshed out” embodiment of 1960s Louisiana, depicted here as an oil-rich state parading commodified history. She offers nostalgic glimpses of the past through “haunted twilights,” yet she is grounded in reality—albeit paradoxically—through “fakery” and pseudo-authenticity of the present day, hence Lancelot’s claim, “It meant having her and not being haunted.” Margot epitomizes Lucy’s antithesis as she characterizes a very “real” and palpable representation of Sunbelt Louisiana, with its new money, commodified historicism, and “southern” charm.

Lancelot’s title character poses, “Did you know that the South and for all I know the entire U.S.A. is full of demonic women who, driven by as yet unnamed furies, are desperately restoring and preserving *places, buildings?*” (121, italics original). Lancelot’s perplexing observation, posed as a question to his listener, reflects a motif threaded through Percy’s works of frenzied women driving architectural restoration projects. He frequently genders his critique of cultural nostalgia and preservation through women as a

reflection on historical precedence. Women initiated and organized the first nationwide preservation group, the Mount Vernon Ladies' Association, in 1853 (Tyler 29). Women also spearheaded efforts to protect and conserve the nation's battlefields and to create monuments honoring prominent military leaders. With women's long association with preservation practices, Percy personifies his critique against cultural nostalgia and preservation through women as a reflection of their involvement. As such, his female characters appear as metaphors and symbols in his narratives rather than as fully developed characters. Percy's first novel, *The Moviegoer* (1961), associates women's preservation efforts with a search for identity and belonging. In this novel, Kate Cutrer scrapes away "a hundred years' accumulation of paint from old walls and cupboards to expose the cypress and [plantation] brick underneath" (42). As she repurposes used wooden shutters—found in a junkyard—to create "a pleasant little nook," protagonist Binx Bolling witnesses the gravity of her attempt, thinking "it seems that if she can just hit upon the right *place*...her very life can be lived" (57, emphasis original). Kate strives to construct a very particular place, and identity, before her upcoming marriage. She grounds these constructions in material signs of history such as the century-old cypress, antebellum plantation bricks, and the well-seasoned shutters.

In the same novel, Binx's Aunt Edna renovates her husband's unexceptional house into a prominent showplace as if substantiating herself through the architectural semblance of history and, therefore, belonging. Binx is bewildered that his uncle's Natchez-style manse was prompted by his wife, a transplant from New York, and not his uncle, "the old settler:"

Strangely enough, it was not Uncle Oscar, the old settler, who restored the house in the best Natchez style—adding a covered walk to the out-kitchen, serving mint juleps where the Bollings had never drunk anything but toddies, and even dressing up poor old Shad in a Seagram’s butler suit and putting him out on the highway with a dinner bell—it was not Uncle Oscar but Aunt Edna, the druggist’s daughter from upstate New York whom Uncle Oscar met and married while he was training at Plattsburg in the first world war. (174)

Edna transforms what Binx had called “a big old rambling pile” into a “Natchez style” showpiece, which she dubs Lynwood (174). She modifies the architectural structure and exchanges family traditions for elements more recognizably “southern.” Her “restoration” earns the house “a permanent place on the Azalea Trail” in which tourists marvel over grand historic homes (174). Despite Binx’s bemusement, Percy’s novels typically depict “outlanders,” such as Aunt Edna, invested in restoration while the locals gravitate toward more modern and suburban structures (Carpenter, “Splendor Never Known” 111). For Kate and Edna, these restoration projects are driven by a desire to substantiate their tenuous identities through material signs of history.

“Southern Living” Culture and Satisfying the Tourist

Beginning with its first issue release in February 1966, *Southern Living* magazine demonstrated how to craft an idealized southern lifestyle within the Sunbelt home. As John Shelton Reed, Diane Roberts, and Amy Elias all suggest, a significant portion of the magazine’s focus on southern themes and heritage centers around consumer desire for an attainable “authentic” sense of southernness, often in material form. According to Roberts, “*Southern Living* is in the business of transmitting traditions, teaching old-time gracious living; it is the lifestyle Bible of the genuine and the aspiring upper-middle classes” (85). As “the magazine of the predominately white, property-owning elite of

what was once the New South, then the Modern South, and now the Sunbelt,” *Southern Living* teaches the region’s insiders and outsiders how to act and live like an upper-middle-class white southerner (Roberts 87). *Southern Living* caters to those who are learning to perform a particular image of southernness: “The magazine teaches those who aren’t from the region, or aren’t quite as polished as their neighbors, how to be an upper-middle-class Southerner” (Roberts 87). The magazine for “the new urbanizing, suburbanizing southern bourgeoisie” took shape in the mid-1960s as a popular lifestyle and shelter magazine featuring interior decor, architectural designs, and modern southern recipes; it became, as Roberts claims, a “conduct manual” of southern lifestyle (86, 87). *Southern Living* creates “a market-driven definition of authentic southern place” (Elias 89). It similarly fosters a southern identity attached to simulacra and reproduction by heavily associating southern lifestyle with styling, staging, and performing southern traditions. In the emerging cultural era of *Southern Living* and the Sunbelt, the idea of “southern living” shifts from southern identity rooted in place and tradition to semblance and performance of southernness in which “stylization in the magazine [is what] substitutes for heritage as an index of southern identity” (Elias 86).

As the American Bicentennial approached, cultural obsession with historicism reached an all time high. Accordingly, in 1975, *Southern Living* regularly included feature articles on historic restoration houses. The featured houses ranged from the quaint middling to picturesque plantation houses. Each had a story to tell of historical integrity that balanced the romance of place with the sophistication of style. With charming narratives and captivating photographs, the restoration articles model traditional

architectural styles and authoritative design ideas that entice readers to refurbish their own dwellings in southern chic style.

One issue spotlights the small town house of an Alabama couple that “brought out the Georgian details in their turn-of-the-century Victorian house,” nearly all of which they undertook in a DIY “do-it-yourself” renovation (Joyner 52). In a later issue, an Italianate mansion of the 1850s called Moongate earns a lengthy rags-to-riches story. The house became “just an old deserted house” frequented by “drifters and derelicts” between 1963 and 1971: “Vandals had pulled the marble mantelpieces from the walls in search of some hidden treasure that actually wasn’t hidden at all. For the treasure of Moongate House was its history” (“Moongate” 2L). Photographs reveal the restored lavish interior of highly sophisticated moldings, chandeliers, and mantelpieces. The adoptive owners “embarked on three buying trips to Europe and two to the Orient” to furnish the home (2L). The corresponding photograph, captioned with the information that “Louis XV furniture and Aubusson carpets add elegance to spacious double parlors,” apprises readers of the luxurious styling (2L). The page closes with details for those wishing to tour the house, including location, tour times, and pricing. The magazine promotes the glories of Longwood Plantation of Natchez, Mississippi, available to tourists, namely grandeur and sentimental loss. The Civil War halted its construction, leaving a grandiose monumental octagonal shell and all but one of the house’s six interior stories unfinished. Various buildings on the property were ransacked and destroyed by Confederate and Yankee soldiers. The article promotes a mournful nostalgia of Longwood through the passing of its owner: “in 1864 at the age of 48, he died at Longwood—a saddened,

disappointed man. He didn't even live long enough to see the war come to an end" ("Troubled Times" 24). Tourists, however, flock to see the unfinished home and marvel at its story of loss. Although these represent only a small sampling of *Southern Living's* restoration feature articles, together they suggest the alluring and influential models of historical architectural restoration, interior design, and home staging regularly promoted to its readership.

Southern Living's embrace of popular historicism and architectural restoration responded to cultural nostalgia while also promoting commodified southern tradition. The final section of each issue, "Southern Living Shopper," replete with advertisements, markets historical reproductions aimed at consumer desire for "instant heirlooms." Readers can purchase an "Early American Black Walnut Dry Sink" reproduced from an authentic "200-year-old-model" and top it with an ornamental pitcher and wash bowl to appreciate the golden days before indoor plumbing (Advertisements 180). Surely taking on the cabinet's required assembly and finish work will also nurture ambiance of a bygone era. For those seeking to display a prestigious family heritage, "trained researchers" offer an official Coat of Arms hand painted in Olde English script on "hand rubbed wood." For the sake of authenticity, each shield comes "Complete with Report, Reference Sources, Descriptions, with a ready-to-fill-in Family Tree History Chart" (185). Civil War reproductions such as Confederate military uniform buttons or cufflinks can be ordered through a company in Sherman, New York. The 24K gold CSA [Confederate States of America] buttons are "'restrikes' from original working dies" (200); however, one moderately concerned with the semblance of authenticity might

wonder about the Yankee supplier, the use of 24K gold, and the advertisement's scare quotes on "restrikes." The advertisements reveal the ironic truth underlying Reed's comment that *Southern Living* "offer[s] middle-class Southerners...a version of the good life, tied to consumption of the goods advertised nearby" (76).

Percy felt the impact from this expanding embrace of "southern living" culture. In his essay "Why I Live Where I Live" (1980), Percy lamented the effect, stating "Covington is now threatened by progress. It has become a little jewel in the Sunbelt and is in serious danger of being written up in *Southern Living*, what with its restored shotgun cottages, live oaks, nifty shops, covered depot" (7). What had most attracted Percy to Covington was its avoidance of "southern living" culture, particularly its "lack of identity, lack of placeness, even lack of history" (6). Percy perceived Covington as a "pleasant nonplace" in stark contrast to nearby New Orleans, which was "drenched in its identity, its history, and its rather self-conscious exotica" (6, 3). With so many southern towns haunted by history and consumed by exerting their own "sense of place," Covington offered him the solace of living in "a kind of interstice in the South...between places," and, therefore, "in a certain sense out of place and out of time" (3, 9). Observing the powerful momentum of growing commercialism and popular southern historicism, Percy noted that "Things have changed in recent years. We have joined the Sunbelt with a vengeance, are in fact one of the fastest-growing counties in the country. It is worrisome to be written up by *Money* magazine, but more ominous is the plan afoot to build a 'theme park' here, like Walt Disney World but bigger" (7). The southern theme park never materialized, but its intended development, like the broader drive toward

southernization and historicism, imposed an anachronistic sense of time and place upon Percy's interstitial oasis. While the Sunbelt economy drove the region forward, the "backward glance" to commodify southern history and southern culture became a vehicle for "progress" and prosperity.

Lancelot is a proponent of plantation tourism, yet he remains conscious of its counterfeit practices. Through his grandfather, he learns to satisfy the tourists's need for historical materiality through its semblance. After discovering "what looked like the original bowie knife" among a junk pile, young Lancelot witnesses his grandfather tie the knife's legendary tale to their own family, claiming "it was one of the originals made by Bowie's slave blacksmith" and that an ancestor "had a part in the notorious Vidalia sand-bar duel in which Bowie actually carved a fellow from limb to limb" (18). His grandfather includes the knife and tale in the plantation's own historical narrative "and displayed it as part of his spiel to the tourists whom he used to lead around Belle Isle at a dollar a head" (18). Lancelot later learns the knife was an imitation—"the original was made from a rasp and still showed the grooves"—but recalls that, "at any rate, my grandfather made a good story of it" (18).

His grandfather later fashions a tour guide jacket with the family coat of arms sewn onto the breast pocket. Ironically, an African American man, Elgin, serves as the tour guide, wearing "a livery which no house servant had ever worn but which by my grandfather's calculation should satisfy the tourist's need for proper NBC guide and authentic Southern butler rolled into one" (90-91). The novel suggests the paradox of a black man wearing the plantation's heraldic symbol—one that never would have

acknowledged his ancestors in family lineage—while sitting in a “slave chair” that had been “made by slaves for slaves” (90, 43). Yet, as his grandfather surmises, the embroidered shield “satisf[ies] the tourist’s need” to visualize a guide’s status, credibility, and belonging within the plantation world. As Susan Donaldson argues, “Whatever tradition remains in [Lancelot’s] world has been remade and neatly packaged for the consumption of tourists and for the interests of historic preservation” (67-68). The once-revered coat of arms no longer has a fixed referent of nobility. At the touristy Belle Isle, the modified suit jacket boasting the family crest functions the same as a work uniform or professional attire sporting a corporate logo.

The novel’s treatment of tourists reflects Percy’s critique of uncritical historicism and musealization as a growing cultural obsession with the past, particularly in commodified or consumable forms, that the plantation tourist venue fulfills. Belle Isle decisively projects what sells: consumable history. Case in point, “in the bad years” Lancelot “spent a month in England buying antiques to show and sell at Belle Isle” (32). The ploy presumably fared well given the tourists’ unrefined interest in historicized objects. However, the novel also portrays damage and loss as an unexpected consequence of public historic preservation properties. Belle Isle is selected for a favored tourists’ pilgrimage, the “Azalea Trail,” which Lancelot regards as a cash cow, “a happy marriage of rich new oil people and old broke River Road gentry” (71). In need of the money, Lancelot “put up with the inconvenience: being put out of the house, carpets trampled, plates missing” as “ten thousand good middle-class white folks, mostly women, tramped through the house shepherded by belles in hoop skirts” (71). Percy characterizes Belle

Isle's tourists as an intrusive, destructive female herd as they erode and pilfer the mansion, trampling the Aubusson carpet and swiping china. He essentially renders historic preservation boosters as nescient anti-preservationists.

Many of Lancelot's unfavorable comments about tourists depict them as especially naive and unsophisticated outsiders: "rumped amiable bemused Midwesterners paid their five dollars and went gawking through the great rooms as foreign to them as Castel Gandolfo" (25). Predominately of Midwestern origins, with many hailing from Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, and Illinois, the tourists reflect an outsiders' fixation on the region and its history; although their home states supplied a large number of troops for the Union Army, these populations remained largely distanced from Civil War's battlefields and southern culture. Fred Hobson observes that Percy's depictions of Midwesterners, especially Ohioians, reflect a bland American norm of "[t]oo much sameness and too much saneness," perhaps most often portrayed as "tasteless, standardized, materialistic, and just plain boring" folks (*Southern Writer* 60, 49).⁵² Most significantly, the tourists model a tendency that, as Martin Luschei notes, Percy regularly critiques in his texts, "general conformity to the crowd or to the prevailing myths" (25). As such, his tourists appear easily led and awed through the house tour, unfazed by inaccuracies, omissions, or replicas.

In contrast, Elgin's tourist spiels engage with Belle Isle's musealized space with what can be perceived as greater historical legitimacy than Lancelot or his grandfather attempt. Elgin captivates visitors with precise details of assumed historic authenticity, that is, details they most desire to hear. The African American tour guide even manages

to nearly erase slavery from the plantation's narrative by emphasizing reverential grandeur and evoking confederate sympathy:

That summer Elgin and his sister Doreen took turns leading the tourists through the house. They tell them the usual stuff--that though Belle Isle is indeed a small island now, surrounded by Ethyl pipery, in 1859, it had 3,500 arpents of land, harvested 2,000 hogsheads of sugar, had its own race track and fifty racing horses in the stable.

--that--and this is the sort of thing Peoria housewives *oh* and *ah* at: the marble mantelpiece was delivered from Carrara accompanied by two marble cutters, a right-handed one and a left-handed one, so they could carve the fresh-cut marble at the same time before the marble 'hardened' (something marble does).

--that the solid silver hardware of the doors, locks, hinges, keyholes, taken for steel by the Yankee soldiers, no, not even taken, the metal not even considered, for what Yankee or for that matter who else in the world but Louis XIV would think of a sterling silver door hinge?

--that all the rest, brick, column flutings, wavy window glass, woodwork, even iron cookery was made by slave artisans on the place.

—that finally...the hiding hole, no more than a warming oven let into the brick next to the fireplace but actually used as a hiding hole one day when nineteen-year-old Private Clayton Laughlin Lamar home on leave in 1862 hid from a Yankee patrol. (44-45)⁵³

Elgin's commentary begins by replacing the visitors' initial image of Belle Isle, "a small island now, surrounded by Ethyl pipery" with a quantifiable statement of its pinnacle performance. He draws attention to the resources with which the plantation sustained itself and made profit: its expansive territory, its annual sugar harvest, and its secondary source of profit and entertainment, the race track. Notice, interesting enough, that Elgin and Doreen, at least in this account, don't mention how many slaves Belle Isle depended upon for its daily operations and profitability.

Of course, the tourists do not pay to hear about Belle Isle's century-old business statistics. Elgin knows that the Midwesterners pay for the plantation house tour in order to spy on its visible signs of luxury. His discussion of the treasured Carrara marble imported from Italy and the solid silver hardware emphasizes Belle Isle's era of conspicuous consumption. The erudite team of marble cutters, also "imported" directly from Italy for their impeccable craft, reifies the plantation's affluence and prestige. The solid silver hardware, a luxury only imaginable to one as extravagant as Louis XIV, remains unscathed by the Yankee soldiers, who ironically believe it to be of no real value. In the one mention of slaves—their construction of visible and valued relics such as columns, bricks, and "wavy window glass"—the label "artisans" shifts to the forefront as the tourists will likely recall the historic relics rather than the enslaved laborers that made them. In one sense, the term artisan would be an appropriate description as some of the plantation slaves would be skilled craftsmen. However, one senses a hint of irony in Percy's writing directed at the tourists with "artisan" likely remaining in their memory rather than slave. The subsequent popularity of artisan and artisanal as marketing terms underscores Percy's prescience here. The spiel finishes with the sympathetic image of a young confederate soldier, barely a man and still small enough to crawl into the enclosed space of a dumbwaiter, as he hides from Yankee terrorists. The young white soldier in Elgin's spiel represents the most sympathetic figure to tourists as he personifies white tragedy and loss.

Restoration Fantasy and Parody

With the media's proliferation of commodified southernness, from *Southern Living* to Hollywood films to southern chic home decor, "authentic" southernness could be projected through a lifestyle of role-play and ownership of the right decor. Margot's sense of southernness derives from mass-media images and Hollywood actors. Her "Texas-conceived image of the River Road gentry," Lancelot discovers, constitutes an amalgamation of fictional and historical male figures seen through their Hollywood stereotypes. For the "anemic poetic Georgia gent" figure she pulls *Gone with the Wind's* character Ashley Wilkes and his Hollywood counterpart, actor Leslie Howard (120). Her image of the Confederacy comes from Jefferson Davis, the former Confederate President, "home from the wars and set up in style ... at Beauvoir, parked out in a pigeonier much like mine" (120). Gregory Peck, famously playing the honorable lawyer Atticus Finch in the 1962 film *To Kill a Mockingbird*, provides her an image of the noble "gentle Southern lawyer" (120). Lastly, "a bit of Clark Gable as Rhett [Butler]" in the film *Gone with the Wind* provides Margot with a grand image of southern masculinity (120). As Lancelot acknowledges, several of these men were, like himself, "creatures" designed by strong women (120).⁵⁴

The Texas native arrived in New Orleans with her father "who had made ten million dollars in mud; had moved to New Orleans to make still more in offshore rigs and so arrived in the Garden District, rich, widowed, with a debutante age daughter" (71). The newcomers fumble their way through the prestigious community, yet predictably fail to understand customs of the history- and tradition-laden district. As Towers notes,

Margot represents “the new money that has invaded the South, buying up old relics with which to disguise its rawness” (8). Although Percy never directly links Margot to the magazine, she nevertheless symbolizes a caricature of “southern living” culture, an embodiment of pseudo-authenticity, eager to stage her own life with recognizable acts and appearances of “southern living.”

As Margot fashions a River Road gentry lifestyle through architectural restoration and antique home furnishings, she practices the 1960s and 1970s logic of *Southern Living* and southern plantation tourism. She restores the plantation house’s architectural interior in an effort to give Belle Isle the market-driven appearance of authenticity that tourists, like herself, desire. In practice, Margot’s passion for authenticity plays out as uncritical historicism and pseudo-authenticity in which what counts as authentic in her vision is merely what passes for authenticity to the uncritical or uneducated eye. By portraying “southern living” through southern chic historicism, Margot performs in a manner that resembles what Martin Luschei identifies as Percy’s prevailing characterization of conformity, “the phenomenon of role-playing—what we might call living the cliché” (25-26). In her determination to restore Belle Isle to a proper River Road spectacle, she also engages in a personal transformation to become the plantation mistress. Her role-play, however, depends upon “old and clichéd southern fictions” that she has learned from film and popular culture historicism.

Margot may be driven by a passion for authenticity, yet her own performance of the southern lady leaves much to be desired. Lancelot succinctly recalls his first glimpse of Margot, simply stating “Margot was a belle” (71). The label quickly proves to be little

else. Dressed to portray a southern belle for Azalea Trail tourists, Margot appears as a “not quite genuine belle,” when first noticed by Lancelot, “but more Texan come to Mardi Gras” with her gaudy harlequined pantaloons (80). She attempts to relay a sense of belonging to Lancelot’s milieu through speech to similarly poor reception. Her utterances include a pastiche of accents and identities:

[I]n her two or three exclamations my ear caught overtones that overlay her original out-from-Odessa holler (gollee?): a bit of her voice teacher here, a bit of New Orleans there (they were saying Oh, Scott that year), a bit of Winston Churchill (great good luck), a bit of Edward VII (at long last). Or was it Ronnie Colman? I had not yet heard her cut loose and swear like an oilfield roughneck. (76)

Lancelot recalls her transition from native tongue to the local vernacular, “I swear I think she almost said *git* but not really: she was halfway between *git* and *get*, just as she was halfway between Odessa, Texas, and New Orleans” (75, italics original). He mocks the dissonance between Margot’s early desire to reflect authenticity and the commercialized role she enacts. Sizing her up against the stereotypical southern belle model, Lancelot observes “She wasn’t pretty and she wasn’t Scarlett” (73). In Lancelot’s description, Margot appears unpolished, with a “shiny and foreshortened” face and “coarse stiff hair” (74). Her mouth and hands appear large, even masculine, rather than dainty. Margot and her counterparts, who were also “unpretty,” look more like “wet dogs” to Lancelot (74). In fairness, even Margaret Mitchell’s description of Scarlett does not focus upon beauty but instead upon the way men croon for her. The first line of *Gone with the Wind* concerns her lack of beauty: “Scarlett O’Hara was not beautiful, but men seldom realized it when caught by her charm” (5).⁵⁵ Lancelot quickly recognizes that Margot’s great

charm is her overt sensuality while donning the trappings of southern history: “what she was or had and what I caught a glimpse of and made me swallow was a curious droll direct voluptuousness” (74). He revels in this deviation from the typecast tradition as Margot initially reflects the whore more than the virgin or, in her case, the prurient Mardi Gras tourist donning a soiled, wet hoop skirt.

Although she utilizes representative tokens of southernness and the southern belle, time after time her attempts miss the mark in unflattering ways. In one such instance, Margot wears the recognizable fragrance of the southern belle: orris root. Lancelot recalls, “I must have asked her what her perfume was because I remember her saying orris root and laughing again: Miss What’s-Her-Name, grande dame and ramrod of the Azalea Festival, wanted everything authentic” (77). Percy scholar Lewis Lawson notes that Margot’s orris root fragrance was, as William Alexander Percy says in *Lanterns on the Levee*, “‘the right smell’ for elderly southern gentlewomen” (226). Lawson claims that “Margot must have roused the image of the southern belle, the ideal past, for Lance” (226). As Walker Percy has commented, *Lanterns on the Levee*, the highly-acclaimed memoir written by his second cousin and adoptive father “Uncle Will,” has been regarded by many “as an expression of the ‘aristocratic’ point of view of the Old South” that was “written from the ancient posture of Southern apologetics” (Introduction xviii, xv). As such, Lawson reads Margot’s use of orris root as a sign of the authentic southern belle of an “ideal past.” However, Lancelot’s laugh proves he finds humor in her performance as he mockingly calls her “Miss What’s-Her-Name, grande dame and ramrod of the Azalea Festival.”

Lancelot is equally aware of the distance between Margot's girlish performance and her actual age as he watches her "bounding and ducking like a thirteen-year-old yet really she was post-debutante, post-belle, twenty-three or -four" (73). If we follow Lawson's logic of looking back to "Uncle Will's" belief that orris root is "'the right smell' for elderly southern gentlewomen," we should also recognize Percy's satirical pun equating Margot's "post-debutante, post-belle" status to "elderly southern gentlewomen" wearing orris root as a nostalgic curtsy to bygone society. In a similar occurrence, Lancelot detects Margot's use of outdated blue-blooded phrases: "*Cunning*. Where did she get that? Not Odessa. I hadn't heard it for years. That's what my mother's generation said" (78). In both instances, Lancelot's perception of Margot as the "grande dame and ramrod of the Azalea Festival" spotlights the errors in her performance as she anachronistically and forcefully, like a ramrod, plays the aging southern belle rather than the young lady she intends. From the beginning, Margot, who later ventures into acting in B-grade films, is always attempting to portray a role she has learned as much from Hollywood as she has from the culture of *Southern Living*. Despite her efforts, she remains, as Lancelot realizes, a bad actor throughout.

Through Margot's fondness for employing southern chic materialism as evidence of authenticity, *Lancelot* satirizes cultural infatuation with antiquated objects by equating antiquarian nostalgic desire with sexual desire. Margot "liked antiques and making love" (80). Although separate interests, Lancelot's recollections of Margot's "passion for old 'authentic' things" yoke the two proclivities together in synchronous gratification (80). The couple "lived by sexual delights and the triumphs of architectural restoration" as she

transformed Belle Isle “to a splendor it had never known” (119, 117). Margot, who “want[s] everything authentic,” feels sensual desire and then climax once her ideal has been attained: “Certain architectural triumphs became for her like orgasms...she having discovered old accurate sketches of the plaster roses in the ceilings of the burned wing of Belle Isle. Her face glowed...as good for her as sexual love, at the time better in fact” (77, 119-20). Margot’s discovery elicits euphoria as she envisions recreating even the smallest intricate details of the original structure.

Percy satirizes the charisma of cultural nostalgia and pseudo-authenticity cultivated within the peaking restoration culture of the 1960s and 1970s through Margot’s restoration of Belle Isle. The novel concentrates Margot’s restoration efforts in Belle Isle’s pigeonier. Located on the outskirts of Belle Isle, “the farthest place from the tourists, servants, and family,” the decrepit pigeonier appeals to Lancelot as a secluded place away from the realm of history, tourism, and performance, a non-place much like Percy’s chosen town of Covington. When Lancelot first invites Margot into the pigeonier, the building appears to be little more than a shed, “dusty and cluttered but dry and pleasant,” a place “to store garden tools” (75). However, Margot, in her wet and sullied southern belle gown, designates the place an “architectural gem” as she envisions reconstructing her restoration fantasy of cultural nostalgia. She lays her claim to domesticate the outbuilding: ““A kitchenette there. Bedroom up there. Think of it! I saw Beauvoir last week. Jeff Davis had a place like this. Let me fix it up for you,”” to which Lancelot quickly accepts (78).⁵⁶ Having toured Beauvoir—the last home of Jefferson Davis, former President of the Confederacy—in Biloxi, Mississippi, a mere week before

setting her eyes on Lancelot's pigeonier, Margot envisions the space as a grand opportunity to restore Belle Isle and Lancelot "according to some Texas-conceived image of the River Road gentry" (120)— in essence, a Hollywood-inspired composite of the southern gentleman and his home that registers aristocratic plantation culture for a mainstream audience. In hindsight, during his confession to Father John one year later, Lancelot recognizes Margot's grand design in her eagerly proposed renovation ideas: "turning a dove-cote into a study, me into Jefferson Davis writing his memoirs" (82). Margot's restoration amounts to restoration fantasy.

Percy's fictional treatment of the pigeonier undergoes a strikingly similar transformation as that of Covington, that is, from a nondescript "non-place" of solace to a self-conscious "place" eliciting historical performance. Thus, Percy utilizes Margot's restoration of the pigeonier as a narrative critique, a parody, geared toward the prevailing "southern living" culture of musealization. Structurally, a pigeonier (more commonly known outside of Louisiana as a dovecote) is a one-and-a-half or two-story-high brick or stone outbuilding of cylindrical or square shape topped with a decorative finial. The lower level commonly serves as a storage room while the upper level furnishes an aviary populated with nesting lofts for pigeons or doves (Poesch and Bacot 144). In earlier times the dovecote established a convenient means for acquiring fresh poultry, eggs, and fertilizer, which led to its popularity in colonial America (Harris 103). Margot calls the space an "architectural gem," yet she is unfamiliar with the pigeonier's purpose or architectural history. "Looking up at the ceiling through her eyebrows," she asks with uncertainty "This was for pigeons?" (76). Lancelot directs her to listen for the

few remaining birds upstairs, but their call, a “chuckle-coo” that came “down the iron staircase,” is drowned out by rainfall (76). While in the pigeonier with Lancelot, she maintains focus on the structure’s potential symbolism and aesthetics. Historically, pigeoniers have served an ornamental purpose beyond their utilitarian beginnings due to French influence in the eighteenth-century as a reflection of landed gentry’s elevated status (Poesch and Bacot 142). As “commanding and decorative” outbuildings adorning the main house, pigeoniers “continue[d] as a fashion well into the nineteenth century” in Louisiana’s French settlements (Poesch and Bacot 142). Its inclusion alongside Belle Isle’s construction reflects regional architecture while also signifying the Lamar family’s presumed claims to aristocracy. However, such claims fail to resonate with its current state of disrepair.

As a glorified birdhouse and garden shed in the late 1960s of the novel, the pigeonier’s walls are swathed in copious splatters of bird feces, a condition which Percy employs to debase restoration and recovery of the past. Margot finds joy in excavating the antique status symbol from the filth: “she liked cleaning away a hundred years of pigeon shit and finding lovely oiled-with-guano cypress underneath” (82). Percy effectively labels historical restoration and renovation as “shitwork,” at least under Margot’s direction. Given the novel’s parodic treatment of Margot and restoration, its association with shitwork suggests the triviality and meaninglessness of her effort to convert “a dove-cote into a study, [and Lancelot] into Jefferson Davis writing his memoirs” (82). With the scatological metaphor, Percy swiftly undercuts Margot’s restoration fantasy as a vain attempt to replicate historical status through remodeling and

role-playing. Furthermore, he mocks restorationist vernacular as he describes the feces-stained floor with the aesthetics of beauty, the “lovely oiled-with-guano” flooring (82). Percy portrays feces as a surprising preservative of prized architectural features: “To her delight, after scraping off 150 years of pigeon shit they found the original cypress floor of two-by-twelves marvelously preserved, two-foot-thick walls of slave brick” (18). Margot delights in her discovery of the pigeonier’s authentic antebellum-era materials as if they were hidden treasure. Percy, however, ensures that nostalgic and fetishized plans for the wood and brick are forever associated with shit and triviality.

Margot forcefully converts Lancelot’s appealing non-place into a *place* defined by historical objects and “southern living” culture. She stages the main downstairs room with newfound antique furnishings, a “plantation desk” and a “slave chair,” to reflect tradition, social hierarchy, and plantation history. To maintain the historical appearance of the study, she relegates Lancelot’s modern office equipment (file cabinets, typewriter, “metal swivel chair” and “metal desk”) out of sight, upstairs in “the pigeon roost proper” (27-28). The plantation desk had been designed to conform to the specific function and lifestyle of an antebellum planter, “built high so a planter in a hurry could write a check standing up” (26). The typical plantation desk style resembles a large secretary desk: a cabinet, or hutch, resting atop the slightly deeper surface area of a simple desk. In comparison, the plantation desk’s cabinet stands significantly taller. Like the secretary, “pigeonholes,” or cubbyholes (for organizing mail, bills, or other office-related paperwork) occupy a significant portion of the cabinet’s interior. The cabinet, which appears as the main feature and function of the furniture, limits surface area of the desk

below. Although the style's name fits, as does its common usage in plantations, the design fails to register with Margot's Hollywood-contrived image of the plantation owner, "a kind of gentleman planter without a plantation" (120). The plantation desk, however, was clearly designed for an active businessman, not a leisurely gent, as Lancelot surmises from seeing its height: "I don't think those fellows ever sat down and wrote a letter or read a book" (26). Because Margot's restoration fantasy envisions a gentlemanly "man of letters," the plantation desk had to be converted; therefore, "[s]he had the legs cut off to make an ordinary desk" (26). Relegating the most functional element of the desk toward the floor, her reconditioning converts the cabinet top to a writer's desktop, and recycles material history into nostalgic materiality. With the room fully restored and staged according to Margot's desires, Lancelot reports to the pigeonier as if to perform his calling, "and there I sat, feeling like Jeff Davis at Beauvoir, ready to write my memoirs. Except I had no memoirs. There was nothing to remember" (18). Of course, Lancelot has no grand memoirs of the South to record.

Lancelot may not feel equipped to simulate Jefferson Davis; nevertheless, he genially participates in the generic restoration fantasy, "pacing up and down, stopping now and then to make a legal note at my plantation desk in her Florentine-leather notepad, stopping at the cypress cupboard-turned-into-bar to pour a whiskey from crystal decanter into silver jigger, the way Southern gents do in the movies" (120-21). His role-play is rather ironic given his humor with Margot's assumptions: "I went along agreeably, amused by her extraordinary Texas notion that we 'aristocratic' folk were somehow all of a piece. Of course we were not, not even aristocratic" (120-21). Although

Margot assumes that the “aristocratic folk” are all the same, there are no shared universal characteristics except in her assumed naiveté. The Lamar family does not even fall within the upper echelon associated with River Road’s impressive plantation mansions. Despite his perspective of Margot’s idealism, he is happy to play the part Margot stages for him, if for nothing else then to masquerade affluence. Feeling that he never truly belonged to the presumed aristocratic gentry, Lancelot later confesses “since I never felt much of a piece myself, I’d as soon dress the part. I even found myself playing up to the role” (120-21).

Lancelot also garners Percy’s critique as he inhabits a life grounded in nostalgia for the southern aristocratic codes. Lancelot is Percy’s only central character, across his novels, to dream “of recovering the role of Southern gentleman” (Gray 262). While Lancelot critiques Margot, Percy continually mocks Lancelot as a figure relatively unaware of his own participation in similar patriarchal traditions and customs. As with many of Percy’s works, *Lancelot* treats pastoralism with “a degree of irony... [that is] lost on the denizens of Percy’s South,” a place where “[a]most everyone... measures success by attainment of the arcadian dream” imaged and “restored” in popular culture (Gray 51). Lancelot once regarded these traditions as empty, hence his disdain for Margot’s actions and Belle Isle’s tourists’s credulity; however, he readily adapts to the southern gentleman lifestyle, ignorant of his own folly. Lancelot indifferently slips into a state of idleness and isolation. Ironically, he reflects tendencies he has long critiqued in his father, who spent his days of leisurely seclusion as a poet, a painter, and a cuckold. Lancelot recalls

Once he, my father, painted a mystical painting of our alley of live oaks showing the perpetual twilight filling them even at noon, and above, the great domed spaces shot through by a single stray shaft of sunlight, a picture he entitled ‘O sola beatitude! O beata solitude!’ He wrote a poem with the same title. Poet Laureate he was of Feliciana Parish, so designated by the local Kiwanis, lying on his recliner in the deep shaded upper gallery dreaming over his history manuscript, dreaming not so much of a real past as what ought to have been and should be now and might be yet: a lovely golden sunlit Louisiana of bayous and live oaks and misty green savannahs, Feliciana, a happy land of decent folk and droll folkways and quiet backwaters, the whole suffused by gentle Episcopal rectitude. (215)

The painting’s title, “O sola beatitude! O beata solitude!” offers an allusion to Saint Bernard’s proverb, which loosely translates to “O blessed solitude, O solitary blessedness.” Its meaning has been long considered a variation of the belief that one can be happy only when one removes oneself from the world. The imperative of solitude and isolation fostered a spiritual objective for practicing monks; however, quite different circumstances are portrayed in Percy’s example. Lancelot’s father has removed himself from the world, rather lily-livered in Lancelot’s accounts, and into a nostalgic retreat of solitude. His “mystical” painting showcases the iconic image of a plantation’s approach, an oak tree-lined drive. “Even at noon,” the hottest moment of the day, the Louisiana sky at the plantation appears like twilight with his father reclining in deep shade in nostalgic dreams of a past that never was, though it “ought to have been” and “might be yet.” The picturesque setting resembles a slick stylized photo in *Southern Living*, the “happy land of decent folk,” an oasis without controversy or problems. Perhaps more importantly, it reflects a nostalgic image of the South and the southern gentleman that has been repeatedly portrayed across time and that Percy would likely argue has little value in the modern day. For, as Brian Carpenter claims, “Percy had little reverence for the old icons

of the South and even less for the culture they purported to represent” (“Splendor Never Known” 107).⁵⁷ Lancelot describes his father’s lifestyle as “lovely,” “happy,” “droll...and quiet,” “gentle,” yet all the while Lancelot’s mother presumably engages in an affair. Lancelot suspects his father has inadvertently advocated the affair, by regularly sending his wife and friend out for lengthy excursions, but somehow remains oblivious to it all. There is a danger to such oblivion as his father appears lost in the past and in idleness. The ironic treatment of the painting poses critique as well, since the man is not finding pure bliss in solitude with God, as the proverb implies, nor is he in solitude from the world. Although distancing himself from the real or modern world, he immerses himself in another, the arcadian world of nostalgia.

Percy satirizes Lancelot’s father as an individual unaware of his own clichéd lifestyle. As Susan Donaldson insightfully claims, “What concerns Percy in particular, though, is the refusal of people to recognize old and clichéd southern fictions as fiction and their determination to hold on to tradition and its narrative long past the period of their usefulness” (70). Lancelot’s father exemplifies this tendency as he reflects the typecast “anemic” poet and cuckold to boot. Lancelot has slipped into a similar performance of clichéd southern plantation life:

There I sat in my pigeonier, happy as could be, master of Belle Isle, the loveliest house on River Road, gentleman and even bit of a scholar (Civil War, of course), married to a beautiful rich loving (I thought) wife, and father (I thought) to a lovely little girl; a moderate reader, moderate liberal, moderate drinker (I thought), moderate music lover, moderate hunter and fisherman, and past president of the United Way. I moderately opposed segregation. I was moderately happy. (24)

Lancelot's self-description is much like the WASP or upper-middle-class rising affluent Southerner. In nearly every activity he self-identifies as "moderate," a safe, uncontroversial middle ground. His mention of segregation and United Way both suggest class, affluence, opportunity, and benevolence to those less fortunate. His moderate lifestyle mirrors the "southern living" ideal, devoid of confrontation in true *Southern Living* style. Lancelot slips into conformity, following the course that his preserved plantation house has set for him: "Do you know what happened to me during the past twenty years? A gradual, ever so gradual, slipping away of my life into a kind of dream state in which finally I could not be sure that anything was happening at all. Perhaps nothing happened" (57). As he concludes, "I became an idler" (59). Falling into the trap of southern living role-play has led Lancelot to this "dream state."

As with many of Percy's other novels, *Lancelot* also depicts its title character shaken from the everyday malaise. The great ordeal which manages to return his critical vision is the plantation mistress's fall from the pedestal upon which the stereotyped ideal stands: virtue. Percy satirizes the Cavalier South of southern mythology by upending the Arthurian legend through Lancelot and Margot. As Ford explains, "Unlike his Arthurian namesake, [Lancelot] believes that his undoing comes not out of his own faithlessness, improvidence, and commitment to worldly virtues, but of the tawdry infidelity of the woman he loves" (563).

Lancelot stages the grand intersection of Margot's passion for historicism and restoration and her inauthentic role-play in their marriage bed. Lancelot recalls, "Truthfully, at that time I don't know which she enjoyed more, a good piece in Henry

Clay's bed or Henry Clay's bed" (119). Towers argues that one model for Percy's fictional Belle Isle is Rosedown Plantation in Louisiana, "which was not only restored by a rich Texas woman but contains an enormous gothic bed originally designed for Henry Clay's use in the White House in the event of his election—a bed which appears in *Lancelot* as having been made for John C. Calhoun" (8). Indeed, many historians describe the "Henry Clay bed" in terms of its original commission. The elaborate bed was designed and built by Clay's Whig Party supporters who were confident that he would be slumbering in the presidential bedroom after the 1844 election. Of course, Clay never became president and the bed never reached the White House. The bed is as much a piece of political history as it is an artform.⁵⁸ Standing "more than 13 feet tall, with elaborate pinnacles [i.e., grand four-poster bed], a huge high-backed headboard and a tester [i.e., canopy] whose interior is carved into pyramids," its magnitude and intricate Gothic design are unparalleled (Moonan E41). The magnificent "Henry Clay bed" serves as the idealized marriage bed for Lancelot and Margot and also as the tragic murder bed for Margot and her paramour.

Like the historical journey of Henry Clay's actual bed, the Lamar's bed represents a grand dream nearly realized and a symbolic reminder of failure. Lancelot first mentions the bed while considering Margot's affections for him being rivaled by her affection for antiques: "Once a couple of years ago when we were making love...as her arm stretched up her fingers explored the fine oiled restored texture of the mahogany, her nails traced the delicate fluting of the heavy columns" (119). While Lancelot once emphasized Margot's poor performance as a southern belle and her "passion for 'old' authentic

things,” he has since embraced her as a southern woman evolved through “southern living” culture: “Ten years had turned her from callow coltish skittish-mustang Texas girl to assured chatelaine and mistress of Belle Isle, more Louisianian than Louisianians for they didn’t know what they were like and she did” (88). As such, she has become idolized in Lancelot’s own restoration fantasy. Meanwhile, he has slipped from a state of idleness and nostalgia to a delusional arbiter of southern custom and gender roles.

The bed, a material object rooted in a long-held imaginative history that never “materialized,” perfectly symbolizes Lancelot’s dream of Margot sparked through her role-play and the failure of her simulation to replicate the idealized mythic southern plantation mistress. Although surrounded by the material world of the musealized plantation, Margot’s failure to live up to the virtuous expectation surfaces once Lancelot discovers proof of her adultery in their child’s blood type. Considering Margot as the “assured chatelaine and mistress of Belle Isle,” his indulgent restoration fantasy has been ruptured. When Lancelot finally witnesses Margot’s infidelity in the very bed that he had earlier called “Henry Clay’s bed,” he switches the historical referent and instead calls it “the great Calhoun bed” (237). The switch reflects a significant shift, although at first it seems that Percy has merely taken creative license with the politician’s name while keeping the actual history intact: “It was the great Calhoun bed, built by my ancestor for his friend John C. Calhoun to sleep in in the White House in 1844. But Calhoun never slept in the White House so Royal Moultrie Lamar kept the bed” (237). One could easily assume Percy’s substitution of Calhoun for Clay occurred in oversight. After all, Clay and Calhoun, along with Daniel Webster, came to be known as the Great Triumvirate

dominating national politics in the 1830s and 1840s. Their names have been tied in history and politics for well over a century. As historian Merrill Peterson explains, the three outspoken politicians “were widely regarded at home and abroad as the foremost American statesmen of the age” (5). However, Clay, Calhoun, and Webster were each so inextricably linked to their geographic regions that they were “representatives, spokesmen, ultimately personifications, of their respective sections: East [Webster], West [Clay], and South [Calhoun]” (Peterson 5). Consider, then, that Percy’s slippage between the Henry Clay bed and the great Calhoun bed reflects a pivotal shift in ideology from West to South—that is, Lancelot’s perceptual shift from Margot the west Texan who poorly performs the aristocratic southerner to an idealized southern lady that has violated the most stringent Old South code of aristocratic southern womanhood, chastity.⁵⁹

Preserving and Restoring the Residual Codes of History

As Percy stood in Greenwood Plantation’s back parlor examining the “odd and troubling list” of the plantation’s slaves, he surely considered the paradox of the plantation tourist industry’s drive for authenticity while rarely including images and narratives of the enslaved individuals that sustained the plantation. His fictional plantation portrays an African American family, the Buells, serving as Belle Isle’s staff of “faithful and . . . ill-paid retainers,” sadly reminiscent of their slave ancestors (92). The father, Ellis, operating as both gardener and butler, retains an old-fashioned custom of silence and confidentiality despite the atrocious behaviors he has become privy to at Belle Isle. His wife, Suellen, serves as a modern-day mammy to Lancelot who says, “[s]he had raised me, thousands of Suellens had raised thousands like me, kept us warm

in the kitchen, saved us from our fond bemused batty parents, my father screwed up by poesy, dreaming of Robert E. Lee” (55). Their son, Elgin, nears graduation at M.I.T. thanks to a scholarship Lancelot helped him obtain, although Lancelot secretly confesses his minimal involvement since “the Ivy League [was] beating the bushes for any black who could read without using his finger” (91). Despite the intimacy created between them over the decades, Lancelot’s interactions with them always maintains their role as servants while he, at times, regards them with patriarchal benevolence.

In a narrative so highly critical of preservation, it is rather intriguing that Lancelot demonstrates contradictory behaviors, even performing the very things he has critiqued. At one point, Lancelot admits to guiding tours in pure jest to test the boundaries of tourists’s civility, telling “them scholarly disquisitions on the beauty of plantation life, somewhat tongue-in-cheek—to see how far I could go without getting a rise from these good Midwestern folk” (59). Lancelot intentionally downplays the hardships of slavery so as to suggest the slaves maintained a sense of autonomy, “so help me, they weren’t so bad off on Belle Isle. They became first-class artisans, often were given their freedom, and looked down on white trash” (59-60). He reiterates the romantic image of the industrious and benevolent plantation owner that has earned his affluence: “the strong, self-reliant, even piratical master who carves a regular barony in the wilderness and lives like Louis XIV, yet who treats his slaves well” (59). In his final push, he exalts the amenities of the slave cabins, yet hears no protest:

“Now take a look at this slave cabin, ladies and gentlemen. Is it so bad? Nice high ceilings, cool rooms, front porch, brick chimney, cypress floors. Great arching oaks back yard and front. Do you prefer your little brick bungalow in Lansing?” They watched me carefully to catch the drift and either nodded seriously or laughed. It’s impossible to insult anybody from Michigan. (59-60)

Lancelot clearly acknowledges the institutionalized racism of slavery within plantation culture as he tests the limits of tourist civility. He recognizes the irony of the African American tour guide wearing the plantation coat of arms on his guide jacket, and yet he still has Elgin, a highly educated black man, employed as his servant. As he slips further into performing the role of Belle Isle’s master, Lancelot repeats the preservation tactics he once critiqued. The narrative reveals numerous moments such as this when Percy shows how the very myths that he critiques are also embedded within the everyday. In the preserved plantation house, Percy reveals the durability of labor relations, particularly as the African American Buell family’s livelihood depends upon their participation in Lancelot’s and Margot’s restoration fantasy.

The restoration and staging of Belle Isle intimately affects the Buell family as it reinstitutes antiquated labor relations. Lancelot repeatedly recalls Margot’s enjoyment of the physical act of restoration, especially in scraping pigeon droppings from the pigeonnier. Yet as his memories reveal, an African American man performs the manual labor of, quite literally, shoveling shit for Margot: “It took Fluker two weeks to shovel out 150 years of pigeon shit, scrape the walls, and reveal what Margot was after, the slave bricks of the walls and the three-inch cypress floor, not only not rotted but preserved, waxed by guano” (28). By calling upon Fluker, Elgin’s brother, Margot restores the aesthetic beauty of the structure by reenacting the plantation’s antebellum hegemonic

labor practices that initially built and sustained the pigeonier. Essentially, Margot the plantation “mistress” hands off the grotesque labor to a black man with enough family ties and loyalties to Belle Isle that he feels compelled, if not forced, to carry out the drudgery. Worse yet, he must slog through more than six inches of waste in order to reveal what “Margot was after,” the slave bricks and cypress floor, relics of slave labor, that Margot excitedly anticipates will exhibit the authentic historical grounding to envision Lancelot as Jefferson Davis writing his memoir of the rise and fall of the Confederate South. The scene recalls McPherson’s reflection on plantation homes’s dual historical narratives, illustrating “the history of oppression that such homes could just as easily symbolize and encourag[ing] a nostalgic form of southern history” (44) and its desirable relics in its place.

In the pigeonier Margot positions the “slave chair, made by slaves for slaves” across from the antique plantation master’s desk (43). Her claim that “the work of some slave artisans had the simplicity and beauty of Shaker furniture” suggests their positioning comes more from decorative harmony than from historical usage. Plantation desks often resemble Shaker style furniture, as both focused on simplicity and utility rather than ornamentation. Historically, the two pieces would not likely share the same space as the slave would be expected to stand, not sit, in the master’s presence. The slight reflects another instance of Margot’s attention to the appearance and sound of authenticity rather than historical reality. However, Margot’s staging of the plantation desk and the slave chair influence Lancelot and Elgin to play the roles assigned by the furnishings.

The Buell family has felt indebted to Lancelot for their belief that he “saved” them from the Klan’s harassing attacks upon Ellis, Belle Isle’s caretaker and Elgin’s father, by threatening a “shoot-out ultimatum” in “grand mythic Lamar tradition” (92). In truth, Lancelot’s “heroic” deed involved briefly reminding the KKK’s Grand Kleagle, a dim-witted local who had been his high school and college football teammate, that “‘he’s *my nigger*, J.B. He’s been working for us for forty years and you know that,’” to which J.B. affably consented and sealed with a cordial shot of whiskey (93). Lancelot, who “for a long time hadn’t asked [Elgin] or anybody to do anything, because [he] hadn’t anything to do” (44), imposes his authority upon Elgin with an unseemly task—to spy on his wife for evidence of adultery. Elgin responds in partial dialect, “You know I’d do anything you axed,” saying “axed” for “asked” (91).

Lancelot observes his paradoxical mismatch of speech and intelligence. Now attending M.I.T. on scholarship, Elgin already “knew more about chemistry” as a high school student than most learn in college (44). When Lancelot asks Elgin about the functionality of a dumbwaiter he replies “‘That old rope rotten,” in dialect more fitting for a slave or lower class servant than the young man that graduated from “the elite Black Catholic school in New Orleans” (44). Pondering with uncertainty over Elgin’s repeated “Yes, sir” response, Lancelot imagines Elgin’s extended use of dialect following his work request as he observes him: “Elgin was excited. Not excited. Mystified. What am I up to? What he gon do next? He doesn’t know, but he’ll go along” (46). Despite recognizing Elgin’s intellectual superiority, Lancelot still predicts that Elgin will faithfully and blindly follow orders, even imagining Elgin’s thoughts in dialect “What he

gon do next?” With his wife’s virtue and his masculinity threatened by her probable infidelity, Lancelot regains a sense of authority and command by role-playing Old South codes of conduct between master and faithful slave.

Lancelot directs Elgin to stage videocameras throughout the plantation house’s living quarters as a means of tracking overnight movements. The endeavor involves a strategic feat of technology and linear arrangement. He never specifically explains to Elgin that he seeks evidence of his wife’s infidelity, believing that Elgin, like his father, would “shutter his eyes” and retain the custom of confidentiality and blindness: “I had counted on...that the problem, its sheer impossibility, would engage him immediately so that he would not think two seconds about what I was asking him to do” (141). Lancelot recalls his reliance upon Elgin in terms of an inherited tradition of subservience and benevolence, “he was my nigger after all, and if he could look, wouldn’t, didn’t...He was the perfect nigger” (181). With Lancelot at the plantation desk and Elgin in the slave chair, Lancelot conjectures, “he was still in a sense ‘my nigger’; and my watching him, waiting for him, was piece and part of the old way we had of ascribing wondrous powers to ‘them,’ if they were ‘ours.’” (142).

Lancelot’s characters demonstrate a close association between the preserved plantation house and its inhabitants’ roles, whether generated from popular culture or inherited from archaic custom. Just as the novel overtly demonstrates the longevity of gendered stereotypes, particularly through Margot, it also reveals enduring mythologies

attached to the plantation house and cultural nostalgia that surrounds it. Preserving the plantation house in Percy's *Lancelot* also entails preserving the residual codes of gender and race relations that were embedded within plantation culture.

Notes

⁴⁹ *Greenwood Plantation*, Greenwood's website, provides all information of the plantation's history mentioned in this paragraph including its film appearances.

⁵⁰ As with Shakespeare's character Hamlet, Percy's protagonist Lancelot also wavers between portrayals of clarity and madness. While I refer to Lancelot here as "half-mad," several of his statements to Father John indicate an aversion to memory more than a loss of memory or sanity. For instance, Lancelot says, "It's not that I'm crazy and can't remember things but rather that the past doesn't seem worth remembering" (3). In another instance, Lancelot explains, "There's nothing wrong with my memory. It's just that I don't like to remember" (9).

⁵¹ "Limelight" music refers to the musical score of the film *Limelight* (1952) starring and directed by Charlie Chaplin. The feature song, titled "Terry's Theme," was also written by Chaplin, though it is commonly known as the "Limelight Theme" and was popularized as a cover song titled "Eternally."

⁵² Hobson refers to Walker Percy, Barry Hannah, and Josephine Humphreys as "the Ohio-Bashing School of Southern Fiction" for their common tendency in the 1960s and 1970s to poke fun at the mundaneness of the Midwest, and especially Ohio (*Southern Writer* 60).

⁵³ Arpent is a French unit of measure for land comparable to the acre. The term is still used in some French-speaking provinces within Louisiana and Canada.

⁵⁴ It is interesting to note Lancelot's perception of Margot's image of the River Road gentry focuses almost exclusively on masculinity and patriarchy. He does, however, state that most of these men "were, like himself, 'creatures' designed by strong women" (120).

⁵⁵ In *Gone with the Wind* Scarlett's charm flows from the personality visible in her eyes, "turbulent, willful, lusty with life, distinctly at variance with her decorous demeanor. Her manners had been imposed upon her...her eyes were her own" (5).

⁵⁶ Two years before Davis inherited Beauvoir from a family friend, he began renting a small pavilion on the property, the Library Cottage, as a quiet writing retreat. Built in the 1850s during Beauvoir's original construction, Davis's rented pavilion stands prominently as one of two cottages

flanking the main house from its front lawn. The owners renovated the cottage into Davis's living quarters, converting the rear veranda into bedroom and dressing room (Jefferson Davis, 397-98, fn 2). Elsewhere the library was "filled to the ceiling with books" (Jefferson Davis, 398, fn 2).] It was here that Davis began composing his monumental history *The Rise and Fall of the Confederate Government* (Federal Writers' Project 294).

⁵⁷ Mark Graybill envisions Percy's critique more adamantly across his works, claiming "Percy contests most aggressively the nostalgic images of the South as a pastoral world of lovely belles and noble courtiers who live of the land and spend their leisure time indulging in the 'finer thing': discussing politics, philosophizing, and most important of all, reading the masterpieces" (47). Lancelot certainly fits the bill as far as Graybill's description goes, yet Percy's most aggressive contestation in *Lancelot* is directed toward Margot and the cultural drives that her characterization represents.

⁵⁸ When Clay's friends, the Turnbull family of Rosedown Plantation, purchased the multi-piece bedroom suite from its relatively unknown builder in 1845, they were "forced to build a wing onto [the] house just to accommodate the set" (Moonan E41). According to Moonan's research, Turnbull and Clay were friends, hence his awareness of the bedroom suite and desire to purchase it for Rosedown.

⁵⁹ Interesting to note, in 2001 the bed was purchased by the Dallas Museum of Art where it remains on public display.

CHAPTER IV

“DON’T BRING YOUR PAST INTO THIS HOUSE”: RACIALIZING THE PLANTATION HOUSE IN ALICE RANDALL’S *THE WIND DONE GONE* AND ATTICA LOCKE’S *THE CUTTING SEASON*

Preserving and restoring the old plantation house, in material and literary forms, have predominately been perceived as a white affair. White-centric cultural memory tends to lay heritage claims to the plantation and its mansion as a family home rooted in Southern culture and identity. As such, these representations often emphasize a narrative of white lineage, ascension, and benevolent authority, relegating slave experience to the periphery. Southern scholar Tara McPherson observes that cultural perceptions of the idealized plantation house entail a substantial disconnect from the historical plantation system, explaining,

In many ways, Americans can’t seem to get enough of the horrors of slavery, and yet we remain unable to connect this past to the romanticized history of the plantation, unable or unwilling to process the emotional registers still echoing from the eras of slavery and Jim Crow. The brutalities of those periods remain dissociated from our representations of the material site of those atrocities, the plantation home. (3)

The long-standing popularity of abolitionist, historical, and neo-slave narratives makes McPherson’s reflection on the fascination with slavery even more salient.

Year after year, Frederick Douglass’s *A Narrative of the Life of Frederick Douglass* (1845) and Harriet Jacobs’s *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl* (1861) continue to illuminate widespread experiences of slavery through their individual

accounts. While their admirable works speak from lived experience, Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin* (1852) remains one of the most widely read anti-slavery novels. Contemporary works such as Octavia Butler's *Kindred* (1979), Toni Morrison's *Beloved* (1987), and Edward Jones's *The Known World* (2003) return to the antebellum plantation to demonstrate haunting traumas of slavery that continue to saturate individual experiences in the present. Recent top-grossing films, Quentin Tarantino's revenge fantasy *Django Unchained* (2012) and Steve McQueen's slave narrative adaptation *12 Years a Slave* (2013), present the plantation as a place of unrestrained violence to great critical acclaim. Far from exhaustive, the list of slave narratives continues to grow in both contemporary literature and archival research. Yet, as McPherson suggests, the plantation home often remains disconnected from slave experiences in dominant cultural memory. In the realm of plantation tourism, an emphasis on the "Big House" as an enviable showpiece results in the absence or selective display of slavery—in effect, it's silencing.

In an extensive study examining representations of slavery at plantation museums conducted between 1996 and 2001, researchers Jennifer Eichstedt and Stephen Small observed that the overwhelming majority of these sites either sidestep slavery or trivialize its experience through minor tales of "happy" or "faithful" servants (10).⁶⁰ According to Eichstedt and Small,

These sites exist within the context of a booming heritage industry, whose success rests on its ability to connect visitors to the 'glory' of United States history. Prominent plantation heritage sites tell a particular type of story (white- and elite-centric) to a particular kind of tourist (white). The stories emphasize the hard work, civility, and ingenuity of plantation owners. (6)

As discussed in Chapter 1, plantation tourism emerged relatively concurrent with early historic preservation initiatives. Pioneers who guided the preservation movement's social vision were "all white, all well-to-do, none either immigrant or native," as historic preservationist Ned Kaufman explains (326). Given the converging interests in preserving white Southern history and the sweeping popularity of *Gone with the Wind*, the initial, and ongoing, limited focus on whiteness, affluence, and nostalgia is hardly surprising.

The histories of slaves and African Americans have received increasing mainstream recognition since the Civil Rights movement. However, their marginalized presence at many plantation house museums suggests that the plantation legend still thrives today in part because of continued silence and trivialization surrounding slave experience. Only 4 out of 122 plantation museums Eichstedt and Small studied "incorporate issues regarding slavery and those enslaved throughout the interpretive locations that a visitor might attend at a given site" (203). Pervading absence of slave heritage in these sites of American history has been noted in recent years by historic preservationists such as Kaufman who explains, "African Americans, for example, whether descendants of southern plantation slaves or free blacks in seventeenth-century New York, have a stake in the accurate presentation of American history, one that records both their sufferings and their contributions, and sometimes that simply acknowledges their presence" (324). To better appreciate the "selective history" presented at a range of these sites, we should consider that enslaved laborers comprised as much as fifty to ninety percent of the total population at antebellum plantations (Eichstedt and Small

200). The incommensurate historical awareness and interest in architectural and landscape aesthetics under the mantra of “saving history for posterity” evolves into a skewed portrayal of the past in which grand plantations covered the Old South and their laborers, whether indigent or enslaved, nearly vanish. In *Wounds of Returning*, Jessica Adams highlights the historical bias and its paradox as she claims, “Though slavery has become irrelevant to the plantation, the slaveless plantation house is central to ‘American history’” (59).

Alice Randall and Attica Locke, both contemporary African American writers of the South, address the “widespread historical and popular silences” about slave experience within the plantation house of cultural memory and the tourist industry. While Randall and Locke take different approaches, both critique plantation houses and the uncritical philosophies of preservation that shape them. As such, their narratives reframe the plantation house by inscribing slave history and heritage into the houses, architectures, and narratives that previously have excluded them. Randall’s *The Wind Done Gone* (2001) critiques plantation mythology’s idealized and preserved symbols. Through a parodic rendering of *Gone with the Wind*, the novel re-presents material signs of genteel plantocracy, such as neoclassical architecture and decor, as satiric and symbolic commemorations of slavery. Whereas *The Wind Done Gone* explores conceptual preservation in cultural memory, Locke’s *The Cutting Season* (2012) reframes plantation tourism with an African American perspective. Locke’s novel dramatizes many of the limitations and silences that Eichstedt and Small discovered in their study of plantation museums. In addition, her critique of selective preservation highlights issues of

musealization, the staged manipulation of symbols for interpretive context, and the sanitization of history for mass consumption. Locke's novel critiques plantation tourism ideology and models a greater awareness of plantation history. Ultimately, these novels push beyond the common cultural boundaries of the white columns to commemorate African American contribution and history as an integral component of plantation house historical narratives.

Redesigning Architecture through Re-appropriation in *The Wind Done Gone*

In March 2001, months before its publication, Alice Randall's *The Wind Done Gone* made headlines. Randall's novel parodies the legendary plantation epic *Gone with the Wind*, published by Margaret Mitchell in 1936, through rewriting a variation of Mitchell's characters, settings, and key events from the perspective of Cynara, the mulatto half-sister to a lampooned rendering of Scarlett derisively named "Other." The self-proclaimed "unauthorized parody" faced legal battle with the executors of Mitchell's estate over alleged copyright infringement. In a declaration written to support Randall's defense, Toni Morrison claims, "What Miss Randall's book does is imagine and occupy narrative spaces and silences never once touched upon nor conceived of in Mrs. Mitchell's novel: that is the interior lives of slaves and ex slaves, their alternate views; their different journey" (par. 2). The two parties eventually settled out of court and Randall's book was published later that same year.

Many discussions of the novel have focused upon the legal battle and the novel's interface with *Gone with the Wind*, and rightly so. Randall's parody is, at times, parasitically linked to its colossal target. Critics have contributed valuable insights into

The Wind Done Gone through these readings, yet the novel entails additional interpretive and argumentative work beyond the particulars of *Gone with the Wind*. By reflecting upon *The Wind Done Gone* as a novel that critiques cultural memory's preservation of the uber plantation house, I present Randall's novel as a model of preservation critique.⁶¹ *The Wind Done Gone* parodies and rewrites plantation mythology, specifically through its treatment of neoclassical architectural elements. Randall's critical response satirizes preservation of plantation mythology through architecture and also reframes the plantation as a site of African American history and heritage.

Randall's *The Wind Done Gone* imagines the world of *Gone with the Wind* from a new perspective and a later time period. Cynara, the heretofore unmentioned mulatto half-sister of a burlesqued Scarlett, is the progeny of Mammy and the plantation owner. Mitchell's major characters are easily recognizable in Randall's rewriting with Scarlett as "Other," Rhett as "R," Gerald O'Hara as "Planter," and his wife Ellen as "Lady," Ashley Wilkes as "Dreamy Gentleman," the O'Hara's faithful slave Pork as "Garlic," and Mammy as "Pallas." Randall makes a significant distinction between house and land by naming the house "Tata" and the land "Cotton Farm." The novel's overall time period is the late Reconstruction era, approximately one month after Mitchell's novel closes; however, it also includes Cynara's occasional recollection of key events from *Gone with the Wind* from her own perspective. Mitchell's novel has been criticized by late-twentieth-century critics for its demeaning and racist portrayals of black characters such as Mammy, Pork, and Prissy. Thus, Randall's characterizations reverse racial stereotypes by depicting the incompetency and weakness of white figures such as Planter and Other.

In contrast, black figures such as Cynara, Mammy, and Garlic appear as their clear superiors in intelligence, beauty, and power.

As *The Wind Done Gone* exchanges Scarlett's story for Cynara's, the novel develops its own narrative logic. Randall's novel initially gained attention for its appropriation of *Gone with the Wind*'s cultural symbols. *The Wind Done Gone* certainly begins by remapping relationships and scenarios already determined by Mitchell's epic, yet shifts from parody into bildungsroman as Cynara struggles to accept the past that has so affected her as an individual, a daughter, and a wife. As Michael Kreyling claims, *The Wind Done Gone* reveals Randall's "obligation to repossess the cultural and racial memory appropriated by *Gone with the Wind* novel-and-film; to take back some degree of identity from decades-old clichés about race and sexuality" (151). While parody is a central element in *The Wind Done Gone*, especially so in its most crass mockeries of Mitchell's O'Hara family in the first third of the novel, Randall also employs characteristics of the slave narrative genre, particularly in examining the traumatic impact slavery has upon plantation families, both black and white. Randall shifts between generic conventions, creating moments in which satirical reinterpretations of plantation tradition are laden with such critical symbolism of slavery that appropriations which begin as mockery evolve into reclaimed spaces and commemoration.

The Wind Done Gone denounces the plantation tradition's tendency to commemorate the owner's labors to design, build, and cultivate the plantation landscape and architecture. Randall parodies plantation mythology by employing Garlic to reappropriate ownership over the design and building of plantation homes, an endeavor

conventionally attributed to white owners, not their laboring slaves. Garlic explains that “He needed me. And I needed him, ‘cause I had a vision of a place I wanted to live” (51). To build this vision, Garlic needed Planter; therefore he manipulated him “into winning our land from another white man in a card game” (64). Highlighting Garlic as builder, Randall reiterates that the grand mansions overshadowing them were typically built by the slaves themselves. She also situates Garlic as the subversive mastermind of Cotton Farm and Tata, repositioning Planter, Cynara discovers, as “a man without position or land” (64), thus amplifying his impotence. As Scott Romine argues, “The pattern...repeated throughout the text, is to evacuate causal sequences operated by white agency and replace them with sequences in which Tata’s slaves exert what amounts to authorial control” (51). Thus, Randall voids Planter’s potency and figuratively instills Garlic with his dominion.

Randall’s novel not only works to “take back some degree of identity from decades-old clichés about race and sexuality,” as Kreyling argues, but it also repossesses the material and imaginary plantation from “decades-old clichés” of Old South mythology through architectural reconfigurations of memory and history. Garlic recalls the strategy behind his design: “‘There was no architect here,’ Garlic says, ‘There was me and what I remembered of all the great houses on great plantations I had seen. Bremono. Rattle-and-Snap. The Hermitage. Belgrove. Tudor Place. Sabine Hall. I built this place with my hands and I saw it in my mind before my hands built it’” (52). Garlic lacks the education of the great architects; yet, as a skilled craftsman, he incorporates and modifies features of their designs into Tata. As a slave he performs the work of a highly respected

architect, which includes borrowing ideas and forms from the classical orders. When Cynara sees Tudor Place, one of Garlic's models, she fully appreciates his talent:

I came upon Tudor Place. It's just a house. Just another rich man's house, but I wanted to weep. Weep for beauty, weep for home, weep for not believing Garlic when he told about all the places he had been and what he had seen. Here was the model for our round porch with columns. Here a different variation of the theme of five portions. Garlic's building, Tata, is much more beautiful. It's not just what they will let us be; it's what we will let ourselves be. (113)

In comparison to Tata, the distinguished Federal-style mansion appears as commonplace and unimpressive as "just another rich man's house." That "Garlic's building, Tata, is much more beautiful" affirms his mastery and his vision. As Cynara says "It's not just what they will let us be; it's what we will let ourselves be," she reaffirms Garlic's, and by extension all slaves', potential to rise above relegated social class and expectations. Therefore, Randall replaces conventional praise for the owner with recognition of the actual designers, builders, and cultivators of the plantation's aesthetic grandeur. Garlic's and Cynara's phrasing through these scenes also imply a satirical undertone toward the notion of a slave taking pride in the appearance of the plantation and enterprise that owned him. The satire here recalls Thomas Nelson Page's portrayal of the faithful black retainer who recalls the former beauty of the plantation and "a certain sense of status [attained] through his bondage," through which "he [could] participate in the exclusive world of the planter" and express a feeling of "gratitude for the opportunity"

(MacKethan, *Dream of Arcady* 54). In such moments, Randall blends satire and commemoration as she depicts former slaves appreciating the architecture that has been preserved while slave histories have been effaced.

Through Garlic's vision, Greek Revival forms that traditionally denote plantation ideology instead display symbols of African American and slave heritage. Garlic infuses symbolism of the black slave body within structural and aesthetic elements of the architecture. Of Tata he says, "Every column fluted was a monument to the slaves and the whips our bodies had received. Every slave being beat looked at the column and knew his beating would be remembered" (52). Endowed with spatial and historical consciousness of its designer and builder, Tata's fluted columns reflect the harsh realities of enslavement. Garlic's vision of the columns reveals the hypocrisy of "democratic principles" traditionally associated with their image and symbolism. This reappropriation, I argue, illuminates a preexisting logic of appropriating symbols that have been glorified in Old South mythologies. Southern reverence for neoclassical design stems from the region's imagined descent from Cavaliers and Greek antiquity (Cobb 43). In the South's search for sectional identity and justification for slavery, prominent land owners referred back to what they perceived as similar models of civilizations, such as ancient Greece (Cobb 42). Merging aspects of European Romanticism's feudal society with Greek democracy's "foundation of slavery" (Hobson, *Tell About the South* 22), proponents used this sense of antiquity to leverage superiority (Cobb 42). Incorporating Greek forms and styles into their architectural and interior designs reflected their imagined lineage, "democratic" principles, and refined culture. Issues of lineage, design, and power all shift

under Randall's direction as she re-appropriates Greek Revival forms into symbols of African American and slave heritage.

After Garlic's tutoring, Cynara's perception of grand white columns and porticoes is forever changed. Reflecting upon *Twelve Slaves Strong as Trees*, Cynara recalls, "there were twelve columns across the front of that slave-built house. They stood for the original twelve dark men who cleared the land. And the lines, the flutes, on those columns stood for the stripes on those slaves' backs. They [the white owners] didn't know any of that, but we did" (55). Cynara extends the metaphor as she considers its ruins, saying "Twelve slaves, twelve columns, twelve disciples. Twelve memories" (55). Her cultural memory and interpretation of the plantation, in its past splendor and its current ruins, commemorates slaves' labors and slaves' lashes rather than the Old South mythologies that overshadow them. The plantation house forged in cultural memory as a place that erases slavery transforms into a site commemorative of slaves' contributions as well as their traumas. There is, however, a paradox at play. Romine observes that while the novel largely "imagine[s] Tara as a territory owned and operated by African Americans," their authority and control is limited "since their possession inevitably recurs to deprivation, trauma, and lack" (51).⁶² To put it another way, the slaves have the authority to inscribe memory and commemorate heritage through white-centric architectural symbols; however, the trauma reposed within those structures reinforces their lack of agency and undermines authority and agency gained in the process. Regardless of the paradox or its limits in agency, Randall's re-vision of the plantation

house's columns dramatically scars the plantation's picturesque image of gentility and benevolence with the mark of the institution's own hypocrisy.

Randall's powerful re-interpretation of manorial white columns evokes the Caryatid Porch of the Erechtheion temple in Athens, Greece. Built on the Acropolis in the 4th century BC, the temple features marble statues of robed women, called Caryatids, in place of columns. The Roman architect Vitruvius, 1st century BC, claimed in his preeminent work of classical antiquity *De Architectura* ("The Ten Books on Architecture") that the Caryatids were designed and built to exhibit "a permanent picture of slavery" (Plommer 97). The architects designed the matronly images to suffer under the heavy burden of their load as they, crowned with basket-like capitals, supported the weighty pediment (Plommer 97). The legitimacy of Vitruvius's explanation has been doubted by scholars, yet the association between the Caryatids and slavery has persisted. Like the Caryatids, the columns Garlic designed subversively bring the slave body to the forefront. Randall thus ruptures the plantation myth's aesthetics and beauty of revered Greek-inspired columns and porticoes.

Randall continues to reframe the plantation house through reinterpreting symbols of white plantation mythology within the mansion's refined interior decor. Following the example of many plantation mansions, decorative wallpaper in Tata's formal dining room illustrates a classic tale of Greek mythology from Homer's *Odyssey*. Like the columns, the wallpaper offers the aesthetic beauty typical of these houses and implies the family's ancestral lineage and authority. However, Cynara recognizes her own history and lineage in the painting's allegory as she muses, "the dining room wallpaper is painted all over

with the story of Telemachus, in the land of the enchantress Calypso, searching for his father, Odysseus. Garlic once told me he had seen paper just like it in the home of President Jackson....Didn't I know what it was like to live in the land of an enchantress and to long for your father?" (11). The neoclassical decor appropriated by plantation culture to reflect the owner's mythic descent from a respected and refined civilization ironically parallels the slave's family circumstances.

As Randall re-appropriates the neoclassical decor, she voids its symbolism of "democratic principles," lineage, and power while reframing the picturesque image with its opposing specter of slavery. For Cynara, the "enchantress Calypso" that separates child from father could be interpreted as Other or Mammy as both are the subjects of his affection and hinder his relationship with Cynara. The storied image entails greater meaning given that Cynara's separation from her father stems from the "divided loyalties" fostered by the institutional treatment of slaves as property, even sexual property. In his letter to another slave owner describing the "delicate situation," Planter sells Cynara "for a dollar" in exchange for a gentleman's agreement that he "use her kindly" (37). He explains, "This is a delicate situation, a delicate situation I know you will understand....I have a certain tender concern for this child. To put it clearly, I would not like to see someone who looked so much like my sainted mother ill-used in field or bed" (36). The great irony of the wallpapered painting, of course, is that Planter *is* Cynara's father. The voguish wallpaper silences and even beautifies the exploitative practice of "miscegenation" in plantation culture in Cynara's implied interpretation. The same wallpaper's appearance in President Jackson's home, The Hermitage, substantiates

its aesthetic value among affluent plantation owners. However, its mention poses another example of the democratic hypocrisy: Jacksonian Democracy's social vision of equality, a contradiction in terms for free blacks and slaves excluded from its periphery. Seen through Randall's and Cynara's eyes, the prevailing Greek-inspired wallpaper evokes an entirely different sense of history and historical value than its owners and decorators assume.

Tata's landmark features enhance Garlic's and Mammy's sense of identity and loyalty to place. As architect and builder of Tata, Garlic envisions the house as his home, "his sacred place" (86). He explains to Cynara, "Mammy and me, we saved it from the Yankees not for them [Planter and Lady] but for us.... I stole for this place and I got shot doing it. We, Mammy and me, kept this place together because it was ours. Here I raised my family. Right this morning we're burying the real mistress of the house [Mammy]" (52). Garlic and Mammy claim a sense of identity, ownership, and pride with Tata. Their filial attachment to Tata and Cotton Farm contains dual meanings, re-enacting the "loyal darky" of plantation tradition in parody while also signaling their adamant claim of ownership. For example, Dreamy Gentleman eulogizes Mammy as "the last of a vanished species and culture—the loyal old servant who, Christ-like, sacrificed herself for others" (53). Cynara rejects his naive perception of her mother: "He knew nothing of her at all" (53). Mammy, the symbolic life-sustainer and indeed the nurturing breast of Tata, secretly murdered each of Planter's sons "soon as they were born" (63). Like Garlic, Mammy has demonstrated dominance rather than subservience, even if covertly. Randall positions the fictional plantation house as the spatial, conceptual center of self for Garlic

and Mammy. Just as Garlic claims that Mammy is “the real mistress of the house,” rather than Lady, he too is the real “master” of Tata. After all, Garlic sleeps in Planter’s bed inside Tata while his family sleeps in the overseer’s house.

Garlic’s design of Tata responds again to the boundaries between domesticated and cultivated space, between the house of white privilege and the land of black labor. Cynara dreams that Garlic has designed Tata to blur the boundaries between house and land: “There were many windows. The house was built to let the outside in, the fragrance of peach and plum, the outside light after it is tinted by the colored glass of the windows” (11). The barrier between house and land dissolves, yet each remains highly visible. Infiltration of the refined agricultural landscape, the “peach and plum,” suggests multiple levels of a solicited black presence within the plantation house. The image counters the segregation of subjugated and privileged by metaphorically bringing the land and harvest into the plantation house. We might say Randall is writing black presence back into the Big House that has for so long avoided its inclusion.

In her memory and longing for Tata, Cynara feels “nostalgic for spacious, high-ceilinged rooms and lavish plaster embellishments” (155). Her continued reminiscence highlights an emphasis on space and freedom, rather than period details, as she recalls that when the front doors were open, “it was as if the side of the house had been taken down. We will take back this place, we will take back this place, a tree once grew where this dining room stands and will grow there again; we will take back this place, nature says as you move through the house; and it was Garlic who created the structure that said it” (155). Randall’s use of “we” suggests a unity between nature and the black

community at Cotton Farm. Furthermore, she suggests that Garlic has designed the house to allow for this recovery. The openness of the house in Garlic's design echoes ideas posed in "Home" by Toni Morrison in *The House That Race Built* (1997). Morrison writes,

If I had to live in a racial house, it was important, at the least, to rebuild it so that it was not a windowless prison into which I was forced, a thick-walled, impenetrable container from which no cry could be heard, but rather an open house, grounded, yet generous in its supply of windows and doors. Or, at the most, it became imperative for me to transform this house completely. Counterracism was never an option. (4)

Designed with an emphasis upon territories of race and exclusion, the plantation house is a true "racial house," to use Morrison's words. The plantation house that Randall imagines is transformed through symbols of space and freedom: high ceilings, disappearing walls, and a structure that welcomes nature to recover and reclaim the space conquered and cultivated by slave owners. Having made a clear distinction between house and land from the beginning, Randall cleverly redraws the boundaries. Furthermore, the shift suggests a counter to popular culture's common conflation of house and land through plantation moniker. The shifting boundaries signal the complex paradox of the conflation of house and land as the image of the house supplants the land in popular cultural memory, yet the plantation maintains the idea of a distinct hegemonic separation of space between labor and privilege that was often in flux given the spatial and social dynamics of life within the plantation household. Combined with a reinterpretation of the plantation house's iconic symbols, Randall has transformed the image and our perceptions through her design.

In plantation tradition's romantic depictions, wilderness threatens to conquer the land cultivated and domesticated through the labors of the plantation master. Randall repeats this threatening image with a difference. Garlic has designed an entrance that, when open, dissolves part of the house's structural facade and insularity. The refrain "we will take back this place, nature says" recalls the threat of wilderness to regain control of what the plantation owner has labored to cultivate. For example, Thomas Nelson Page's *In Ole Virginia* (1887) presents numerous portrayals of the paradigmatic fallen plantation house of the late Reconstruction era: "Their once splendid mansions, fast falling to decay" (1). The mansion and grounds, once well-maintained under the supervision of the owner, fall into images of grand neglect and mourning after the war. Cynara's refrain, "We will take back this place" (155), unites the restitutive power of the natural landscape with the formerly enslaved's own power and sense of ownership. Following Mammy's death, Cynara claims to "need the house to grieve" (56), a sentiment that similarly recalls the plantation tradition's depiction of the house in mourning to memorialize its owner and fallen hero. In each case, Randall rewrites elements of the plantation tradition to inscribe the black perspective within its narrative.

Cynara's Atlanta house reveals further insight into Randall's thematic architectural representations of racial history as it entails hybrid features reflecting both Cynara's and R.'s identities. Cynara explains, "The architecture of my home is a bow to R. and what he remembers of the houses of Charleston" (8), therefore paying homage to R.'s own heritage. The house, however, belongs to Cynara, and reflects her heritage as well. She recalls, "Some folks say my house is a cross between Egyptian Revival and

Charleston architecture” (87). The Egyptian Revival style, predominately built in the United States from 1830-1850, was considered an “Exotic Revival” influenced by ancient Egyptian architecture (Harris 113). In *Sites Unseen: Architecture, Race, and American Literature* (2011), William Gleason explains that since the late-eighteenth century imported designs “were considered not merely national or regional styles but expressions of racial character” (3). Nineteenth-century American revivalism, he states, embraced the overlap of contrasting forms such as Classical Revival and the Egyptian Revival, but also depended on an architectural expression of race through “foreign” or “exotic” forms (Gleason 3).

Tensions between the couple’s history and heritage collide in numerous instances as they each struggle over the architectural representations of their disparate histories. Cynara claims that R. has designed and paid for the house, yet she has controlled the design as well. She “turned [her] house away from the street” because R. “wouldn’t approve a cupola for the hot air to rise into” (8). While R. chose to incorporate Charleston’s architectural details in the design as indicative of his own upbringing, Cynara chose a location for her house that reflects her racial identity. The location seems incompatible with R.’s ideals, for “[i]t unsettles R. that I chose to build my house in the middle of the colored—he would say ‘section,’ I will write ‘community.’ He would rather I had built on some outskirts, someplace that wasn’t yet a neighborhood to be known as white or colored” (26). Regardless of the style, the house becomes identified

with blackness once situated within the “colored section” or “community.” This marker of identity “unsettles” R. because the house has become a reflection of them both, not just Cynara.

The house operates as a complex repository of history and heritage. R. attempts to control the narrative perception of the house through his influence and design, just as he believes he controls Cynara through concubinage; yet Cynara’s repeated claim of her singular possession of the home (i.e., “my house”) ensures that her own sentience remains. R. tells Cynara, “Don’t bring your past into this house,” but her past follows her “breaking in like a robber in the night” (27). She cries, “Every day it gets harder to see why he can bring his history into my house, but I can’t bring my past. And every day I’m more afraid of my past than I was the day before” (27-28). R.’s double standard mirrors notions of the plantation house as repository in white cultural memory as owners and their descendants lay claim to the history and heritage narrated and displayed for spectators. As with Randall’s reinterpretation of the histories visible through iconic plantation house symbols and decor, enslaved and African American history always punctures through the facade. R. may attempt to design Cynara’s house in reverence to his own heritage and aspirations, but her identity and history continue to make their presence known in whatever home and psychic space she occupies.

The tensions and differing interpretations of Cynara’s house extend beyond her conversations with R. into community perception as well. According to Cynara, “Some folks say my columns look like bundles of broomsticks. R. says they look just like bundles of papyrus reeds” (87-88). The Egyptian Revival style typically featured lotus- or

papyrus-shaped capitals topping the pillars to imitate bundles of papyrus stalks flanking a monumental gateway for entrance (Harris 113). When R. looks at Cynara's house, he sees the conventional columns of Egyptian influence encoded within normative whiteness, envisioning "bundles of papyrus reeds" as the capitals atop the columns. The semblance of broomsticks perceived by others indicates an amended architectural form that implies racialized domestic labor and also represents a lower status than the formal papyrus capitals.⁶³ As broomsticks, the columns reflect the local demographics rather than R.'s Charlestonian affluence and class. Cynara's house expresses racial tones through the "exotic" and "amended" Egyptian Revival features as well as its surrounding community.

Once Cynara has freed herself of R., and, we might say, of the trappings of *Gone with the Wind*, she purchases a house that is at once historical yet also not laden with the burden of memory. Of this home in Maryland, Cynara explains "Its weather-darkened bricks are from before the birth of our nation; the woods that surround my place are older still. The Frederick Douglasses are talking about buying some nearby property and building a home....It's easier to live where fewer dreams are buried" (203).⁶⁴ Cynara suggests that because the bricks and the surrounding woods predate the "promise" of freedom issued with nationhood, they do not harbor buried dreams of freedom precipitated by the denied recognition of blacks during the country's pivotal declaration of independence. Her reference to "our nation" again highlights the contradictory notions of democracy and freedom in a country that has depended upon enslavement. The paradox remains a major point of contention in the novel, especially so with

Reconstruction coming to a close and along with it the waning power and freedom of blacks. With Frederick Douglass as not only a potential neighbor but also a new builder, the future looks hopeful with an accomplished spokesperson for racial equality living near the nation's capital and Cynara as well.

Randall's novel critiques racial privileging of history and the legendary narrative of the southern plantation house by drawing attention to the lacunae between southern symbols and the popularized cultural history that undergird them. She strips away the patina of grand columns and porticoes so admired in plantation houses preserved across the countryside, literature, and film to expose the alternate history hidden beneath. Rather than destroying or effacing the plantation house, Randall's characters reclaim the mansion as a site of their own slave and African American heritage. In recovering the plantation mansion from the clutches of white Southern history, Randall unlocks the big house and inscribes the iconic architecture with the black memories and lives memorialized in its material form. By re-interpreting relics of the notorious white-columned mansion, the "tangible past" is read anew, giving the contemporary reader an alternative perspective of the histories preserved within the plantation house.

The Plantation as Interpretive Site in *The Cutting Season*

Alice Randall and Attica Locke both reframe the plantation house by critiquing its adherence to white cultural memory and reiterating African American and slave history within its architectures. Locke's *The Cutting Season* looks to the plantation at large, reinscribing black presence where it often has been silenced. Furthermore, the novel exposes the impact of commercialism and tourism on representations of slavery in

plantation tourism. Like many preserved plantation houses today, Locke's fictional Belle Vie operates as both a house museum and an events venue. While the intent of preservation sites is to educate and to promote the history of place for posterity, Locke's novel reveals that conflicting priorities of portraying historical realities and commodifying a vision of the past leads to the disrespect and silencing of history, especially as it relates to African Americans. Illustrating many of the concerns that Eichstedt and Small observed in their own study of plantation museums, Locke's narrative lends a critical eye toward the selective histories presented at plantation venues. *The Cutting Season* asserts that an essential measure for understanding plantation history involves the discovery and unveiling of its previously excluded black experiences and contributions.

Locke's *The Cutting Season* uncovers the mysteries of Belle Vie, French for "Beautiful Life," an antebellum plantation restored into an events venue in present-day Louisiana. Protagonist Caren Gray was reared in Belle Vie's kitchen where her mother, Helen Gray, served as a lifelong cook for the property-owning Clancy family. Helen's name and memory are nearly synonymous with notions of the Clancy's generosity and care. "Belle Vie is home, her mother would say. *It's in our blood*" (15). Although she claimed Belle Vie as her family home, "her mother never made it past the foyer" of the main house (17). In fact, "[t]he Grays, for generations, had stayed clear of the main house, either by fate or by choice" (17). First as slaves and later as paid servants, the Grays have a long presence at Belle Vie with clearly marked boundaries. Caren has been conditioned by her mother to accept Belle Vie as home, but for her it remains a place of

hardship, broken family bonds, danger, and mystery. After accepting a position as General Manager of the estate, “[s]he had, for better or for worse, made a life here” (7), with her own young daughter as if repeating the cycle. Her combined family history, racial heritage, and role at Belle Vie create a unique setup for exploring the plantation as both heritage site and tourist site from an African American perspective.

As General Manager, Caren “oversees” the daily operations of Belle Vie, including interpretive exhibits and staged performances catered toward tourists eager to buy into the white romantic fallacy. A double vision of the plantation surfaces through her unique perspective, focusing on both the romanticized image as well as the transhistorical black laboring body that makes that image possible. Caren quite consciously occupies territories previously forbidden, working from an office in the main house, just above the formal parlor, and living in a cottage that was once the overseer’s residence. Raising her own young daughter on plantation grounds in the era of President Obama, she recognizes the comfort, uneasiness, and complexity involved in accepting Belle Vie as home.

Locke presents Belle Vie as an unsettling homeplace and workplace for Caren. She struggles with the plantation, an enterprise reliant upon hierarchy and exclusion, as home to both her and her enslaved ancestors. Given her childhood memories and her mother’s presence, “[t]he plantation’s eighteen acres were the whole of Caren’s only real idea of home, the only constant in her life” (15). Feeling a strong obligation to remain mindful of this tension, she “made herself a single promise: she would not forget her family’s generations of sweat here, and how trapped she’d felt by that very legacy” (182).

Her reluctance to accept life at Belle Vie remains palpable through such moments of remembrance and influence. She feels with great trepidation a haunting presence in the slave cabin of her great-great-great-grandfather, Jason, who mysteriously disappeared during Reconstruction. The precipitate present-day murder of a migrant worker from the neighboring farm resurfaces concerns about the exploitation of subjugated workers. While police detectives investigate the murder, Caren engages in a parallel investigation into her ancestor's disappearance and the Clancy family's property rights.

The novel's opening scene, an eventful wedding ceremony at Belle Vie, swiftly ruptures and restores the plantation as an idyllic and romantic setting. The scene's heavy dose of symbolism and context justify its lengthy quotation below.

It was during the Thompson-Delacroix wedding, Caren's first week on the job, that a cottonmouth, measuring the length of a Cadillac, fell some twenty feet from a live oak on the front lawn, landing like a coil of rope in the lap of the bride's future mother-in-law. It only briefly stopped the ceremony, this being Louisiana after all. Within minutes, an off-duty sheriff's deputy on the groom's side found a 12-gauge in the groundskeeper's shed and shot the thing dead, and after, one of the cater-waiters was kind enough to hose down the grass. The bride and groom moved on to their vows, staying on schedule for a planned kiss at sunset, the mighty Mississippi blowing a breeze through the line of stately, hundred-year-old trees. The uninvited guest certainly made for lively dinner conversation at the reception in the main hall. By the time the servers made their fourth round with bottles of imported champagne, several men, including prim little Father Haliwell, were lining up to have their pictures taken with the viper, before somebody from parish services finally came to haul the carcass away.

Still, she took it as a sign.

A reminder, really, that Belle Vie, its beauty, was not to be trusted.

That beneath its loamy topsoil, the manicured grounds and gardens, two centuries of breathtaking wealth and spectacle, lay a land both black and bitter, soft to the touch, but pressing in its power. She should have known that one day it would spit out what it no longer had use for, the secrets it would no longer keep. (3-4)

The ominous opening poses a recurring motif of Locke's novel—the oddity of the plantation as a place of romance and idealism in cultural memory and popular culture.

The snake poses multiple meanings capable of subverting this image. As a literary trope, it suggests a totem of evil and death. Locke adds to this metaphor the exposure and mistreatment of the black body through her particular staging of the cottonmouth, which in reality is not nearly this long nor capable of scaling a tree to that height. The venomous cottonmouth falling high from the oak tree and “landing like a coil of rope,” shot by a deputy with a conveniently placed shotgun, and photographed as spectacle with the wedding reception's guests and minister hints toward a lynched black body, spectacularly exposed and treated as fun fodder.

The snake, like the antebellum slave, breaks the idealized image of the pastoral plantation as a place of tranquility, leisure, and beauty. Yet ironically, the intrusion of the magnificent sign “only briefly stopped the ceremony” and barely interrupts the romance for attendees. Instead, its destruction, as if routine punishment for its untimely appearance, adds to the festivities. The dinner reception in the main hall, complete with caterers, servers, and multiple rounds of “imported champagne,” mirrors the conspicuous luxury and leisure of plantation owners, lending grandeur to the fanciful occasion. Belle Vie maintains a schedule of timing and order that quickly restores its image as the “bride and groom moved on to their vows, staying on schedule for a planned kiss at sunset, the

mighty Mississippi blowing a breeze through the line of stately, hundred-year-old trees.” A facade staged for generations, its “manicured grounds and gardens, two centuries of breathtaking wealth and spectacle,” the imagined beautiful lifestyle of Belle Vie has the captivating power to outshine a shocking reveal of its own unseen dangers, no matter how deadly, for its spectators. Caren astutely observes that the beauty of Belle Vie “was not to be trusted.” The “secrets it would no longer keep,” like the coiling snake, will come forth from the “land both black and bitter.”⁶⁵

Locke admits there is an undeniable beauty to the restored and museumized plantation. While attending an inter-racial wedding ceremony at the renowned Oak Alley Plantation in Vacherie, Louisiana, she recognized both the beauty and the ethical quandary of the plantation as an events venue. She explains, “there’s no way to not feel the beauty of it because it is so stunning. But it also kind of made my stomach turn, because of what it represented” (Interview, par. 5). Questioning whether the site’s transformation entailed “stomping on the history, so to speak” led to her creation of *The Cutting Season* (Interview, par. 4, 6). Like Locke’s experience at Oak Alley, Caren’s sense of the paradigmatic beauty of Belle Vie also involves an observation far deeper than its apparent charm. A routine morning drive through the estate reads as if it were her first glimpse of the picturesque meadows and tree-shaded drive, yet also reveals a greater awareness of place.

From high overhead, sunlight studded the green grass with bits of coral and gold, as she rode beneath a canopy of aged magnolias that shaded the main, brick-laid road through the plantation; their branches were deep black and slick with lingering rainwater. Mornings like this, [Caren] didn’t try to fight the romance of the place. It was no use anyway. The land was simply breathtaking, lush and pure.

She drove past the gift shop, then north toward Belle Vie's award-winning rose garden, which sat embedded within a circular drive just a few feet from the main house. The nearly two-hundred year old manse was held up by white columns, and adorned with black shutters and a wrought iron balcony that overlooked the river to the north and the garden to the south. (8-9)

The scene envisions nature adorned by wealth. The image of the lawn as "sunlight studded the green grass with bits of coral and gold," so rich with colorful detail, suggests that the pinnacle of nature, the sun, has jeweled the grass with "bits of coral and gold" much like a woman's ears pierced with gemstone studs. An arboreous porte-cochère of oak or cypress trees forms the impressive approach into numerous plantations of the South. Oak Alley's drive is perhaps the most highly photographed and recognizable with a brick-paved pathway leading to the house lined, as an alley, with immense oak trees forming a grand canopy of limbs, branches, and leaves abundantly draped with Spanish moss. In slight contrast, Locke's Belle Vie features a grand approach of ornamental, fragrant magnolia trees canopying the brick path. There is a stately elegance to this visual as Louisiana heralds the magnolia as its state flower. The "romance of the place" is the reveal as the tree-lined path opens to a palatial home. However, Caren finds the "romance of the place" rooted in the land, not the architecture, as "the land was simply breathtaking, lush and pure."

Surveying the landscape and its architectures, Caren's gaze insinuates an assumed line between Belle Vie's bucolic scene and its commercialism. As she continues her morning drive, the gift shop brings a sudden end to the beauty and romance. A definitive symbol of commodity, the gift shop profits from its patrons' desire to possess an emblem, a souvenir, of the packaged romantic image that Belle Vie portrays. The proverbial

“award-winning rose garden” also appears along the path. “Embedded within a circular drive just a few feet from the main house,” the prized garden figures as a central showpiece, yet warrants little notice or description beyond its location. Her gaze guides readers between the staged image and her own perception of Belle Vie when she focuses upon the main house’s frontage. The trademark columns are not recognized for their grandeur, but rather for their utilitarian and commonplace function as they “held up” the “old manse.” Understating the iconic columns subverts their symbolic image of Greek antiquity and hierarchy. While the features associated with whiteness, such as the award-winning garden and the columns, gain little fanfare, she draws our attention to the “black shutters and wrought iron balcony,” black features that *adorn* and decorate the portico. Whereas the columns have a utilitarian function, the black shutters and balcony have a decorative function that, like the sunlit lawn and magnolia-lined drive, suggests wealth. The distinction made between white and black features recalls the territorial boundaries of Belle Vie. Although Caren’s mother “never made it past the foyer,” black architectural details symbolically flank and decorate the main house as if asserting the recognition of black presence as an essential part of viewing the plantation’s main house.

Locke’s assertion of black presence in the above passage, among many others, counters the very limited visibility of slavery among many restored plantation museums and venues. Once prominent historical sites of enslavement, contemporary plantation museums would seem to be prime spaces to explore and discuss not only slave history but also the many ways that slave labor built, supported, and sustained plantation society; however, this is rarely the case. Many of the slave quarters and related outbuildings were

destroyed during the Civil War for military and political purposes. Their destruction continued after the war as individuals attempted to eradicate “reminders of certain unpalatable aspects of the past” (Eichstedt and Small 99).

Two additional factors primarily account for this limited visibility of slave heritage at plantation museums and venues that can be understood in terms of cultural memory and historical practicality including preservation objectives and patron interest. Few artifacts of slave life have been preserved among plantation sites for historical posterity. In his pioneering study *Back of the Big House: The Architecture of Plantation Slavery* (1993), John Michael Vlach found that the few remaining slave cabins that could be photographed and documented by HABS and WPA in the late 1930s and early 1940s, beyond those that still stand today, “represent exceptional buildings of their kind, houses constructed well enough to last, in some instances, almost two hundred years” (162).⁶⁶ Architectural historian Catherine Bishir aptly explains the predominant rationale for their disintegration and destruction, stating “there are not many practical reasons for saving slave houses once there are no slaves to house” (*Southern Built* 305). The historic structures and objects that remain for our viewing today, Bishir explains, should be understood in relation to those that no longer exist. Society has chosen to preserve the best, not the ordinary (*Southern Built* 305). For example, consider the relationship between preserved houses of plantation owners and preserved slave cabins. Using North Carolina as an example, Bishir explains,

there were over 300,000 slaves in North Carolina on the eve of the Civil War. Of the houses owned by large planters and slave owners—a tiny percentage of the population—dozens and dozens have survived, a goodly proportion of the total

number that once stood. But slave houses? Practically zero—maybe a few dozen in the entire state, I would estimate. These structures were once legion and now are mighty few. (*Southern Built* 305)

Although Bishir's study focuses on North Carolina, the rarity of preserved slave cabins extends across the Southern states. Once a customary structure of antebellum plantations, few slave houses remain today even in ruins. In contrast to plantocracy estate houses, many of the slave dwellings “were often so poorly constructed that they had little chance of surviving into the twentieth century” (Vlach 156).

Visiting Middleburg Plantation, near Charleston, South Carolina, writer V.S. Naipaul noted that “[t]he land and the past were being honored,” yet the plantation was “without what would have been its most important—and most notable—feature,” its slave cabins (83). The peculiarity of their absence resonates as he considers their unavoidably overt presence at the working antebellum plantation where the cabins “would never have been out of sight of the plantation house. Considering the sanitation of those days, there would almost certainly have been a physically squalid side to the slave plantation” (84). With the plantation “cleansed of its cabins,” he keenly realizes how “[h]ard, mentally, [it is] to set the cabins in that grandeur that spoke more of old European country houses” (84). Middleburg Plantation, a private residence which dates back to the 1690s, is quite modest in comparison to numerous grand plantation houses open for tourism. However, Naipaul's reflection on the severe absence of slave cabins conveys the unobserved paradox at many sites and the ease with which their historical presence can be silenced within the “cleansed” grandeur of the preserved plantation.

The Cutting Season offers a critical alternative to the majority of plantation tours, which position the preserved plantation house as the “main attraction” featuring displays and narratives of the elaborate architecture and affluent lifestyle of its owners. While the plantation house is presumed to be Belle Vie’s main attraction, Locke shifts her narrative’s attention elsewhere. As opposed to emphasizing the plantation mansion’s preservation and aesthetics, Locke depicts Belle Vie as a remarkable example of preservation through its six original slave cabins available for viewing. However, she also calls attention to the significant discrepancy between present-day exhibits and historical accuracy: “six cabins were all that remained of what was once a THRIVING VILLAGE OF PLANTATION WORKERS” (11, original emphasis). Locke capitalizes the distinction in type as if to mirror the historical marker while also making the distinction blatantly visible. Slave settlements on large plantations, as Belle Vie represents, “were big enough to resemble, in the words of former slave occupants, ‘little towns’” (Vlach 12). Laid out in uniform grids with gravel or dirt paths between them, the one-room cabins would resemble small villages (Vlach 12), as Locke’s novel describes. Few plantations exist today that could compare with the preservation of original slave dwellings at the fictional Belle Vie. More on par with Locke’s depiction are plantation venues that have reconstructed sites of slave life and labor. When Locke published *The Cutting Season* in 2012, Oak Alley Plantation, which she largely used as her model for Belle Vie, was midway through a two-year project to create a permanent exhibit of the enslaved community (“Exhibit” par. 1). The project’s most significant contribution is six reconstructed slave cabins that “give insight into their lives and habits” (“Exhibit” par.

2). However, even Oak Alley represents a minority among plantation venues regarding its representations and inclusion of slavery into the publicly viewed site. With few signs of the material history of slavery prominently available for viewing at plantation venues in general, it is little wonder how many of these sites evade discussions of the brutal and dehumanizing practices that sustained them.⁶⁷ Despite the presence of slave cabins, Belle Vie still manages to downplay its own enslavement practices. The bronze historical marker designates the village as one housing “plantation workers.” The nonspecific wording significantly avoids the precise label “slave.”⁶⁸

Although Belle Vie has sustained cabins dating back to 1852, their presence and representation are not without conflicted notions of value. Leland Clancy and his wife “restored the plantation that had been in their family for generations” (8). As the aging family figurehead, he was “beloved in the parish for preserving an important piece of history, for Louisianans, and black folks, in particular” (12). Although he and his family “were beloved in Ascension Parish for what they had done, making the land available to the public and preserving the history for posterity,” it was an act that he regretted (45). He wished instead that the estate was still simply private family property, confessing once to Caren “that he wished he’d never bothered with any of it, turning Belle Vie into an events venue and tourist stop” (45). His son Raymond, the acting director, perceives Belle Vie and its historic architectures in terms of profitability. The slave cabins, he believes, hinder opportunities to increase the tourist site’s revenue.

Raymond hated the slave cabins, hated every damned thing they stood for, he’d said, and had more than once made a fervent pitch to tear them down completely, fairly begging,...Raymond had tried to rope Caren in once, asking her to author a

memo on company letterhead stating all the ways it would boost the plantation's bottom line if the unsightly cabins were done away with. They could build a second reception hall, he'd said, or expand parking. (12)

Raymond claims to hate “every damned thing [the slave cabins] stood for,” the oppression of slaves for the privilege of affluent white plantation land owners; however, his desire to tear down the slave cabins falls far from reparation. Rather, he would prefer to erase those historical monuments for their “unsightly appearance” and replace them with additional structures of white plantation grandeur. A “second reception hall” would be inauthentic to the original plantation and would further obscure slave heritage and history from a site that already celebrates plantocracy. He wants to replace the historical slave cabins with structures that could potentially increase his yield. Overall, the Clancy family's differing views on the slave cabins revolve around issues of public and private use, or rather, historical versus commercial value.

As an African American with ancestral ties to the slave cabins, Caren recognizes their value in ways that the Clancys do not, in terms of history, heritage, and education. That “Raymond had tried to rope Caren in once” to argue for their demolition suggests her unwillingness to compromise her own beliefs even against the authority of “the one who signed her checks” (46). In another example of Raymond's drive for profitability over historicity, he rejects Caren's request for the cabin exhibits to include the historically verified gardens “out front a tiny, square patch of dirt and weeds where vegetables and wildflowers once grew” (12). Caren's desire to increase representations of authenticity poses a threat to Raymond's profitability. His attempt to disguise this motive under public image and relations merely reinforces it: “Raymond Clancy had pointedly

refused to re-create, even in a nod of verisimilitude, for fear of being accused of painting too pretty a picture of slave life, of being called an apologist or worse” (11-12). Were Raymond to be branded “an apologist or worse,” affections for the Clancy family could be sullied and Belle Vie’s popularity and profitability as a romantic, serene venue could be curtailed. His disinterest in drawing attention to slavery reflects a similar widespread evasion among public plantation venues. Raymond treads a fine line in the plantation tourist industry’s balance of historical representation and its aesthetic marketability. When it comes to slave life, he prefers simply to erase it.

Through conflicts between Caren and Raymond, Locke’s novel asserts that there is a responsibility for the plantation, as a public historic site, to not only make this knowledge available but also to portray it with respect and authenticity. Belle Vie offers its visitors two demonstrations of its antebellum slaves’ livelihood: the extant slave cabins and a theatrical performance depicting the plantation’s history up to the Civil War. Both attractions entail the staging of a selective history that Locke subversively works against. Redirecting focus toward her own readership, Locke vicariously positions *The Cutting Season*’s readers as Belle Vie’s visitors through the intermediary of narrative; while the shift is subtle, its impact is powerful. Locke pushes against established practices heavily influenced by tourism and commercialism. As Eichstedt and Small would say, visitors may not gain adequate knowledge about enslavement and its experience on a given historic plantation site, but Locke ensures that her *readers* will. Locke’s readers gain a vision of the fictional Belle Vie plantation’s historical sites that its tourists presumably do not. More importantly, they gain a foundational experience upon

which to contemplate the plantation tourism industry, the selective histories presented to visitors, and the possibilities for enhancing knowledge at these historic sites.

Although the Clancy family wants to downplay slavery at Belle Vie, Locke ensures that readers gain a palpable, sensory experience of the cabins. Like many plantation venues, Belle Vie's slave quarters operate as interpretive sites separate from the main house tour and thus unguided. Guests have the option to privately scan the slave dwellings for a glimpse into the accommodations. In order to "take away anything of value about the institution and the people who lived under it," Eichstedt and Small ascertained that visitors must not only choose to learn about it, but also actively explore the grounds and raise questions with docents (200). Those who only participate in the traditional house tour "are very likely to learn nothing of any substance about enslavement; they can walk away with their lack of knowledge, understanding, or awareness intact" (Eichstedt and Small 200). Rather than depicting guests viewing or bypassing the slave cabins, Locke drafts her readers to the quarters and pulls them inside. As Caren makes her daily rounds to inspect the cabins before opening the main gates, the slave quarters shift from what would be a voluntary or self-directed excursion for Belle Vie's patrons to a mandatory and exclusive exploration of the site for her readers through the narrative.

An unsettling and haunting aura surrounds the slave village, particularly when compared to the serene and pastoral appearance of Belle Vie's manicured landscape. Coming upon the quarters, Caren reflects that "[t]he slave village had always been a dark distraction, its craggy, crooked shadows blackening many a morning at Belle Vie" (10).

Her perspective is loaded with possible meanings. In aesthetic terms, the shoddy slave quarters appear as a blight on the picturesque estate. A more proverbial reading suggests that the sins of slavery have left a black and fateful mark on Belle Vie. However, it is Caren's psychic response of dread and spectral presentiment that reveals the uncanny essence of the slave quarters. Other workers and visitors at Belle Vie have shared her anxiety: "The air in the quarters was always a few degrees cooler. Even in the dead of summer, more than a few people had reported feeling a chill on this very path," correlating the sensation to a "sign of spirits in their midst" as if the souls of the enslaved remain in the quarters (10). The obligation of her daily rounds forces Caren to repeatedly confront a suppressed ancestral history as murky and cryptic as the interior dwelling.

Caren's daily rounds reach beyond a mere visual inspection to vicariously provide readers with a sensory experience of the slave dwelling. Although each wall contains a doorway, the structure seems to refuse any luxury of air or light from the outside: "The air was thick, even the palest breeze unable or unwilling to cross the threshold" (11). The "darkness of the one-room shack" disorients Caren, who "couldn't see two feet in front of her, the daylight stingy and withholding stubbornly at the door. She was standing in utter darkness, the air thick and dusty" (11, 14). Entering the cabins in the early morning, she illustrates the slaves's domestic challenges, particularly the limited visibility and the inferior living standards. Her routine inspection provides readers with a glimpse into the rudimentary provisions:

Caren gave the cabin a quick survey: straw pallet on the dirt floor; antique field tools hanging from rusty nails on the walls; a pine table with a tin cup and a kettle resting atop; a broom of twigs and brush; and a crudely made bench with a

threadbare quilt lying on one end. It was neat and clean and ready for showing...The others were all the same: four leaning walls beneath sagging shingled roofs, each with an open doorway but no actual door. (11-12)

Belle Vie's cabins are staged with replicated slave belongings of the antebellum era, which is far more the exception than the norm for many plantation venues.⁶⁹ The meager bedding for chattel slaves, a "straw pallet on the dirt floor," resembles the resting place for livestock. The only wall decor made available for viewing, "antique field tools," asserts not only a utilitarian purpose, but also a faceless laborer. The dining set, "a pine table with a tin cup and a kettle resting atop," suggests the scant rations allowed to slaves. A makeshift broom and "crudely made bench" round out the room with the exception of the cabin's one luxury: "a threadbare quilt," which would likely have been handed down to a slave once it was no longer deemed suitable for the owners. With each wall interrupted by "an open doorway but no actual door," privacy would be as nonexistent as protection from inclement weather. Although the cabin has remarkably stood for over one hundred and fifty years, its current profile of "four leaning walls beneath sagging shingled roofs" recalls commentary by Vlach and Bishir on the poor condition of many slave dwellings during the antebellum era.

The slave quarters figuratively personify the slave body: "The cottages were aligned in two rows, three on each side of the dirt road. Their spindly columns were like tired arms at the end of a long day's work, nearly crushed beneath the weight of what they were being asked to hold up" (225). The columns reflect a beggarly version of the Caryatids, impoverished, overburdened, and depleted. As if to offer a concrete analogy to better visualize the description, the substandard cabin is strikingly compared to a

contemporary symbol of upper-middle-class mobility: “each cabin, silhouetted by the newly set sun, was no more than a few feet wide, smaller than some of the SUVs riding on American highways” (225). The sensation of Caren’s family standing in the cabin extends an awareness of the cramped quarters: “the three of them were crowded inside, a family barely contained by these four walls. It was hard to imagine Jason raising his own family here. Eric, who was nearly six feet tall, hunched over” (226). Locke’s narrative adds new consideration to the term “interpretive site.” Given the detailed survey of the slave dwelling, one can only reflect with irony Raymond’s fear that Belle Vie will project a “pretty picture” of slavery.

Performed in “the old schoolhouse,” *The Olden Days of Belle Vie* portrays a long-standing historical narrative of Belle Vie plantation for its visitors that proves lacking in educational history. The Belle Vie Players, local actors “paid by a yearly stipend from the state’s Department of Culture, Recreation, and Tourism” (6), perform a staged chronicle of the rise and fall of Belle Vie’s founders, the benevolent Duquesne family, and their devoted slaves. Official recognition from the National Register of Historic Places provided the impetus for the play: “It was written by a senator’s wife, following Belle Vie’s formal recognition as a historical treasure (worthy of state funding)...It was as soapy as *Gone With the Wind*, full of belles and balls and star-crossed lovers, noble Confederates and happy darkies and more dirty Yankees than you could count” (19). The amateur playwright, “a senator’s wife,” crafts the celebratory image of a nonexistent golden past to promote a romantic and idealized plantation for tourist enjoyment. Perennial attendance and appreciation among tourists confirms its favorable reception:

“not a period or comma had changed in the twenty-five years hence. And the tourists *loved* it. Senior groups and war buffs and New Englanders in shorts and flip-flops. And middle school teachers, of course, many of whom ordered items in bulk from the gift shop as takeaways for their students” (19, italics original). Descriptions of the gratified audience as tourists, outsiders, and novices undercut the play’s endorsement, as does Caren’s belief that the play “was, admittedly, bad,” for its false portrayal of harmony (19).

The play follows an outdated literary plantation tradition as it extends great sympathy for the slave owning Duquesne family and depicts an awe-inspiring devotion of slaves for their masters and “home.” The climax situates the dramatic turning point for Belle Vie as the fall of its white mistresses from prosperity to hardship:

The women of Belle Vie, Madame Duquesne and her unmarried daughter, Manette, virtuous gentlewomen reduced to tattered rags and begging food on credit, fall to tears on the news of Yankee soldiers commandeering plantations throughout the parish—ordering slaves to leave their work in the fields; stealing jewels and silver hair combs for their mothers and girlfriends up north; and burning pianos for firewood, or just for fun. (341)

The play grieves for the family’s loss of material assets and social standing. Yankee soldiers take control of the entirety of plantation property, pillaging their luxuries and dispersing their slaves. The following staged slave reaction of sorrow, rather than redemption, merely seals audience compassion for the slave owners:

‘Dem Yankee whites can’t make me leave dis here land. Dis here mah home. Freedom weren’t meant for nothin’ without Belle Vie.’ It was a grand soliloquy meant to paint the slaves as loyal to the mostly good white people of the South. But the soul of the show was always meant to rest with the ladies Duquesne,

women who would rather lose everything than watch their way of life turned over for ridicule or sport....The final word from Mademoiselle: 'Belle Vie is no more.' Arm-in-arm, the women Duquesne walked off the stage while a boom box on the stairs played a cassette tape of a scratchy Brahms recording. The slaves, left behind on the plantation, did not jump for joy at the end of their incarceration, nor did they hear in the martial drums in the distance—and the coming of Union soldiers—a life of freedom. They fell against each other, weeping for the end of an era. (341-42)

We might read the “grand soliloquy” of “Field Slave #1” as an ironic mirroring of antebellum historical realities as Southern whites could force the slaves to remain on that very land, could disrupt and disable any sense of homeplace for slaves through sale and relocation, and could thwart any sense of freedom for slaves. While the Duquesne family walks away from their losses, the slaves are “left behind on the plantation.” As Caren explains, the play calls for the slaves to not even recognize their momentous emancipation, but instead to mimic white sentimentality in “weeping for the end of an era.” The amateur playwright repeats the popular plantation school tradition of employing the faithful retainer as defender of his owner’s benevolence and paternalism.⁷⁰

Locke cleverly dates the Clancy family’s restoration of Belle Vie in 1966 and its inclusion on the National Register of Historic Places in approximately 1983 with the corresponding preservation movement and cultural milieu. The 1966 restoration coincides with the National Historic Preservation Act passed in that same year. Years of ongoing discussions between the preservation and legislative sectors led to this pivotal moment. The act “established legal guidelines for the preservation of cultural artifacts on many levels, encompassing prime examples of buildings and sites important for their time and place regardless of their significance from an associative or historical point of

view” (Murtagh 66). Preservation expert William Murtagh explains that the act “broadened the federal government’s traditional concept of preservation, taking it beyond entities of national historic significance to include those of state and local importance and architectural value as well” (66). The NHPA dramatically shifted preservation efforts from private groups to the public sector with the belief that “the historical and cultural foundations of the Nation should be preserved as a living part of our community life and development in order to give a sense of orientation to the American people” (Murtagh 176).⁷¹ Consequently, the National Register of Historic Places was created through the act’s aim to preserve a “total heritage of the nation” (66).

The National Historic Preservation Act heralded a time of greater recognition and awareness of what constitutes material history. According to Murtagh, this expansion included “sites, buildings, objects, districts, and structures significant in American history, architecture, archeology, and culture” (66). However, as Stephanie Meeks, current president of the National Register of Historic Places, explains, “until recently, the list has represented a mostly white male version of events in our history” (par. 2). Although the contemporaneous Civil Rights Act of 1964 and the Voting Rights Act of 1965 additionally broadened considerations of African American heritage and history for years to come, preservationists’ ambitious maxim to preserve a “total heritage of the nation” still faced the obstacle of a dwindling number of extant slave dwellings and historic objects.

As Locke's novel illustrates, so many pieces of African American history on plantation properties have yet to be discovered, compiled, and explored. Caren's reflection below makes this even more salient:

Most black folks with roots in Louisiana could trace their people back before the war, when slaves had built the state's sugar industry with their bare hands. And they all had a good yarn about a great-great uncle or a distant cousin or somebody who fought with the Union, or a great-great-great-grandfather who served as one of the first blacks in Congress during Reconstruction. There were bits and pieces left behind, letters and faded newspaper accounts, but for the most part this was a history that existed in the wind, in stories passed down through the years. (35-36)

Locke uses the double plot of murder mystery and staff tensions to investigate and record one such story: how Jason became the rightful owner of Belle Vie and how it led to his death. Danny Olmsted's research had come to a standstill years ago, but a parallel investigation by Caren and a local newspaper reporter, jointly attempting to discover the truth behind the recent murder of a migrant worker on Belle Vie's property, ultimately brings the mysterious slayings of both sugarcane cutters to a close. Once a slave at Belle Vie, Jason continued to live and labor there even after its owners, the Duquesne family, abandoned the property and emancipation freed him from bondage. Jason built a small home on the land following the criteria set forth in the Homestead Act of 1862: "[A]ny free man could be granted a piece of unclaimed property, including former plantations, as long as he lived on the land and grew crops or built on the place, a structure of at least twelve by fourteen. Long as he could prove he'd made some kind of improvements to the land, any man stood a chance" (355). Caren recalls finding in the plantation archives Jason's hand-drawn map of the plantation featuring his addition: "The map, as she

remembered it, was dated the fall of 1872, November, and it was stamped by federal seal by the Homestead Land Office in New Orleans. Jason had filed the map with the land grant office...yet it was Tynan who ended up with the deed,” the very man who had taken possession of the land “for himself” just before Jason’s disappearance (340, 355). In turn Tynan was awarded the property, willed it to his only child, a daughter who married a Clancy. The property had remained in the Clancy family ever since.

Caren’s belief that “this was a history that existed in the wind, in stories passed down through the years” rings true as she recalls her mother’s words: ““Them people ain’t got no more real claim to this place than anybody in our family, and don’t think Leland Clancy don’t know it, either. He’s not stupid, Mr. Clancy, and he knows good and well he came into this place on someone else’s back, that it was a way that was paved for him to sit in that big house that had nothing to do with his labors”” (270). The migrant worker had found Jason’s remains as they surfaced from their shallow grave. Slayed by the Clancy family while secretly living in Jason’s slave cabin, her death was intended to prevent the family name from ever being marred.

Locke’s novel presents the Clancy family and the Gray family with distinctly different ideas regarding the true history of Belle Vie as well as the tangible and intangible elements that merit preservation. The plantation’s historic landmark status, granted in 1983, launches Belle Vie’s *The Olden Days of Belle Vie*, which was as much tourist entertainment as it was marketing campaign. The play’s sentimentalism for the Old South and its popularity among tourists correlates with the televised miniseries *North and South* premiering in 1985. The *Gone with the Wind*-esque epic family romance of the

antebellum period leading into the Civil War remains “one of television’s ten highest Nielson rated miniseries” (Mary Jones 3). The miniseries was based on the first installment of John Jakes’s fictional trilogy, *North and South*. Published in 1982, the novel repeatedly appeared on the *New York Times*’s bestseller list, as did the sequel. Although a highly acclaimed historical fiction and film, *North and South* centers upon two affluent white families, the Hazards and the Mains, representative of the political strife between North and South yet united through friendship. *North and South* and *The Olden Days of Belle Vie* each pose a popularized narrative of selective history in which slaves and blacks appear on the periphery.

One of Belle Vie’s leading actors, Donovan, a young African American man who plays Field Slave #1, experiences “a personal awakening” to the offensive racist tropes of the play while taking an introductory college history course (19). In protest, he determines he will no longer follow the script or promote “this cracker-ass bullshit” (19) and threatens to leave Caren “with the task of figuring out a way to run Belle Vie without any slaves” (21). Caren encourages him to “create some kind of alternative document...that would tell a more accurate version of antebellum life, using Belle Vie’s own library” (20). Donovan rewrites the play with full creative liberties and little historical grounding. To Caren’s disappointment his creation “was an absolute mess”; it was “an overcorrection that favored Donovan’s own misguided ideas about power and score-settling over any real semblance of the truth” (20). She explains, “the whole thing read like bad comic-book fan fiction: slaves firing weapons without any gunpowder in sight, Yankee soldiers making telephone calls in the middle of the Civil War, and there

was at least one musical interlude” (20). Donovan’s play includes the invention of false historical events, including a bloody slave revolt wiping out half of the French Creole ancestry of the local Ascension Parish, and a variety of overtly anachronistic details. Still, she pitches the idea of a revised play to Raymond Clancy who predictably mandates that “the play, and Belle Vie itself, his family homestead, would stay the way they had always been” (20).

Although Donovan’s play, titled *Truth and Consequences: The Straight Story of the South*, builds upon “misguided ideas,” “boyish fantasies,” and a false history, its story is no more (and no less) “straight” or truthful than the recurring “soapy” nostalgic romance of belles, balls, and happy darkies that has been performed for decades at Belle Vie. One play could easily be exchanged for another as far as merit is concerned. Each play promotes a racialized fantasy of power and re-interpretation of history. Yet, Donovan’s play diverges too far from the marketable aspects of the plantation for tourists. As Caren observes, “it wasn’t exactly the kind of feel-good fare that pulls tourists in off the highway” (20). The episode reiterates the relationship between profit margin and the intentionally selective memory, or selective forgetting, of the plantation tourist industry. Regardless of her own aversion to *The Olden Days at Belle Vie*, Caren fully acknowledges that she and the Clancy family are equally dependent upon Belle Vie’s ability to sell an image of itself that tourists want and expect to see. The nostalgic play so beloved by Belle Vie’s visitors feeds into the sentiments of tourists longing to witness and consume the stock figures within the plantation house. The “cultured” traditions encoded within decor and hospitality, narratives of the refined southern lady,

and the material trappings of an elite lifestyle are all preserved through musealization and made available for brief and limited public display. The nostalgic plantation narrative of *The Olden Days at Belle Vie* reproduces the celebration of affluent white privilege and laments its decline.

Donovan's ill-conceived *Straight Story of the South* fails to rectify the portrayal of racial privileging he protests; however, his second attempt, a screenplay and film, succeeds and also generates the rich historical narrative of Belle Vie Plantation that could only be exhumed from its private records. Research for the script quickly evolves into a group undertaking as he leans heavily on an adjunct history professor, Danny Olmsted, who has virtually taken residence in the plantation library's archives while writing his dissertation titled *Recovery and Reconciliation and the Emergence of a Free Labor System in Ascension Parish*. Olmsted's work centers around the first elected black sheriff of the local parish who, in 1872, investigated the disappearance of "an ex-slave and cutter in the fields behind the historic Belle Vie plantation, [who] went missing and was believed to have been the victim of foul play. It is precisely the type of crime that would have gone unprosecuted, or outright ignored, in the days when slavery was legal" (148). The victim was Jason, Caren's great-great-great grandfather. The case spoke to the heart of Donovan's need for a new story of African American history that did not reiterate the plantation myth. His adaptation of this history "would be groundbreaking, a story to put to rest that 'Swing Low, Sweet Chariot' mess for good, he said. Donovan wanted to blow

the world away with the story of a gun-toting sheriff who was kickin' ass and takin' names, just a few years after black folks 'quit' being slaves. Donovan finally had a real story, one he could believe in" (219-20).

Donovan recruits The Belle Vie Players as his cast, with the new addition of Danny Olmsted. Nearly all of Belle Vie's hired staff are involved in performing, recording, and supporting the film, *Raising Cane: A New Sheriff in Town* (Inspired by a True Story). The screenplay portrays an alternate conclusion to Sheriff Sweat's investigation giving restitution to both the sheriff and Jason. Danny's research reveals that Sweats was "run out of office" because he wanted to put William Tynan on trial for murder (279-80). Tynan had long been heralded as the hero of Belle Vie, the overseer who had dutifully stayed after the original owners had fled during the war. His name appeared "in all the literature of Belle Vie and in the coffee-table books sold in the gift shop," and, of course, he was a prominent figure of respect in *The Olden Days of Belle Vie* (62). As Danny explains, Sweats's exile was a grievous, though predictable, outcome given the racial tensions of the Reconstruction era: "It can be, and has been, argued that he was ill-prepared to pioneer for his race as the chief law enforcement officer in a sugar-rich parish that had known Negroes as chattel property for over one hundred years" (148). Donovan firmly believed "[t]he story was good, one that needed to be told, about life on the other side of slavery" (219). Using the incriminating evidence each of the amateur investigators uncover, Donovan stages in the present day what was denied to both men in the past: Sweats's testimony at Tynan's trial for murder.

Raising Cane is not a staged or public performance, but on one of the final days of filming members from the Groveland Corporation, Belle Vie's potential buyer, are invited to watch one of the final scenes. The scene reflects Donovan's desire to rectify the past as "Tynan finally went on trial for the presumed stabbing death of Jason" (366). Donovan plays the sheriff and Danny Olmsted, the historian, plays the role of prosecutor. When one of the Groveland employees asked "What *is* this?" Caren responds "Belle Vie," acknowledging to them all, "*This* is what you bought" (366, italics original). Donovan has high hopes for the film to reach a mass audience, aspiring to be screened at the New Orleans annual film festival or, at minimum, the potential to go viral on YouTube (219).

The final scene of *Raising Cane*, Jason's funeral, occurs in the evening hours of Belle Vie's final opening night. Groveland Corp has purchased the plantation from Raymond Clancy with plans to raze the land and expand their sugar fields across the fence line. The impending destruction of Belle Vie plantation appears as a fitting end given that the only individuals that still desire it long for a nonexistent nostalgic past. Leland Clancy and his son, Bobby, associate the plantation with a golden era of youth and leisure. In an even more biting critique, the elderly Leland absent-mindedly wanders the property as if senile. Bobby, his prodigal, irresponsible, and alcoholic son is responsible for the migrant worker's homicide that hastens Belle Vie's closure. Even though Belle Vie's plantation architectures will be demolished, the Clancy family once again reaps profits from the plantation. Given the questionable practices of Groveland Corp's project manager, a modern-day abusive overseer supervising migrant workers in

the sugar cane fields, the land arguably remains a plantation. Caren reflects upon Belle Vie's end believing that "[w]hatever the plantation had meant to each and every one of them, they would have to take it with them" (343). Raymond had once stated to her, "Everybody's got their own idea of what Belle Vie ought to be, who it really belongs to" (369). Once Belle Vie "is no more," Donovan's film will continue to tell the history denied forgotten so long.

The corrected history never reaches Belle Vie's tourists. Instead it reveals itself to those that have invested in learning about the heritage and legacy of the plantation's slaves and workers. Caren's experience in the slave quarters foreshadows the process as "[t]he space opened itself up to her only after she acknowledged its power. It was the only way forward" (11). Most importantly, the process educates Locke's readers by suggesting a path of discovery that has the greatest potential to bring about change in the plantation tourist industry. Although few slave artifacts and spaces remain on preserved plantation properties, slave presence and history can be recognized across all aspects of the plantation. Vlach contends that numerous interviews, diaries, and accounts reveal the ways in which slaves laid claim to a variety of spaces, "empowered by [the] territorial gesture" of their labors (16): "thus the kitchen might be claimed by the slave cook, the dining room by the house servant, the loom house by the weaver, the barn by the field hand" (17). With Vlach's observation in mind, an abundance of narrative spaces and silences of slave experience appear across various representations of the plantation, from literature to musealization. African American writers such as Randall and Locke who

address discourses and narratives of the preserved plantation house re-historicize, re-create, and re-frame perceptions of the mythic icon.

As the study by Eichstedt and Small reveals, representations of slavery remain silenced, undisclosed, or segregated from featured displays of plantocracy among a predominant segment of the plantation tourism industry. Practices that prioritize commercializing the historic plantation house as an enduring symbol of Old South chivalry, honor, and grace leave little room for proportional representations of the “peculiar institution” upon which they tread. To return to McPherson’s contention, many remain “unable or unwilling to process” the connection between the two (3). As if in response, both Randall and Locke turn to moments of Reconstruction, shifting focus from the plantation’s white slave owners to the rise of its greatest assets, and thusly from the victimized plantation slave to the possibility of a free African American capable of making a new history, legacy, and heritage. As Reconstruction ended and political hostilities led to the disenfranchisement of African Americans, that possibility for revising history was equally subdued and repressed. In turn, Randall and Locke acknowledge the urgency for narrative memory to recover plantation and African American history from silence to respectful recognition.

In recent years a number of historic plantation sites and museums have revised their traditional narratives and expanded exhibits about their enslaved laborers. The Whitney Plantation in Wallace, Louisiana, recently completed an exceptional renovation, turning the plantation into “a museum dedicated to telling the story of slavery — the first of its kind in the United States” (Amsden par. 2). In a region where restored plantations

touting the moonlight-and-magnolias tour “crop up every couple of miles,” Whitney offers a rare perspective: “a visitor’s most memorable glimpse of the white shutters and stately columns of the property’s 220-year-old ‘Big House’ will come through the rusted bars of the [slave jail’s] squat rectangular cell” (Amsden par. 1, par. 3), thus re-framing the stately house from the rarely-seen perspective of captivity. The museum opened in December 2014, following a fifteen year renovation project privately funded and extensively researched by its owner, John Cummings (Amsden par. 3, par. 27). The property contains numerous exhibits including audio recordings of the 1930s WPA interviews with former slaves and their descendants. Another exhibit of “hulking iron kettles that were used by slaves to boil sugar cane” (Amsden par. 3, par. 27), strategically lining the path between the slave cabins and the jail, emphasizes the bondage, drudgery, and figurative imprisonment of slave labor. Many of the exhibits aim to present the disturbing reality of slavery, a stark historical reality seldom seen against the backdrop of the “Big House.” The museum reflects representations of slave history that Randall and Locke push for through their respective novels.

Notes

⁶⁰ A number of plantation museums have become more mindful of including slavery in their presentations for tourists since their findings were published. However, more recent scholarly works like Tara McPherson's *Reconstructing Dixie* (2003) and Jessica Adam's *Wounds of Returning: Race, Memory, and Property on the Postslavery Plantation* (2007) discuss findings comparable to Eichstedt's and Small's study. This recurring research suggests that the inclusion has been slow and often remains under-utilized.

⁶¹ In my reference to Tara as the uber plantation house, I allude to Scott Romine's *The Real South* in which he observes the plantation industry's vision of Tara as the hypothetical paragon, which he calls the "sim-plantation": "Tara is the sim-plantation that all real plantations of the tourist industry strive to reproduce, an ineffable space toward which actual spaces of all kinds are mobilized, a platonic ideal that quotidian objects of all sorts, from wedding cake toppers to Barbie dolls, strive to represent" (29).

⁶² This quotation from Romine specifically mentions "Tara," as he argues here *The Wind Done Gone*'s reimagining of Tara through Tata, which, unlike Tara, is "a territory owned and operated by African Americans" (51).

⁶³ For example, Talbot Hamlin discusses Latrobe's revision of Greek orders on the columns to satisfy Jefferson's "suggestion to create new and American forms" (37). Latrobe crafted these "new and American orders" by using "tobacco and maize corn" rather than acanthus on the capitals (Acanthus leaves were typically used on capitals of the Greek Corinthian order) topping the pillars of the US Capital building (37).

⁶⁴ We may also read Cynara's reference to bricks that pre-date nationhood as Randall's allusion to D. W. Griffith's film *The Birth of a Nation* (1915). Based on Thomas Dixon's novel *The Clansman* (1905), Griffith's film promoted white supremacy and championed the Ku Klux Klan as protection against the portrayed violent and disruptive force of the Negro. As Edward Campbell explains in *The Celluloid South*, "The impact of the 1915 epic lay in the fact that the stereotyped South finally became eminently respectable...A section whose ways and conservatism had long seemed stifling was now defended before a broad constituency" (58). In this manner, Randall may be aligning the paradox of national freedom and slavery with *The Birth of a Nation*'s extensive cultural influence on the treatment of African Americans.

⁶⁵ Immediately after Caren's recollection of the above wedding, her suspicion holds true. In the early morning hours the fresh corpse of a female migrant worker from the neighboring farm is discovered, its shallow grave exposed by animals overnight.

⁶⁶ As HABS toured the South to document aging structures, WPA workers with the Federal Writers' Project visited with and interviewed "thousands of aged black men and women during the late 1930s and early 1940s and recorded what these people could still remember about slavery times...eventually fill[ing] forty thick volumes" (Vlach xiii).

⁶⁷ Ironically, one of the greatest material relics of slavery and slave labor is the plantation house and its surrounding architectures.

⁶⁸ Eichstedt and Small explain that "one way of symbolically annihilating both the system of slavery itself and those who were enslaved is to use words other than *enslavement* to describe the situation that existed" (131, italics original). Locke's use of "worker" correlates with many sites that their study observed. Even more prevalent, they found that use of the term "servant" as a euphemism for slave "is widespread throughout the sites" that they analyzed (133).

⁶⁹ Eichstedt and Small identified only "a relatively small number of sites that have incorporated information about the presence and contributions of African Americans and the institution of slavery into their sites at more than a minimal level. These are sites where you can find out not just the number of people enslaved there but who they were and how they lived" (170). Material history and narratives of slave life, when offered, are commonly "segregated" from the house tour. Patrons can glimpse informative markers and interpretive sites, such as reconstructed slave cabins, by wandering the property's unguided territory. Some plantation sites offer special tours, often called "slave life tours," "Black history tours," or "African American history tours," which focus on enslaved communities; however, they are offered only on a limited basis. As Eichstedt and Small explain, "While a step in the right direction, in that slavery is actually discussed, sites that follow the segregation-of-knowledge strategy don't necessarily increase the likelihood that visitors will learn about slavery, since visitors self-select to attend the special tours" (170-71). These tours are doubly limited for visitors as they require additional payment and are offered on few select predetermined dates as opposed to the periodic daily traditional house tours.

⁷⁰The scene brings to mind Page's "Marse Chan," which depicts Master Channing's faithful retainer, his body servant, Sam. While the story takes place in Reconstruction, only the former slaves remain on the plantation land. Master Channing is deceased, yet Sam is still figuratively his servant as he waits on his former master's dog, who is also white.

⁷¹Quotation taken from the *National Historic Preservation Act*, (b), as quoted in Murtagh.

CHAPTER V

PRESERVATION AND THE SENTIENT TRAP IN ALLAN GURGANUS'S *PRESERVATION NEWS* AND GODFREY CHESHIRE'S *MOVING MIDWAY*

In “Po’ Sandy” (1888), a short story written by Charles W. Chesnutt and later published in *The Conjure Woman* (1899), plantation buildings retain an unsettling sentience of the slave past.⁷² As the story begins, the narrator, a northerner recently relocated to the Reconstruction-era South, describes a crumbling schoolhouse at the edge of his newly acquired southern plantation property. The brick chimney shows “evidences of decay” as “crumbling mortar had left large cracks between the bricks [and] the bricks themselves had begun to scale off in large flakes” (605). The wooden siding, however, “was in a good state of preservation” (605), an ironic condition given the typical comparison of material longevity. The lumber’s enduring quality poses a convenient opportunity for John, who frugally observes it could be repurposed. His wife Annie desires an exterior kitchen, “apart from the dwelling-house, after the usual Southern fashion” (605), a superfluous desire, he argues, given the fine modern kitchen in their newly built house. The outdoor kitchen, which was a racialized site of slave labor just two decades earlier, is now a romanticized, idealized space in Annie’s perspective. The outdoor kitchen would give her new home the semblance of history and, more importantly, would reflect a sign of gentility and belonging that she and her husband John seemingly lack as newcomers.

While John perceives the well-preserved lumber as an available resource, Julius, the plantation's caretaker and former slave, portrays the enduring wood as an embodiment of slavery. According to Julius, a fellow slave, Sandy, had been perpetually leased out for work and longed for a permanent home and family on the plantation. Sandy's conjurer wife, Tenie, transformed him into a pine tree so that he could feel rooted to the plantation and his own family. Before Tenie could transform Sandy back to his human form, the master sent laborers into the pine forest for lumber needed to update his wife's kitchen. Unrecognizable to the laborers in his arboreal form, Sandy struggled and resisted against the saws, but eventually he succumbed to the blades. All that remained when Tenie returned was a stump flowing with pine sap and disconnected limb-like branches scattered on the ground, a gruesome simile for Sandy's own dismembered and harvested body consumed as a plantation resource. The fresh lumber used in the kitchen, Julius says, groaned and moaned "en w'en de win' would blow dey could hear sump'n a-hollerin' en sweekin' lack hit wuz in great pain en sufferin'" (610). The haunting specter caused such great apprehension among the master's family and slaves that the kitchen was disassembled and the lumber was reused to build a schoolhouse on the edge of the plantation property.

The lumber retains an indelible sentience of the slave's brutal reaping as the specter shrouds the schoolhouse each night. When "de wah broke out" the schoolhouse was abandoned, Julius says, "dat is, 'cep'n' fer de ha'nts" (610). According to Julius, this lumber will continue to haunt the structure and any others built with it "tel de las' piece er plank is rotted en crumble' inter dus'" (610). Julius's tale affects the more sentimental

Annie and thwarts John's frugal plan to pilfer the old schoolhouse lumber. Annie rejects the wood that has been tainted by slavery, stating "I don't think I should ever be able to take any pleasure in that kitchen if it were built out of that lumber" (610). However she still wants the outdoor kitchen and proclaims that it "would look better and last longer if the lumber were all new" (611). Annie sympathizes with the slaves of Julius's story, crying "Poor Tenie!," but she still wants the replicated southern plantation kitchen.⁷³ She remains blind to the paradox that, even with fresh lumber, the coveted outdoor kitchen figuratively epitomizes the stain of slavery she attempts to avoid. Annie's fancy for the outdoor kitchen emphasizes the popularized aesthetics of the plantation house while dispelling its atrocities. Her intention assumes that plantation architecture can be replicated or reproduced without also endorsing the labor relations upon which its architectural antecedent was embedded.⁷⁴

Chesnutt's "Po' Sandy" thematizes a desire to preserve or replicate the plantation house in a manner that does not preserve the trauma and horror of slavery. The story's theme resonates in twenty-first century southern narratives that illustrate this continuing desire. Allan Gurganus's 2001 novella, *Preservation News*, and Godfrey Cheshire's 2008 documentary, *Moving Midway*, both emphasize the positive attributes of conserving historical sites while they also de-emphasize negative attributes, namely the corrupt history of said plantation. Gurganus's and Cheshire's narratives actively engage with the physical labors and ethics of preserving the plantation house, Gurganus through fiction and Cheshire through documentary film. While each promotes this preservation, they also critique what they perceive to be uncritical ethos at play in their specific projects.

Gurganus critiques the ostentatious plantation house and also satirizes a prevailing attraction to its materiality and signs of conspicuous consumption. Cheshire devotes critical attention to plantation mythology and the media-constructed image of the plantation. Thus, they each actively critique and challenge particular ethical concerns presented in their preservation projects. They individually balance their projects from an approach of stewardship, attempting to honor the accumulated history of each structure. However, each narrative also presents an interesting dynamic of paradox wherein, by exploring sentience of the old plantation house, they slip into the sentimental and romantic territory they hope to avoid.

Sentience figures in all three works as an embodied presence continue to emanate from plantation architectures; however, each text employs sentience with disparate results. To return to my discussion of sentience in the introductory chapter, many fictional houses portray a sentient connection between owner and architectural structure. Sentience has been associated within plantation houses since Roderick Usher's "mansion of gloom" in Edgar Allan Poe's "The Fall of the House of Usher" (1839).⁷⁵ In such gothic tales, the house possesses an eerie ambiance acquired through the nature of its material components and its owner. We might recall Thomas Sutpen's manorial ruins in *Absalom, Absalom!* register his lingering presence long after his death through "a smell of desolation and decay as if the wood of which it was built were flesh" (293). Thomas Nelson Page's fictional plantation houses likewise reflect a perceptible connection to the owner. The plantation house of "Meh Lady" mourns following its master's death in the Civil War. When his daughter later marries, the faithful retainer "Uncle Billy" envisions

the ephemeral return of his masters, “I heah meh kerridge-horses stompin’ in de stalls, an’ de place all cleared up ag’in” and sees the plantation rejuvenated with life: “hit ‘pear like de plantation ‘live once mo’” (138). In each case, the property retains a conscious awareness of its owner. However, Chesnutt’s portrayal dramatically differs from these other literary representations of the sentient plantation house as he subverts the common trope and instead emphasizes the resonance of slavery still perceptible in the plantation architecture. He utilizes sentience to reveal the traumatized and commodified slave embodied within plantation architecture.

While Gurganus and Cheshire also feature embodiment and sentience, their approaches entail the conventional connection between house and owner and ultimately echo plantation fiction’s sentiments. Cheshire’s narrative emphasizes Midway Plantation’s house as a sentient repository of its deceased matriarch and her residual power. Gurganus’s novella employs sentience to depict the plantation through the fantasy of racial harmony. Gurganus and Cheshire each underestimate the enigmatic power of the sentient house and fall into its trap. In this chapter, I address each narrative separately. Though I will attempt to discuss critical approaches and sentient slips separately, they will, at times, be in close proximity.

“Mad about History”: Restoration and Rehabilitation in *Preservation News*

The 2001 novella *Preservation News* dramatizes a romanticized desire for the plantation house and its rehabilitation. The text thematically showcases Gurganus’s strong ties to the historic preservation community in North Carolina. He centers the narrative around a fictional historic preservation community located, like most of his

narratives, in the imaginary town of Falls, North Carolina.⁷⁶ The text commends historic preservationist Tad Worth for his ability to rehabilitate houses and people, championing him as a humanitarian in the preservation realm. Through Tad, Gurganus illustrates the redeeming nature of historic preservation as a communal endeavor that preserves something far greater than architecture alone. While historic preservation efforts begin with the physical architectural structure, Tad's character emphasizes the preservationist's engagement with community and history.

Preservation News emphasizes the positive attributes of preservation practices and distills the unseemly side of slavery from the plantation house. The novella demonstrates the allure of preserving the untainted plantation house, yet also critiques preservation motives that hinge on materiality and uncritical historicism. It does so by focusing on two very different plantation houses that Tad has listed with the National Register of Historic Places. The text associates the house at Shadowlawn Plantation with a grand allegory of resurrection, redemption, and the historicized fantasy of racial harmony. In contrast, the house at Elkton Green Plantation boasts excessive ornamentation and grandiosity; combined with its history of white trauma and loss, the house is presented as an irredeemable site fated for destruction.

The first page of Gurganus's fictional newsletter, *Preservation News*, displays a stylistic newsletter layout complete with nameplate and the defining phrase, "dedicated to saving historic structures of North Carolina, funded by the National Endowment for the Humanities and generous donors just like you" (73). The newsletter's dedication line to Elizabeth Matheson and Myrick Howard, two actual prominent North Carolinian Historic

Preservation supporters, anchors the layout while nodding toward Gurganus's personal associations in the preservation sector.⁷⁷

Through the frame of the newsletter and its format, Gurganus explores the business and passion of twenty-first century preservation philosophies as well as its paradoxes. Before appearing in his collection *The Practical Heart*, Gurganus published the novella in *Preservation*, the magazine for the National Trust of Historic Preservation. The idea for *Preservation News*, Gurganus explains, began with a series of AIDS-related deaths among young gay staff members at the National Trust for Historic Preservation in Washington, D.C.: "It seemed to me I had fallen into an immense and beautiful contradiction: young men's exits and old houses' resurrections. It was a subject destined to be ignored, ruled out of bounds by the persistent homophobia of our culture" (2004, 84). Gurganus likens the tragic fall of these young men to "those boy generals who perished young on horseback" in the Civil War (84), as unsung, marginalized heroes who died while preserving national heritage. In contrast, Gurganus perceives the strong cultural acceptance of historic architecture's siren song for preservation. The materiality of old houses summons a public call for preservation, yet these young men faced a premature mortality that remained relatively unspoken.

The fictional newsletter opens with an "Available for Restoration" advertisement featuring a plantation. Appropriating a format and discourse of preservation, Gurganus begins by satirizing lowbrow preservation-minded zeal for the material allure of over-ornamented architectural aesthetics. Immediately following the advertisement, Gurganus shifts back to a positive portrayal of the preservation realm through Tad's eulogy, written

by volunteer interim editor Mary Ellen Broadfield, his devoted mentee. Mary Ellen's eulogy juxtaposes Tad Worth's physical deterioration from AIDS against his material rejuvenation of the house at Shadowlawn Plantation, his final restoration project. An attempt to show the "full worth" of Tad Worth, her eulogy recapitulates his earlier "restoration" and "rehabilitation" of herself through historic preservation work. She interlaces both of these narratives with Tad's trials to accurately portray and market Elkton Green through multiple drafts of the advertisement.

Although Tad and Mary Ellen seemingly express sincere dedication to Elkton Green, Gurganus employs a satirical tone in his treatment of it throughout the text as he highlights its extreme aesthetic overindulgences. In the opening advertisement, Tad pleads for a buyer to save from slated demolition Elkton Green, an antebellum plantation mansion that boasts "Elegance pushed—testing—clear to the edge of Comedy"—"Even its brackets are bracketed" (74). His pleas to the preservation community to save the mansion from destruction appeal to their love of antiquity:

this, my friends, is our literal last chance. Already bids have come in for the pearwood-and-mahogany parqueted spiral staircase, for all the stained glass; but these bids are from a chain restaurant that will perform a mastectomy, that will then wedge bits of the mansion's exquisite features into separate franchises where people order their quite bad beef awfully overcooked. Large portions of too buttered 'garlic bread' are intended to distract them. It makes us swoon, the thought. Perish it. (74)

Tad's advertisement also plays upon their assumed resentment of the kitschy repurposing of historical materiality, disassembling the ornate features into manageable relics and commodities rather than retaining them intact.

Tad “swoons” at the thought of such dismemberment for kitschy decor, but his advertisement also promotes this same kitschy appeal for fellow preservationists. Describing the home, he intends to enchant readers with immaculate architectural details: “[T]his high Victorian ‘pile’ seems to have been inspired by the minarets of the Prince’s ‘Folly’ Pavilion at Brighton” (74); yet, he likens the showpiece to the Royal Pavilion heavily criticized for its gaudy and wasteful extravagance. His description yields even more satiric fodder:

Elkton Green’s West Wing features a faux-Romanesque capital set directly beside one that might be called “Adirondack Carnival Ecclesiastical Ecstatic.” Our “righthand person,” the inimitable Mary Ellen Broadfield, said, “This home is like some lady from a very good family who’s had entirely too much coffee and feels forced to try on every hat in a third-rate shop, all at once.” (74)

The advertisement illustrates the many faux elements of Elkton Green: “faux-Romanesque capitals,” “faux-marbled baseboards” (74). His pleas for its rescue become increasingly ironic as he admits, “There are sane people who consider the house over ornamented. But for us, the mansion’s gingerbread detailing represents Elegance pushed...to the edge of Comedy. (Which is just where some of us most long to live!)” (74). Elkton Green’s grand ornamentation and numerous faux features are mismatched and inauthentic; however, Tad’s advertisement continues to market Elkton Green’s features to fellow preservation enthusiasts.⁷⁸

The advertisement suggests ethical problems in museum and collection practices while it also implies a popular tendency for exclusive possession to override such matters. The home comes with “a dining-room mural” depicting an “extensive collection

of American Indian artifacts...brilliant early acquisitions—however dubiously gained from those grave-robbing bounty hunters known even then as ‘New York art dealers’...what is now the Smithsonian’s impressive horde” (74). Thus, the advertisement links heritage decor with its egregious and unethical capture, while it also suggests that the painting, distanced from the criminal acquisition, provides a guiltless pleasure of aesthetics and one’s own hoarding of stolen heritage: “[T]he mural is of museum quality and unique in the state” (75). The advertisement lampoons Elkton Green as much as it reflects potential buyers, “somebody with plenty of good sense, mad about history, alive to the finer nuances of strong-armed social pretense, and with a discretionary income to sort of match....We just know you’re out there” (73). Thus, one most likely to invest in its restoration, someone “mad about history” and “alive to the finer nuances of strong-armed social pretense,” would replicate materialistic and self-aggrandizing attributes of its original owner.

The history of Elkton Green plantation’s house is one of vanity, excess, and aristocratic grandeur. Its builder, Caleb Coker, “inherited a goodly fortune” from his ancestor’s “brilliant early acquisition” of American Indian artifacts and their sale to the Smithsonian. His profits from “King Cotton” further contribute to his unethical horde of money (75). Coker “conceived of Elkton Green as the site for his beautiful daughter’s wedding. This, prior to his actually having a daughter. (Such is the energy and optimism of our America!) The mansion’s stained-glass skylight-lit staircase was designed to make stunning the choreography of one girl’s white-veiled descent” (75). Designed to showcase the “wedding of the century” for a plantation master’s daughter yet to be born,

the lavish mansion is founded upon an immoderate idealization of the white southern belle through which Coker intends to project his refinement and gentility. Coker's glorified design is reformulated as American "energy and optimism" rather than its actual inordinate pride, elevated notion of white femininity, and material sign of the plantocracy's profitable exploitation of slave labor. Reframing Coker's lavish mansion in this manner recalls the ease with which the architectural grandeur of plantation houses has been praised and promoted as cultural heritage while erasing the institution of slavery that made such grandeur possible.

Although Gurganus presents the advertisement pleading for Elkton Green's "salvation" through Tad, his heralded preservationist, Gurganus laces the advertisement with his own overwhelming satiric critique of excessive plantation grandeur. In the process, he also satirizes Tad's obsession with history and materiality. Tad, who is himself "mad about history," undertakes a relentless pursuit of Elkton Green's minutest details. Coker's grand wedding for his daughter, who "proved to be the beauty a 51-step staircase preordained" (75), was an unparalleled and grotesque display of wealth. Perhaps most shocking is Coker's importation of numerous South American spiders, accompanied by a trainer, for the purpose of spinning silver webbing over the entire property: "Silver webbing was said to cover every shrub and bracketed spindle" (76). Tad's fascination with Coker's overindulgent decorating plan leads to an inordinate amount of research: "I don't pretend to understand all this, but the eight news clippings here—long since turned brown as cigars—all vouch for the insects' unlikely presence" (76). He so strongly desires to fully capture Elkton Green's "history" that he laments his

failings to provide precise details about the spiders: “The exact species has been lost to us, despite our tireless research. It grieves us, this lapse; my fondest hope was to offer the species’ exact Latin name. I fear there’s no time left before our present Issue # 14 must be ‘put to bed’” (76). Tad becomes obsessed with details of Elkton Green’s material display of wealth, so obsessed, in fact, that by the time he finishes drafting his advertisement for publication, unbeknownst to him, Elkton Green had already been demolished.

What is perhaps most illuminating is the advertisement’s ability to showcase slave labor while also disguising it within a grander spectacle. Coker proceeds to veneer the silver webbing with gold, using slave labor of course: “slaves now sprinkled real gold dust over all the webs. The whole place then got strung with 6,000, yes, white Chinese lanterns. For an evening wedding, the grounds were lit with ‘over 20,000 white tapers, of the finest’” (76-77). The display is profoundly illuminating as “the glow could be seen fully one and a half miles away” (77). The reference to slaves intends for accounts of their labor to reflect upon the elaborate setting, not their own presence as “21 servants,” that is, slaves, spend 12 hours lighting and relighting wicks while avoiding spiders, and all of them “by now themselves turned gold” (77). The slaves are nearly consumed by the plantation owner’s conspicuous consumption and pretension.

The advertisement emphasizes an overwhelming desire for the plantation house to be the spotlight of the wedding. More than one thousand uninvited spectators swarm outside the locked gates, awed by the spectacle of ostentatious wealth. Their validating presence “outshines” the abundantly illuminated spectacle of slave labor under terrifying

conditions. One newspaper account details the unexpected drama as a milkman—notably a worker clearly associated with whiteness—has to be freed “from sudden gauze,” enshrouded by spider webs (76). Another article describes the pre-wedding scene from afar as “a spectacle from pre-Christian myth, in its excess both offputting and yet wondrous as some children’s book occurrence” (77). The wedding decor reflects the mythic proportions of the plantation owner’s splendor and the plantation’s ability to illuminate its most appealing aesthetics. Even though the slaves are covered in “real gold dust,” which would seem to highlight their presence and the paradox of the master’s gross liberties compared to their captivity, instead they fade into the scene, as if decoration. Like the pre-wedding spectators, Tad becomes entranced by the glowing display and overlooks the ironic rendering of slaves that should be the greater spectacle for him in the twentieth century.

The advertisement closes with a description of Elkton Green as it appears before demolition. As it conveys, commercial development has surrounded Elkton Green, which “now stands, somewhat startled it must be admitted, in downtown commercial Falls, NC. It is within easy take-out distance of both a Hardee’s and a Colonel Sanders, alas” (77). The mansion that once made an ostentatious display of wealth visible for a mile and a half, now finds itself crowded within in a presumably low-income area of the downtown commercial sector. Elkton Green manages to maintain some appearance of its past affluence, Tad suggests, as it “still holds a place of honor along Summit Avenue, a street lined with other Victorian mastodons and the magnolias planted by Fall’s ‘Betterment

Committee' in 1891" (77). Its "place of honor" is presumably secured by its antiquity, likely predating the "Victorian mastodons," which generally rose in popularity in the late nineteenth century.

The most pointed critique of Elkton Green calls for its cultural death. Although now a defunct business, "Elkton Green was, during the late 1950s, transformed into Fall's finest white funeral establishment" (78). As a site exclusive to upper-class whites, the transformation actually nostalgically embraces the past as a space dedicated to white loss and mourning. Elkton Green's figurative "embalment" in the 1950s suggests an attempt to slow its cultural degeneration, or perhaps to "preserve" its symbolic power. Through Tad's advertisement and historical narrative, historic preservation in the guise of Elkton Green amounts to an expensive hobby, an investment in status and exclusivity, far more than a means of preserving historical heritage. As his advertisement implies through its drive to market the aesthetic appeals of the mansion, restoration of the Elkton Green plantation house would repeat the excessive materialism of its original owner. Restoration and rehabilitation define distinctly different practices within the preservation realm worth exploring here. True restoration of Elkton Green would remove its accumulated alterations, such as its conversion into a white funeral establishment, in a process of returning its image to a particular period in time, most likely the property's peak visual appeal under Coker's ownership. In this instance, restoration would be a process of restoring Elkton Green to its original state. Rehabilitation, however, would return the structure to a state of utility for contemporary use while also preserving features significant to its historical, cultural, and architectural values (Murtagh 22-23).

Elkton Green offers a unique case study, albeit fictional, as it begs the question of what contemporary use is there for this antiquated relic that has maintained exclusive territorial boundaries of class and race in resistance to the changing demographics of its surroundings. We might read its 1950s transformation into the city's "finest white funeral establishment" as a satiric mode of rehabilitation that essentially reproduces the aristocratic exclusivity from which it originated. While Elkton Green can be architecturally restored, the plantation house image that it represents can not, and should not, be rehabilitated. The mansion's ultimate destruction suggests that given its foundation of vanity, excess, and tragic history, the historical narrative of this plantation house is already dead and worthy of burial, not of rehabilitation. Like Faulkner's narrative ruins, the best "preservation" of Elkton Green is a chronicle of the true history of its transformation: from a plantation mansion of ridiculous grandeur to a white funeral parlor to a dilapidated building razed by bulldozers on April Fool's Day finally monumentalized and preserved in narrative form only.

In contrast, the house at Shadowlawn Plantation, which Tad successfully restores and sells, is all things Elkton Green is not. The advertisement and the historical narrative of Elkton Green center upon the primary associative values recognized in historic preservation: the architectural style and the structure's recognized history. Tad's advertisement, considered in both the finalized form and the drafted versions presented in the novella, reflect this conventional value. The discourse surrounding Shadowlawn breaks away from the prevailing valuation. Over-ornamented architectural details so prevalent at Elkton Green are nearly absent in descriptions of Shadowlawn, which

reflects the Federal style of “symmetry and modesty, [its] frontal candor almost virginal” (93). Whereas Elkton Green towers as “a very big house built to edify, impress, and perhaps slightly terrify this little town” (78), Shadowlawn stands like a graceful beauty. The distinction between them recalls the perceived symbolic differences between architectures as noted in the introduction. Gurganus reiterates these long-standing perceptions in which classic and neoclassic architecture are positively associated with simplicity, tradition, and honor, whereas more elaborate styles are negatively associated with vanity and greed. Mary Ellen says of the approach to Shadowlawn, “when you make the turn, you see the Federal house, a white Greek temple ... like the severe young goddess herself...you literally gasp. Despite the leaks and years and teenage pyromaniacs, ‘It is,’ Tad would say of the columned place, ‘like some old lady come into a party, and who can still make a hell of an entrance. Even on two canes’” (99). Mary Ellen and Tad both feminize Shadowlawn and align the structure with classic Greek aesthetics, much like the romanticized plantation house.

The call for restoration of Elkton Green centers upon material aesthetics above all else. Yet Shadowlawn’s value for preservationists and Tad’s practices as a restorationist dig far below the superficial material appeals and into humanistic concerns, both architectural and sociological. As Mary Ellen explains,

There are people in historic preservation who are only interested in the architecture, in the pediments, the lemon-oiled perfectible period detail...These experts consider the people who actually live (or lived) in these fine places as something like the furniture—you maybe need them there to make the house seem finished, but they’re incidental to the structure’s superior claims. With Tad, the living, the livingness of the place and what went on there and what might go on there next, that was the definition of his passion. (110-11)

Tad's work at Shadowlawn exhibits a deep ethical responsibility of the preservationist toward historical property—the “mission in history, recovery, restitution, meaning” (Gurganus, Introduction, x). His intent goes beyond aesthetics and into full rehabilitation, “re-homing” the property: ““Not just pickled and ‘museumified’ but inhabited, returned to its function. Providing shelter, comfort, and incidental joy”” (82-83). For Tad, material rehabilitation of the property is an incidental part of the process toward rehabilitating and resurrecting “the livingness of the place” (110-11).

Tad's concern for “the livingness of the place,” what we might call its “living history,” relates to the preservation industry's notion of stewardship. In the late 1970s, the National Trust for Historic Preservation adopted new objectives aimed at a more ethic and diverse approach “fostering preservation of the nation's diverse architectural and cultural heritage for all Americans” (Murtagh 47). The Trust's redefined mission included “advocating the ethic of property stewardship” (Murtagh 47). As David Lowenthal explains in *The Heritage Crusade*, the idea of stewardship entails property protection as well as transformation: “Care for what we inherit requires active embrace of what we add to it. To conserve the past is never enough; good care taking involves continual creation” (40). Lowenthal suggests that while the modern urge for heritage focuses on conservation and collection of “specific material relics,” “the future may be better served by our adding to it” greater knowledge, history, and awareness (40). The methods of preservation critique that Gurganus and Cheshire model, I argue, demonstrate the practice of stewardship. Their narratives consider the ethics of preservation beyond saving relics or the musealized plantation house, as they attempt to develop a growing

sense of history tied to property, including continued research and physical transformations.

Mary Ellen suggests that the homes Tad works to preserve are conscious of his stewardship. She claims that the homes he restored “were competitive for Tad’s fullest energies...the mansions used opera diva’s pet tricks: when Tad spent too much time with one grande dame, the others had breakdowns, sprung leaks, threw material tantrums. Possessive, the great homes” (102). In return, the houses rewarded him with their secrets, revealing histories buried and forgotten. As he works on Shadowlawn, Tad suddenly discovers that he has been transported momentarily back in time, an out-of-place and out-of-time figure on the antebellum plantation spotted only by two young girls that point him toward the house’s foundation where he understands they have just buried something. Tad says, “I so wanted to touch them, to hold onto them. Mainly to ask them things” (108). Later that evening, Tad gathers his fellow preservationists at Shadowlawn to witness his unearthing of their secret. “I want us to have a little seminar, my folks. About occupants of historic homes. The people that get left behind” (101).

Tad receives the ultimate historical recovery as the ghosts of Shadowlawn “yield up its separate secrets,” rewarding him with a carefully preserved emblem of a friendship secretly treasured between one white and one slave girl.

From the box he lifted two joined dolls. One was a dark wooden effigy, almost a totem. It was obviously home-carved, maybe 10 inches long. The other had a porcelain head, a stuffed bodice, two simplified bisque hands attached to cloth-tube arms.the arms of this porcelain doll were literally wired around the black carved wooden figure...If the porcelain doll was obviously English, the gum wood one was African or African-inspired in its angularity. (104)

The effigy dolls, with their arms secured around each other, had been shrouded with layers of cloth, sealed with wax, and buried at the foundation of the plantation house in a tin box. Such safe-keeping, Tad believes, expressed a shared feeling between these friends of their love and their awareness of a social expiration date of their closeness.

[T]o find these things, the one a slave toy and the other something porcelain and plainly English import...I believe it was a pact between them, the girls, to go ahead and wire their arms around each other, the dolls. Like they knew their friendship couldn't stand whatever tests were coming—a salable slave child and the owner's daughter, or the overseer's—but to plant these here. As a sign, near the house, a sign they loved each other. To show they knew that, and to save it some. (108)

Tad's "little seminar" demonstrates the impact of "seeing through the bricks" of the sentient architecture to envision the daily social relations and tensions on a plantation. The treasure Tad discovers at Shadowlawn presumes to be an effect of his stewardship as the plantation house's history grows and evolves with new revelations. However, the scene merely replicates plantation fiction's fantasy of racial harmony as it depicts a cross-racial friendship between the plantation's innocent figures. While the moment does register slavery as part of Shadowlawn's history, it does so in a naively romanticized way. Gurganus uses heavy-handed symbolism as the girls preserve evidence of their friendship at the foundation of the white plantation house. As symbolic center of the plantation, the house offers a prominent setting for the memorialization of their friendship while also generating the tensions against which their friendship needs to be preserved. The scene suggests that society will corrupt the pre-social bond, but that the plantation house has somehow forged and will even protect their friendship. While Tad

has seemingly enacted stewardship, the history that he contributes to Shadowlawn is embedded in plantation mythology and fails to generate new knowledge. It does, however, create a marketable story with cultural capital for provide potential buyers eager to reclaim the rehabilitated and freshly romanticized plantation house.

Gurganus's novella extends beyond conventional notions of architecture as the primary associative value of cultural and historic preservation. As Tad tells his mentees, the greater purpose of historic preservation is to tell the history of "the people who get left behind" (101). In return, *Preservation News* brings to the forefront the historic preservationist, a steward of history and culture, although ironically "someone oddly apt to disappear" from the monument's history as well (81). As the preservationist recovers the modern-day ruins and rehabilitates them, his role in the monument's historical continuity remains largely anonymous to future visitors. Although Tad Worth saved many historic homes, he as an individual would fade away with little notice were it not for Mary Ellen who realizes, "You will find his name on no plaque at any of the over 57 homes and public edifices he helped us spare" (81). Her mission in completing *Preservation News* Issue #14 is "to make one little Doric temple on a hill for him" (81).

Tad's passionate labors to preserve historic home places inspire Mary Ellen to reconstruct the diminishment of his corporeal body through a narrative that preserves his spirit and the many modes of preservation he enabled. Not only did Tad rehabilitate architecture, he also resurrected the lives of those around him, widows he had recruited to assist in his preservation labors and fundraising. Mary Ellen compares herself to the historic houses Tad finds in need of restoration, meditating, "The moment my husband

died, I became such a crumbling ‘prestige property’” (79). As she explains, “many of these widows confess to feeling like ramshackle old ‘historic’ home places themselves. I felt myself to be some house suddenly emptied of all its occupants and, despite possessing fairly decent dentil moldings, fallen into disrepair beyond the help of Elizabeth Arden, the National Trust, or the Holy Spirit!” (79). Through her work with Tad, she realizes that he has rescued, preserved, and rehabilitated many individuals, much like his historic homes, back into a fully-functioning subject, not merely a showpiece of their former selves.

Preservation News echoes sentiments of humanist geography and humanist architecture through its attention to sensory experience of place, particularly the sentience and embodiment of architecture in its relation to the human body. The narrative Mary Ellen relays of Shadowlawn Plantation reveals the ironic shadow of house and human as the inanimate defunct architecture rejuvenates and the living human effaces and decays. As Tad restores Shadowlawn from a house extensively vandalized by indoor bonfires, graffiti, and smelling “of wood rot” (101) to a grand beauty once again, his own body transforms from overweight and elaborately animated, “a Victorian edifice with ... overgenerous ornamentation” (116) as Mary Ellen describes him, to a thin, chaste shadow of his former self. Despite being afflicted with the late-stage ravages of AIDS, Tad works relentlessly to fully restore Shadowlawn. Mary Ellen realizes that “the house [Shadowlawn] was there to keep Tad standing” (101) until he could complete the project.

As his historical discovery of the effigy dolls at Shadowlawn “comes to life,” she observes that Tad’s body increasingly reflects signs of his own imminent death, “his cheekbone’s sweeping edge, so suddenly elegant you knew it would be terminal” (105).

Gurganus metaphorically unites body and architecture using this particular paradox of visibility of the restored plantation house and the invisible restorationist to highlight the LGBT preservationist community’s marginalized recognition as stewards of culture. Furthermore, his eulogy of Tad Worth symbolically honors the many preservationists afflicted through the AIDS epidemic, thereby restoring their place in the history that they worked to preserve.

Preserving Home and History in *Moving Midway*

The Shoppes at Midway Plantation, a retail shopping complex built in 2007, has paved over the antebellum homestead of Midway Plantation established in 1848. The remains of a slave cemetery, still anchored to its primordial land, now recede behind the community swimming pool of the latest affluent suburban development. Meanwhile, Midway Plantation’s house and remaining outbuildings have been relocated three miles northeast of their original landsite as a means of “Preserving the past to build the future,” the plantation’s website claims.⁷⁹ Director Godfrey Cheshire’s 2008 documentary *Moving Midway* chronicles conflicts spurred by the decision made by Charlie Silver, Midway’s owner and Cheshire’s cousin, to relocate the plantation in order to “save it” from urban sprawl.

The documentary portrays a dual narrative of Midway's relocation as preservation, one that acknowledges sentimentality and another that ruptures the revered image of the pastoral plantation. Cheshire reframes the story of Midway's preservation by interrogating the *idea* of the plantation house. He works to dispel plantation mythology by contextualizing the plantation as an image constructed and popularized by twentieth-century Hollywood films such as *Gone with the Wind*. Commentary from southern historians explains the plantation myth's endurance and the historical narratives that have challenged it. Throughout the film, Cheshire juxtaposes the white family's nostalgia for the house against these other voices, including newly-discovered African American Hinton descendants' very different attitudes held toward the land. Cheshire's documentary models preservation critique by weaving together a variety of voices and perspectives as a means of correcting Midway Plantation's history that was supplanted long ago by white-centric memory. He also strives to reframe the plantation house in public discourse as a racialized space obscured by its popularized and mythic constructions.

Moving Midway illustrates the continuing desire for the plantation house, particularly the desire to preserve the plantation in a romanticized fashion that sidesteps its inglorious past. Sentiments run deep in *Moving Midway* regarding the home's transportability. In the days leading up to the move, the Hinton family questioned how their family home, a historic landmark listed on the National Register of Historic Places, could be uprooted from the land without diminishing its significance. In an off-camera interview during production, Cheshire commented that the film "brought up the question:

Is Midway the house or the land? If you lose the land, you lose a kind of psychic anchor that can never be replaced” (Ariail).⁸⁰ For Midway’s owners and extended family, memory anchors the house to the land, implying an inseparable history shared between them. Yet a distinct separation of those histories or, rather, a selective filtering of history has long since occurred. Midway’s actual history has roots in the land tied to antebellum plantation economy and its production of slaves alongside crops. The plantation’s history occupies a spatial territory of land beyond the house and likewise includes a slave population and family descendants that never would have inhabited the preserved plantation house. With few slave architectures remaining, the idea of Midway becomes subsumed by nostalgic representations of the owner’s house, essentially remembering the white history of plantation life while forgetting its black slave history. White-centric memory and materiality of the plantation house supersedes the plantation’s nearly invisible history of enslavement. Figuratively, Midway’s land already has been depoliticized as an extension of the family home through this process.

Cheshire aims to chronicle Midway’s preservation in a way that does acknowledge slave history. Against the family romance of Midway, Cheshire critiques plantation nostalgia. The documentary opens with an epigraph, Faulkner’s legendary line, although he misquotes it here as “The past isn’t dead, it isn’t even past.”⁸¹ *Gone with the Wind*’s regal image of Twelve Oaks plantation from the 1939 film immediately follows. The white-columned mansion stands monumental in the distance from the grand oak-tree-lined approach. In voice-over narration, Cheshire describes how director David Selznick created the image by filming a painting rather than an actual plantation. Thus

begins Cheshire's consideration of the plantation as an image constructed through media and conflated with historical memory.⁸²

The documentary's opening demonstrates a critical stance toward the mythic plantation. Within the first two minutes of the documentary, Cheshire layers nearly twenty different images and film scenes commonly associated with southern plantations while he provides a voice-over narration about the iconic plantation in popular culture:

The image [Twelve Oaks] comes into view and it's instantly recognizable: a southern plantation. In history it looms large as the original foundation of the nation's economy, North and South. As the breeding ground of many of American's first leaders. As a central cause of the greatest war fought on American soil. But how you feel about it depends on something else. The plantation as an imaginary figure—one of the most potent icons ever produced by American popular culture, forged in hundreds of novels, plays, movies and television shows. A place of violence and gentility, of pride and shame, music and joy, and devastating defeat. The imaginary plantation embodies conflicts over the meaning of America itself that have lasted from generation to generation. [...pause...] How I feel about the plantation remains a question in flux. As a film critic who lives in New York City, I'm painfully aware of the injustice, oppression, and historic tragedies it represents. Yet I also harbor a deep and abiding attachment to one very real plantation down in North Carolina.

His monologue emphasizes “the plantation as an imaginary figure—one of the most potent icons ever produced by American popular culture... a place of violence and gentility, of pride and shame.” The corresponding introductory film montage depicts a wide range of emotions including celebratory, mournful, agonizing, and somber. Yet images associated with white sentimentality and lost-cause ideologies outnumber their crucial counter images. Cinematic selections include familiar scenes from Selznick's *Gone with the Wind*, Disney's *Song of the South*, D.W. Griffith's *The Birth of a Nation*.⁸³ Historic images also cross the screen, including portraits of the nation's early presidents,

a Civil War reenactment, and *The Birth of a Nation*'s reenactment of Lee's official surrender to Grant at the Appomattox courthouse. Portrayals of African Americans include an aging filmed reenactment of slaves carrying baskets of cotton in the field, as well as scenes of celebratory gatherings, dances, and children at play from black and white films, presumably reflecting Reconstruction. With one brief powerful scene from *Roots*, Cheshire presents the plantation as a site of black trauma, calling it in voice-over "a place of violence," as enslaved and shackled Kunta Kinte is turned around by a whip-bearing overseer.

The opening monologue indicates a skeptical view toward plantation mythology with a painful "aware[ness] of the injustice, oppression, and historic tragedies [that the plantation] represents." More importantly, the opening minutes underscore cinematic constructions of the "plantation as an imaginary figure." The strategy suggests Cheshire's self-consciousness as he engages with a medium that often has portrayed distorted realities of the plantation. However, the monologue's corresponding video montage reveals a slip toward romantic imagery. The snippet from *Roots* and a scene of clansmen from *The Birth of a Nation* offer the most significant counter-pastoral images. Meanwhile, four scenes from *Gone with the Wind* reiterate the plantation as a site of grandeur, celebration, and, ultimately, tragic white loss.⁸⁴ As the montage closes, Cheshire states "How I feel about the plantation remains a question in flux." Cheshire's introduction illustrates the challenge of balancing dual perspectives in the documentary, likely affected by what he calls his "deep and abiding attachment" to Midway.

Much of Midway's known history, the documentary reveals, derives from the memories passed down by its late matriarch, Mary Hilliard Hinton, commonly called "Miss Mary" among acquaintances or "Mimi" among family. As the camera intermittently pans across Miss Mary's photographs and framed portraits in the formal parlor, Cheshire's mother, "Sis," describes her ancestor: "Mimi was on a [chuckles] different elevation...She was interested in her ancestors. She didn't want Midway, as I told you, to ever be changed." Sis suggests that Mimi adhered to Old South gentility long after the Civil War ended. Her perception resonates later with Cheshire's remembrance of Mimi "rul[ing] over Midway when we were kids, dressed like her idol, Queen Victoria" and further substantiates Mimi's nostalgic embrace of nineteenth-century memories. Following her lead, Cheshire and Charlie suggest that their sense of Midway Plantation's history was formed predominately by Mimi's selective memories. In Cheshire's description, Mimi figures as Midway's chief historian: "The plantation was built in 1848 as a wedding gift for Mimi's parents. A prolific writer, artist, and historian, she endeavored to keep Midway as it had been at the end of the Civil War. More than a matriarch, [Mimi] was our storyteller, the one who gave Midway its meaning."

Mimi ensured that her own memories of Midway became its history to younger Hinton generations. Charlie recalls as Mimi would pass memories down to him, Cheshire, and her other great-great nieces and nephews: "She'd sit in the chair and all the children would lie around her, and usually, you know six or eight kids, and we'd all listen to her tell all the stories about Reconstruction and life on the plantation." Yet many of Mimi's beliefs reached back to a glorious past as Cheshire recalls, "The stories that Mimi

passed on to us as kids had little to do with the Confederacy. Her history was the history of blood, our blood. It traced the bloodline back to English and French nobility, even the founding of Rome, and the narrow escape of our Trojan ancestor Aeneas.” Mimi clearly suffered from “Sir Walter disease,” as Mark Twain would say, inflating the plantation lineage and legacy with romantic and chivalric fantasy popularized by Sir Walter Scott novels.⁸⁵ Above the guest book in the front parlor hangs a plaque featuring nine coats of arms. Miss Mary hand-painted the plaque, which allegedly traces the Hinton line of descent from an Earl of Great Britain, a Queen of Scotland, and the Plantagenets, substantiating the family with historical integrity and precedence. Cheshire contextualizes Mimi’s exaggerated romanticism within southern mythology’s evolution, stating

Somewhere along this long saga, of course, history merges into myth. And maybe that was the point. Northerners began to equate America with New England and create a national mythology around Plymouth Rock. Southerners started to see themselves as a distinct culture, and forged their own mythology, one that said the South had been settled by Cavaliers, dashing romantic aristocrats.

Cheshire includes commentary from historians such as Robert Hinton, southern scholar Lucinda MacKethan, and Harry Watson (then the current Director of Center for the Study of the American South), to further substantiate the mythology of plantation society, thus tempering the family’s sensational “history” monumentalized by Mimi and similar plantation ambassadors. The Hinton family, however, continues to honor and promote Mimi’s historical family narrative as evinced by the placement of Mimi’s descending coat of arms made visible to all who enter Midway.

Mimi's characterization in the documentary emphasizes an enduring mythic subscription to a sentient relationship between the extant plantation house and its antebellum mistress figurehead. Long after her death, Miss Mary continues to permeate the meaning of Midway, haunting the house and leading the family to question whether their decision to uproot the family home undermines her matriarchal authority. Charlie Silver's brothers "Possom" and "Winkie" consider the grim probabilities of Midway's future as Possum says, "I don't think it will ever be Midway again. It's the closing of a book." Much like plantation fiction's fallen antebellum hero and the consecutive degeneration of the grand plantation house, as seen in Page's "Marse Chan," Cheshire's film suggests that the house's precarious position and sentient ambiance trail in the wake of its lost forebears. Cheshire juxtaposes images of the once bucolic nineteenth-century plantation house with a contemporary view of twenty-first-century traffic congestion and commercial development accumulating just beyond the gravel drive. In doing so, he amplifies agrarian sentiments, thereby encouraging the audience to sympathize with the white Hinton family, whose house faces relocation as a drastic measure toward preserving its pastoral image.

Against this fading agrarian vision, Cheshire imparts an ambivalence toward "saving" Midway to the extent that preservation reproduces a selective memory of its past. Cheshire often positions scenes of familial nostalgia for the plantation house in tandem with counter-pastoral narratives such as those offered by Robert Hinton, whose grandfather was born a slave on the plantation.⁸⁶ Robert becomes a foil to members of the white Hinton family, most noticeably to "Sis" who continues Miss Mary's legacy through

memory and tradition. His comments foster audience awareness of the plantation myth that the white side of the Hinton family promotes. As the evening winds down during Robert Hinton's initial visit to Midway, Cheshire explains in voice-over narration, "Robert's question about slave quarters reminds me of how curious, and maybe precarious, this whole evening is." The following day, Charlie leads Robert on a tour of the property and a visit to the slave cemetery. He gestures toward the location of the former slave quarters and cotton fields, long since gone. Cheshire attempts to "preserve" these spaces as part of Midway's history through Charlie's tour and dialogue with Robert, yet the impetus for this belated chronicle of Midway's slave history is the physical, material preservation of Midway's plantation house, which will soon be "saved" from encroaching development.

The documentary often features Robert Hinton juxtaposed with Sis, positioning his African American perspectives of plantation history against her embrace of what she considers her own heritage and traditions. Robert's visit all too conveniently coincides with Sis's afternoon outing to the local Civil War reenactment. Robert Hinton asks Sis, "When you think about the real Civil War, what does it mean to you?" Sis's history of the War isn't so much concerned with slavery as it is centered upon the South's resistance to Union regulations and the southern states' right "to govern themselves and take care of their own problems." Robert's presence in the camera's foreground during scenes of the mock battle accentuates the simulated and festive nature of the event with its reproduction costumes and futile gun smoke. He explains later to Cheshire that the reenactments seem to be a "misremembering of the war": "I think the absence of black

people at a thing like this encourages people to think that the Civil War was not about slavery.” His solemn perspective transitions to an equally incisive if not humorous remark as he says, “I’m perfectly happy to have them keep fighting this war as long as they keep losing it.”

Cheshire provides space for alternating narratives that undermine the sentimental narrative of the plantation house and selective memory of Midway’s history. Through commentaries provided by a variety of southern scholars and historians, potential effacements of Midway’s antebellum slave economy transform into opportunities for the film to reframe Miss Mary’s teachings of Midway within the plantation’s historical foundations. Following the battle reenactment, Cheshire unpacks the southern mythology of Cavalier and aristocratic descent to which Miss Mary subscribed as she traced “the history of [Hinton] blood” to nobility and even ancient Greece. Cheshire underscores the South’s methods for validating or justifying slavery through chivalry and old English class systems. In voiceover he equates the English royalty and their castles to the South’s new Rich and their own grand estates, “and so was born the myth of the southern plantation,” an idyllic realm of kindly masters and contented slaves. Harriet Beecher Stowe’s *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* ruptures the idyllic myth, proving, as Lucinda MacKethan explains in interview footage, that the myth of kindly masters does not hold. In narrative voiced over battle scene images, Cheshire says “the counter myth, of course, won the war,” yet “ironically the plantation myth survived...[and] was spread throughout popular culture, primarily in the North through minstrel shows and literary works that came to be known by the tag ‘moonlight and magnolias.’” Additional footage from MacKethan

claims that the myth functions to provide validity to a system and a past that no longer exist, attesting to its powerful deployment. While *Moving Midway* documents the white Hinton family's inheritance of southern mythology, it also consciously dispels it through critical historical insights.

The documentary's portrayal of the house's physical separation from the land offers perhaps the most striking duality of perspective. Arriving as a construction team begins to unmoor the house from the foundation; Robert says to Cheshire, "When I hear you and your cousins talk about Midway, you almost always talk about the house. But, actually, when I think about Midway, the house is the last thing I think about, because I think about the folks working out in the field of growing cotton, tobacco. For me, Midway is one phenomenon, and Miss Mary's house is almost a different phenomenon." Robert Hinton explains the positive impact of Midway Plantation's relocation for all involved: "This way you and your family get to keep this house, which is at the center of your collective identity. But I have the pleasure of knowing that what used to be Midway Plantation will soon be covered with concrete and asphalt." He finds solace in knowing that "nothing significant will ever grow there again."

Moving Midway repeatedly associates the plantation house with a sentient consciousness of its ghosts, particularly Miss Mary, thus invoking a nostalgic and sentimental perception of the house that seemingly erases its plantation history. Cheshire chooses to promote Midway's sentience and nostalgia as a means of relaying the white Hinton family's perspective. Sis, who represents a habitual attachment to celebrating memories of the Old South, initiates the documentary's investigation into Midway's

ghosts when she says, “I hope Mimi will not haunt ‘em about [the relocation]. You know, she is a ghost.” Cheshire follows Sis’s thread with similar interview footage. Charlie’s brother, Winkie, describes the house’s sentient reflection of Mimi: “Mimi had an aura to her when you stayed in there with her. And after she passed, the furniture moved, different things moved around in that house. And you could feel, I don’t know if electricity, but you could feel vibes when you went in there.” Charlie’s wife, Dena, explains the surprising and unsettling sensation: “I don’t think I had any idea how much you would *feel* things. The presence of someone around me. Often.” Sis even guides Cheshire to interview the cleaning staff who recount Mimi’s ghost as a powerful force that crashed computers, threw furniture, and tore plates from the wall. The documentary’s attentiveness to the matriarchal ghost becomes overtly sentimental at such moments. As a result, his reflexive moments must be precisely targeted to balance the narratives. Sentience, however, proves to be an especially powerful mythic presence that Cheshire’s documentary has difficulty critiquing with an equally determined counter-narrative.

The documentary’s most challenging balance of preservation sentiment and counter-narrative revolves around the house’s physical relocation. As moving crews prepare to remove the house from its foundation, discussion of Midway’s ghosts resurfaces. While the contractor tells a ghost story to workers, Cheshire turns to the camera and shows sections of the house’s wood torn, separated, and distressed as if showing the house as a damaged body. His attention to the distressed lumber and its sentient connection to the plantation matriarch once again echoes plantation fiction’s depiction of architectural sentience and mourning. In moments like this, it’s clear that

Cheshire understands a counter-narrative is crucial in the documentary. He follows this scene self-reflexively with commentary about the film industry's observation of America's "ravenous" appeal for westerns and movies about the Old South in the early 1900s. Thus, he considers the national impact of films like *The Clansmen* and *The Birth of a Nation*, which, he explains, revived the KKK and, as a result, launched the NAACP's formation. While significant critiques against nostalgia for plantation culture, his attention to sentience proceeds relatively uncritiqued in moments like this. It seems that only a story like "Po' Sandy" could possibly provide the quintessential critique that the moment requires.

With *Midways*'s sentience still tied to its white ghosts, namely Miss Mary, heavy sentimentalism returns under Cheshire's direction when the house, uprooted from its foundation, begins its slow journey to a new land, and the film overlays music reminiscent of the proverbial bagpipe funeral dirge "Going Home." The solemn instrumental characterizes many of the white Hinton family's sentiments — that Midway's dislocation from the land is synonymous with its extinction. Much like the groaning, resistant lumber of plantation structures in "Po' Sandy," Miss Mary's house also resonates with sound. Cameras and microphones within the shadows of the rolling house capture the guttural drone of Midway as it is hauled from the plot. The low groaning noise is made even more salient by the interior camera, capturing the private confines of the house's interior. The funereal metaphor continues in startling images of men, like pallbearers, walking beneath and alongside the steel beams bearing the house toward its final resting place. Later, aerial shots show the barren land where Midway

once was, now ruins of crumbled concrete and brick, with the funeral dirge music playing again. As the house travels down country roads, the music changes to a slightly more upbeat version, with a slow consistent percussion rhythm that adds to a sense of movement and momentum, of progression forward—a distinctly different sound from its earlier evocation of loss.

By positioning the plantation house as the central feature, many antebellum and postbellum plantation romances portray the grand house and plantation landscape in an idyllic arena often absent of the economic market and slave labor that made such estates possible. Through Cheshire's direction, the actual dislocation of the house from its inaugural site leads to a greater awareness of its history, including an expansion of the family tree, a process that likely would not have occurred without Cheshire's and Robert Hinton's intervention. Cheshire claims, "Learning that I have" over a hundred African American cousins is a learning moment that breaks free from the myth of white purity that Thomas Dixon and Mimi claimed years ago. He is thus able to document a developing sense of identity and memory cultivated through this home. The plantation house, with its mythic legends, becomes a site of homecoming as the grandchildren of Midway's slaves gather together with those of Midway's owners.

As *Moving Midway* celebrates the plantation house's preservation, it implies that a critical awareness of participation in plantation mythology and dependence upon slave labor has "absolved" the house from the stains of its tainted history. Although the documentary remains cognizant of a history of slavery at Midway Plantation, it manages to preserve the plantation house in a manner that does not preserve the trauma and horror

of slavery. While *Moving Midway* critiques the ethical and racial quandaries of plantation house preservation, it still falls back into the trap of sentience.

If memory is rooted within the relics of the past, as Pierre Nora and David Lowenthal claim, then these objects contain a plethora of stories and histories worth exploring, not only of their respective pasts but also a sense of history that accumulates over time through stewardship. Although preservation philosophies have come a long way since the 1966 National Historic Preservation Act, “a significant redirection of American preservation to an emerging emphasis on *both* physical and social community building, and on more inclusive and diverse aspects of history, culture, and heritage” has been slow to follow in practice (Stipe 452). Cheshire’s and Gurganus’s works reflect this slow change while also demonstrating the persistence of cultural myths that undermine the work of critique. For while Cheshire and Gurganus both set out to be highly cognizant of the uncritical ethos at play in plantation house preservation, they each slip into the sentient trap.

Notes

⁷² While I focus upon the original publication of “Po’ Sandy” from *The Atlantic Monthly* in 1888, thinking of the story as a component of *The Conjure Woman* (1899) is effective as well. “Po’ Sandy” only shows slight variations between these two publications.

⁷³ It is also interesting to note that Annie’s greatest sympathy resides with Tenie who allegedly “had des grieve’ herse’f ter def fer her Sandy” (610). She feels sympathy for the slave, Tenie, who grieved herself to death. As for Sandy, the slave who had been harvested, she says “What a system it was...under which such things were possible!” (610), a statement that does not clearly denounce the brutality inflicted upon the slave body, but merely signals some awareness of its practices.

⁷⁴ Chesnut’s “Po Sandy” gained publication in the *Atlantic Monthly* at a time when post-Reconstruction sentiments for blacks were waning (K. Price 257). The plantation fictions of Joel Chandler Harris and Thomas Nelson Page had caught the attention of literary audiences ready to re-imagine the South as an idealized past. Chesnut used characteristics of plantation fiction to appeal to this shifting audience. According to Kenneth Price, Chesnut “built” an intentional duality into these narratives through familiar signs of plantation fiction and John’s skepticism of “Uncle” Julius’s tales. These opportunities for misinterpretation, Price believes, are likely what led to Chesnut’s publication in a leading periodical of the time (264). By using a frame narrative of transplanted Northerners John and Annie and their unfamiliarity as new owners of the post-plantation property, Chesnut was able to embed counter-pastoral narratives through Julius McAdoo. As plantation caretaker, Julius becomes historian of the haunted schoolhouse. His tale of Sandy’s embodiment in the schoolhouse lumber may be folklore or fiction, but it results in Ruskinian preservation of the building, allowing the structure to age naturally into ruins without intervention. With the schoolhouse no longer perceived by John as a consumable resource, Julius acquires permission to use the building as a religious meeting house and therefore claims the space as a site for African American heritage.

⁷⁵ The association between Poe's tale and the plantation house appears in Lewis P. Simpson's essay, "The Southern Recovery of Memory and History" in which he addresses Roderick Usher's estate as "a fantasy of the plantation homeland of the antebellum literary mind," that is, a pervasive sense of a "culture of alienation" (3). Simpson suggests that Poe's fictional mansion doomed by self-alienation and solipsism developed into a symbol of "the self-destruction of southern aristocracy" (2).

⁷⁶ Gurganus situates many of his narratives in this imaginary town, just as Faulkner created the fictional Yoknapatawpha County and town of Jefferson for many of his works.

⁷⁷ Matheson is a North Carolina photographer whose major subjects include old homes and landscapes of the South. Howard serves as President of Preservation North Carolina

⁷⁸ Worse yet, its original owner maintained an extensive collection of Indian artifacts "dubiously gained" from "grave-robbing bounty hunters known even then as 'New York art dealers'" (74).

⁷⁹ Midway Plantation was built upon land that the Hinton's first received as a royal land grant from England in 1739. Over time, as with many large agricultural estates, portions of this land were sold away. Midway Plantation's current owner, Charlie Silver, actually sold the remaining thirty-four acres of the land on which Midway Plantation stood until 2005, including the original house site, to the commercial developers who created The Shoppes of Midway Plantation, a big box shopping complex that includes Home Depot; Target; Bed, Bath, and Beyond; among other anchor stores. His decision to do so, as explained in the film and in various interviews, was precipitated by projected interstate development that he believed would compromise the historical integrity of the plantation because of its close proximity. Silver had the Plantation relocated 3 miles away on approximately forty-five acres of land he purchased that is actually part of the original land Hinton land grant. Midway Plantation is located in Knightdale, North Carolina, east of Raleigh.

⁸⁰ Though all of the viable plantation structures were relocated, the feature in *Moving Midway* is the dis- and re-location of Midway's Big House.

⁸¹ The actual line, spoken by Gavin Stevens in *Requiem for a Nun*, reads “The past is never dead. It’s not even past” (535). Faulkner’s line has been recited, and even recited incorrectly, countless times. Cheshire’s misquote of the line is an unfortunate oversight, but does not alter the meaning of the line.

⁸² The diverse positions of the plantation myth, from nostalgic to dispelled, put forth by Selznick’s *Gone with the Wind* (1939) and Alex Haley’s *Roots* (1977) respectively, reappear throughout Cheshire’s narrative.

⁸³ A few seconds of footage from *Jezebel* (1938) and *Hush...Hush Charlotte* (1964) also appear. Each of the selections emphasize Hollywood’s depiction of the plantation as a site of psychic terror for whites traumatized by white murder.

⁸⁴ Scenes from *Gone with the Wind* include the approach to Twelve Oaks, Melanie and Ashley overlooking the grand plantation landscape and festive barbecue, dancing at the Confederate Ball, and Scarlett’s return to the plantation ruins. An additional scene from *Roots* in the montage presents a time of celebration and dance.

⁸⁵ In *Life on the Mississippi* Twain famously attributed the southern reverence for eloquence, romanticism, and medieval nobility to Sir Walter Scott: “But for the Sir Walter disease, the character of the Southerner--or Southron, according to Sir Walter's starchier way of phrasing it--would be wholly modern, in place of modern and mediæval mixed, and the South would be fully a generation further advanced than it is. It was Sir Walter that made every gentleman in the South a Major or a Colonel, or a General or a Judge, before the war; and it was he, also, that made these gentlemen value these bogus decorations. For it was he that created rank and caste down there, and also reverence for rank and caste, and pride and pleasure in them. Enough is laid on slavery, without fathering upon it these creations and contributions of Sir Walter” (468-69).

⁸⁶ Godfrey Cheshire came across Robert Hinton and discovered his association with Midway Plantation through coincidence. As explained in the film and in NYU Alumni Magazine, Cheshire contacted Robert in 2004 after reading his recent letter-to-the-editor in *The New York Times Book Review* that led him to believe he may have connections to Midway Plantation and its family. “Cheshire knew that

he could not tell the home's full story without discussing slavery. He needed Hinton's help, both as a scholar and as someone intimately connected to Midway" (Robertson 24).

Abraham Hinton was born in Wake County in 1909; the year America was celebrating the 100th birthday of Lincoln who signed the Emancipation Proclamation. Abraham's paternal grandfather, Ruffin Hinton, was the mixed-race son of North Carolina Treasurer Charles Lewis Hinton and Selanie Toby, an enslaved plantation cook. Born in 1848, the year that Charles Lewis built Midway Plantation outside of Raleigh, Ruffin passed to his grandson the memory of his black and white ancestry, which was lost after the Civil War to their white kin but remembered by Abraham and his African-American family.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSION: THE NEW OLD HOUSE

Since the early twenty-first century, popular shelter magazines such as *Southern Living*, *Better Homes & Gardens*, *House Beautiful*, *Country Living*, and *Architectural Digest*, among many others, have featured articles on redecorating, refurnishing, and even reconstructing domestic spaces in the style of the “New Old House” with traditional designs and the semblance of vintage details weathered with time. Renowned architect and founder of the “New Old House” movement, Russell Versaci describes the desirability of patina in terms of a home’s humanistic character: “There is mystery in the character of an old house -- in the painted clapboard, mottled brick, and weathered slate as well as in the faded wallpaper, mellowed floorboards, and hand-rubbed hardware. An old house has a soul nurtured by the passage of time” (4). Versaci’s New Old House incorporates aesthetic components of the past into contemporary architectural design by draping the appearance of historical longevity and tradition over the creature comforts that have become so integral to today’s households. “What we really want,” he explains, “is a brand new house wrapped in the raiment of an old house. The house must be seasoned by the past, but its inner workings must be up to the minute....The answer is a *new old house*” (8, italics original).

In *The Past Is a Foreign Country* (1985), geographer and historian David Lowenthal observes that “[a]s the past seems to recede from us, we seek to re-evoke it by

multiplying paraphernalia *about* it—souvenirs, mementoes, historical romances, old photos—and by preserving and rehabilitating its relics” (259). According to Lowenthal, the nineteenth century and beyond have witnessed an observance of the foreignness of the past and our rage to preserve it, to recycle history into nostalgia, for aesthetic appreciation (*Past* 6). Material signs of the “surviving past” offer an illusion of a concrete and accessible past and fulfill strong desires linked to identity and status. In essence, the evolving crusade to document and collect a national heritage initiated decades earlier has spread into a popular drive to possess one’s own personal history and lineage (Lowenthal, “Heritage Crusade” 44).

In the late-twentieth and early-twenty-first centuries, preservation is as much a passion for a wide range of individuals from amateur to expert as it is an industry and “inexact science” of continued learning (Lea 19). Television shows such as PBS’s *This Old House*, HGTV’s *Rehab Addict* and *Fixer Upper*, to name only a few of many, demonstrate and promote the salvage and restoration of historic homes. Even the 1970s and 80s rocker Daryl Hall, of Hall & Oates, has joined the celebrity preservation realm with his own televised program on DIY Network, *Daryl’s Restoration Over Hall*. A plethora of antiquated domestic spaces and adornments appears across mainstream mediums of magazines, television, and tourism, all echoing what Gurganus calls the “siren song of old things” (“Storied Objects” 52). While these renditions of preservation and restoration may entail discussions of architectural salvage, revival, and conservation,

recreating a house of the past as shown through these mediated images amounts to the fantasy of elite modern traditionalism, that is, crafting a dream home for the upper-middle class.

The New Old House movement responds to a generational cycle of desire to reconnect with the past through signs of materiality. Whether a new house designed to appear old or an old house rehabilitated and renewed, both manifestations of the New Old House movement embrace preservation and the sensory experience of memory and place. This cultural trending toward not only preserving but also reproducing historic domestic spaces operates within a pattern of assumed historical integrity and cultural significance that each of the narratives in this study problematize. While the New Old House is not necessarily the de-politicized and de-racialized space of a preserved plantation house, both structures foster a sentimental and sensory attachment to the materiality of place by portraying simplified representations of the past. There is a particularly alluring and seductive nature to preservation and its positive connotations as a humanistic endeavor—a practice of salvation, of saving places and history. While preservation attempts to “preserve” the past to sustain its visibility in the present, it functions as a subjective practice of re-presenting, re-creating, and re-imagining the past. As contemporary narratives such as *Preservation News*, *Moving Midway*, and *The Cutting Season* thematize, the charismatic power of the plantation house remains strong, even in a time of increasing historical and racial awareness. While Gurganus and Cheshire work to

deconstruct the romance of preserving the plantation house, they each illustrate the challenges of its critique in a time of piqued interest for historicity, materiality, and the power of place to evoke the past.

Reframing the Plantation House has examined southern narratives that present a historic plantation house in the contemporary moment to critique or challenge its architectural preservation. By paying particular attention to each house's architectural design and narrative history, aspects that conventionally legitimize its preservation, these works unsettle general assumptions of actual plantation houses' historical integrity and cultural significance. Writing in tandem with the emerging historic preservation movement, the authors examined in this dissertation address concerns with the ethics of preservation. Faulkner's narratives, I argue, highlight an enduring plantation mythology and its influence upon popular culture's embrace of selective plantation architectural restoration and tourism. As I show, his works destabilize notions of the plantation mansion as a revered symbol of southern history and identity through narrative communities that associate the iconic architecture with corruption. Effectively dissociating themselves from the structure, these narrative communities imply the question of why preserve the grand plantation house at all. Percy's *Lancelot* aggressively parodies the uncritical popular historicism and materiality of "southern living" culture and plantation tourism. However, as I argue, his novel also intimately ties the practice of restoration with the unfortunate reproduction of antiquated social, racial, and labor relations of the past. While Percy dramatizes this pattern, his critical gaze mainly focuses

on issues of pseudo-authenticity and materiality in an approach that limits his ability to critique broader social issues of race and gender, issues that Randall and Locke skillfully address in pointed critiques.

The racial implications of plantation house preservation and restoration, namely what is preserved and what is extinguished, dramatically surface in Randall's *The Wind Done Gone* and Locke's *The Cutting Season* as each explore a pervasive silencing of blackness and slavery. As their counter-narratives re-inscribe slave history and racialize the white house, they also re-frame or re-situate the plantation from a site of white memory to a space of African American history and heritage. Therefore, in the perspective of this dissertation, these narratives complicate questions of the value of plantation preservation in productive ways.

Given the accelerating interest in preservation and historic architecture, this dissertation highlights the importance of narrative responses to the cultural drives that promote, preserve, and reproduce the plantation house. Southern narratives examined in this dissertation raise awareness of myriad concerns and also push for critical insights. This study, therefore, reveals the significance of continuing to explore narratives across a wide temporal range that push against uncritical ethos of preservation and that generate counter-narratives to provoke change and enrich our understanding of historic preservation's objectives and limitations.

BIBLIOGRAPHY

- Adams, Jessica. *Wounds of Returning: Race, Memory, and Property on the Postslavery Plantation*. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 2007.
- Advertisements. "Southern Living Shopper." *Southern Living* 10.10 (Oct. 1975): 180-210.
- Allister, Mark. "Faulkner's Aristocratic Families: The Grand Design and the Plantation House." *The Midwest Quarterly* 25.1 (1983): 90-101. Print.
- Amsden, David. "Building the First Slavery Museum in America." *New York Times* 26 Feb 2015 Web. 2 July 2015.
- Ariail, Date Dobbs. "Moving Midway, or...Godfrey Changes Focus." *Independent Weekly*. 27 July 2005 Web. 3 Nov. 2008.
- Bachelard, Gaston. *The Poetics of Space*. Trans. Maria Jolas. Boston: Beacon P, 1994.
- Bishir, Catherine W. "Landmarks of Power, Building a Southern Past, 1885-1915." *Southern Cultures* 1.1 (1993): 5-45. Print.
- , *Southern Built: American Architecture, Regional Practice*. Charlottesville: U of Virginia P, 2006.
- Blair, John M. "Southern Honor and Sexual Violence: The Case of Walker Percy's *Lancelot*." *Southern Studies* 5.3-4 (1994): 83-94. Print.
- Bone, Martyn. *The Postsouthern Sense of Place in Contemporary Fiction*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 2005.
- Brooks, Cleanth. *William Faulkner: The Yoknapatawpha Country*. New Haven: Yale UP, 1963.
- Brundage, Fitzhugh. *The Southern Past: A Clash of Race and Memory*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard UP, 2005.
- Bushman, Richard L. *The Refinement of America: Persons, Houses, Cities*. New York: Knopf, 1992.

- Campbell, Edward D.C., Jr. *The Celluoid South: Hollywood and the Southern Myth*. Knoxville: U of Tennessee P, 1981.
- Cardwell, Guy A. "The Plantation House: An Analogical Image." *Southern Literary Journal* (Fall 1969): 3-21. Print.
- "Carnegie Survey of the Architecture of the South – Background and Scope." *Library of Congress*. Library of Congress Prints & Photographs Division. n.d. Web. 16 May 2014.
- Carpenter, Brian. "The Freestanding Poetry of Yoknapatawpha." *Southern Review* 39.3 (August 2003): 617-24. Print.
- . "A Splendor Never Known: Walker Percy and Historic Preservation." *Southern Literary Journal* 37.2 (2005): 103-118. Print.
- Cheshire, Godfrey, dir. and narr. *Moving Midway: A Southern Plantation in Transit*. First Run Features, 2008. Film.
- Chesnutt, Charles W. "Po' Sandy." *Atlantic Monthly* 61.367 (May 1888): 605-611.
- Cobb, James C. *Away Down South: A History of Southern Identity*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 2005.
- Davis, Jack E. *Race Against Time: Culture and Separation in Natchez Since 1930*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 2001.
- Davis, Jefferson. *The Papers of Jefferson Davis: 1871-1879*. Vol. 13. Ed. Lynda Lasswell Crist. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 2012.
- Davidson, Donald. "A Mirror for Artists." *I'll Take My Stand: The South and the Agrarian Tradition*. By Twelve Southerners. 1930, 1962. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1977.
- Davidson, Lisa Pfueller and Martin J. Perschler. "The Historic American Buildings Survey During the New Deal Era: Documenting 'a Complete Resume of the Builders' Art'." *CRM: The Journal of Heritage Stewardship* 1.1 (Fall 2003): 49-73. Print
- Donaldson, Susan V. "Tradition in Amber: Waker Percy's *Lancelot* as Southern Metafiction." *Walker Percy: Novelist and Philosopher*. Eds. Jan Norby-Gretlund and Karl-Heinz Westarp. Jackson: UP of Mississippi, 1991. 65-73.

- Dworsky, Donald. "A National Perspective." *Preservation: Toward an Ethic in the 1980s*. Future Directions Symposia Proceedings, National Trust for Historic Preservation annual meeting, October 1978. Washington, D.C.: The Preservation Press, 1980. 92-6.
- Eichstedt, Jennifer L. and Stephen Small. *Representations of Slavery: Race and Ideology in Southern Plantation Museums*. Washington, D.C.: Smithsonian Institution Press, 2002.
- Elias, Amy J. "Postmodern Southern Vacations: Vacation Advertising, Globalization, and Southern Regionalism." *Critical Survey* 12.1 (2000): 82-110. Print.
- Ellis, Clifton. "Greeking the Southside: Style and Meaning at James C. Bruce's Berry Hill Plantation House." *Journal of Early Southern Decorative Arts* 28.2 (Summer 2002): 1-51. Print.
- "Exhibit: Slavery at Oak Alley." *Oak Alley Plantation*. N.p., n.d. Web 24 June 2015.
- Fargnoli, A. Nicholas, Michael Golay, and Robert W. Hamblin, Eds. *Critical Companion to William Faulkner: A Literary Reference to His Life and Work*. New York: Fact on File, 2008.
- Faulkner, William. *Absalom, Absalom!*. 1936. (Corrected text) New York: Vintage, 1986.
- . *Go Down, Moses*. 1942. New York: Vintage, 1970.
- . *The Hamlet*. 1940. New York: Vintage, 1990.
- . *The Portable Faulkner*. Ed. Malcolm Cowley. New York: Penguin, 1974.
- . *Requiem for a Nun*. 1951. Reprinted in *Novels 1942-1954*. New York: The Library of America, 1994.
- . "A Rose for Emily." *The Forum* LXXXIII.4 (April 1930): 233-238.
- . *Sanctuary*. 1931. (Corrected text) New York: Vintage, 1985.
- . *Sartoris*. New York: Harcourt, Brace, and Company, 1929.
- . *The Unvanquished*. 1938. New York: Vintage, 1990.
- Federal Writers' Project. *Mississippi: A Guide to the Magnolia State*. New York: Viking, 1938.

- Fitch, James Marston. *American Building 1: The Historical Forces That Shaped It*. New York: Houghton Mifflin, 1972.
- . *Selected Writings on Architecture, Preservation, and the Built Environment*. Ed. Martica Sawin. New York: Norton, 2006.
- Ford, Richard. "Walker Percy: Not Just Whistling Dixie." *National Review* 29 (13 May 1977): 558-64.
- Gaines, Francis Pendleton. *The Southern Plantation: A Study in the Development and the Accuracy of a Tradition*. New York: Columbia UP, 1924.
- Gleason, William A. *Sites Unseen: Architecture, Race, and American Literature*. New York: New York UP, 2011.
- Gray, Richard. *The Literature of Memory: Modern Writers of the American South*. Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins UP, 1977.
- Graybill, Mark S. "Walker Percy's Postmodern Parod(ox)y: *Love in the Ruins*." *Southern Studies* 6.4 (1995): 43-64. Print.
- "Greenwood Plantation History." *Greenwood Plantation*. Web. 2013 accessed 1 July 2015.
- Griffith, William. Personal interview. Rowan Oak. 18 July 2011.
- Gurganus, Allan. Introduction. Untitled. *A Passion to Preserve: Gay Mas as Keepers of Culture*. by Will Fellows. Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 2004. 84-89. Print.
- . *Preservation News. The Practical Heart: Four Novellas*. New York: Vintage, 2001.
- . "Storied Objects." *House & Garden*. 161.5 (May 1989) 46-49. Print.
- Hamlin, Talbot. *Greek Revival Architecture in America*. New York: Dover, 1964.
- Harris, Cyril M. *American Architecture: An Illustrated Encyclopedia*. New York: Norton, 1998.
- Hines, Thomas. *William Faulkner and the Tangible Past: The Architecture of Yoknapatawpha*. Berkley: U of California P, 1996.

- Hobson, Fred. *Tell About the South: The Southern Rage to Explain*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1983.
- . *The Southern Writer in the Postmodern World*. Athens: UP of Georgia, 1991.
- Huyssen, Andreas. "Present Pasts: Media, Politics, Amnesia." *Public Culture*. 12.2 (2000): 21-38. Print.
- Jackson, John Brinckerhoff. *The Necessity for Ruins, and Other Topics*. Amherst: U of Massachusetts P, 1980.
- Jones, Malcolm. "Moralist of the South." *The New York Times*. 22 Mar. 1987: A42, A44, A46. Print.
- Jones, Mary Ellen. *John Jakes: A Critical Companion*. Westport, CT: Greenwood P, 1996.
- Joyner, Louis. "This Older House Now Has Style." *Southern Living* 10.9 (Sept. 1975): 52. Print.
- Kaufman, Ned. "Moving Forward: Futures for a Preservation Movement." *Giving Preservation a History: Histories of Historic Preservation in the United States*. Ed. Max Page and Randall Mason. New York: Routledge, 2004. 313-328.
- Kennedy, John Pendleton. *Swallow Barn; Or, A Sojourn in the Old Dominion*. 1832. 1851. Intro by Lucinda H. MacKethan. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1986.
- Ketchum, Alton. "Natchez to Hold Open House: Visitors Are to See Its Famous Old Mansions, About Which Cling Memories of Days of Wealth and Hospitality." *New York Times* 17 Mar 1935 p X19. Print.
- King, Richard. *A Southern Renaissance: The Cultural Awakening of the American South, 1930-1955*. New York: Oxford UP, 1980.
- Kreyling, Michael. *The South That Wasn't There: Postsouthern Memory and History*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 2010.
- Kuyk, Dirk. *Sutpen's Design: Interpreting Faulkner's Absalom, Absalom!* Charlottesville: UP of Virginia, 1990.
- Lane, Mills. *Architecture of the Old South*. Savannah: Beehive Press, 1996.

- Lawson, Lewis A. "The Fall of the House of Lamar." *The Art of Walker Percy Stratagems for Being*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1979. 219-244.
- Lawson, Lewis A. and Elzbieta H. Oleksy, Eds. Introduction. *Walker Percy's Feminine Characters*. Eds. Lewis A. Lawson and Elzbieta H. Oleksy. Troy, NY: Whitston Publishing, 1995.1-6.
- Lea, Diane. "America's Preservation Ethos: A Tribute to Enduring Ideals." *A Richer Heritage: Historic Preservation in the Twenty-First Century*. Ed. Robert E. Stipe. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003. 1-20.
- Leenhouts, Anneke. "Letting go of the Old South: An Introduction to Walker Percy." *Dutch Quarterly Review of Anglo-American Letters* 15.1 (1985): 36-51. Print.
- Locke, Attica. *The Cutting Season*. New York: HarperCollins, 2012.
- . Interview by Steve Inskeep. *Morning Edition*. NPR. National Public Radio. 18 Sept. 2012. Web 10 Oct. 2014.
- Loos, Alfred, "Ornament and Crime." *Ornament and Crime: Selected Essays*. Trans. Michael Mitchell. Riverside, CA: Ariadne P. 1998.
- Lowenthal, David. *The Past Is a Foreign Country*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1985.
- . "The Heritage Crusade and Its Contradictions." *Giving Preservation a History: Histories of Historic Preservation in the United States*. Ed. Max Page and Randall Mason. New York: Routledge, 2004. 19-43.
- . *The Heritage Crusade and the Spoils of History*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998.
- Luschei, Martin. *The Sovereign Wayfarer: Walker Percy's Diagnosis of the Malaise*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1972.
- MacKethan, Lucinda. *The Dream of Arcady: Place and Time in Southern Literature*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1980.
- . Introduction. *Swallow Barn; Or, A Sojourn in the Old Dominion*. By John Pendleton Kennedy. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1986. xi-xxix.
- Matthews, John T. *William Faulkner: Seeing Through the South*. Chichester, U.K.: Wiley-Blackwell, 2009.

- McPherson, Tara. *Reconstructing Dixie: Race, Gender, and Nostalgia in the Imagined South*. Durham: Duke UP, 2003.
- Meeks, Stephanie. "President's Note: Expanding Our Outlook." *Preservation* 1 Oct. 2014. Web. 10 Oct. 2014.
- Michener, James. "The Company of Giants." *Recasting: Gone with the Wind in American Culture*. Ed. Darden Asbury Pyron. Miami: UP of Florida, 1983. 69-79.
- Midway Plantation – Historic Site, Raleigh, North Carolina*. 21 May 2007. Web. 19 Sept 2008. <http://midwayplantation.com/>
- Mitchell, Margaret. *Gone with the Wind*. 1936. New York: Warner, 1964.
- Moonan, Wendy. "Antiques; A Gothic Tale of a Bedstead Fit for a President.: *The New York Times* 3 Nov. 2000. E41. Print.
- "Moongate: No More a Derelict." *Southern Living* 10.10 (Oct. 1975): 1L-4L. Print.
- Morrison, Toni. "Declaration of Toni Morrison." 15 Apr 2001. Information about SunTrust Bank v. Houghton Mifflin Company. *Houghton Mifflin Books*. n.d. Web. 27 Feb 2015.
- . "Home." *The House That Race Built*. Ed. Wahneema Lubiano. New York: Vintage, 1997. 3-12.
- Moving Midway*. Dir. Godfrey Cheshire. Perf. Charles Hinton Silver, Jr., Dena Williams Silver, Elizabeth Silver Cheshire, Winston Sprague ("Winkie") Silver, John Wales ("Possum") Silver, Betty Wales Silver Howison, Robert Hinton. First Run Features, 2008.
- Murtagh, William J. *Keeping Time: The History and Theory of Preservation in America*. Rev. Ed. New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1997.
- National Park Service. *Vicksburg: Windsor Plantation*. U.S. Department of the Interior, n.d. Print.
- Nora, Pierre. "Between Memory and History: *Les Lieux de Mémoire*." *Representations* 26 (Spring 1989): 7-24. Print.
- Norberg-Schulz, Christian. *Genius Loci: Towards a Phenomenology of Architecture*. New York: Rizzoli, 1980.

- Oleksy, Elzbieta H. "From Silence and Madness to the Exchange That Multiplies: Walker Percy and the Woman Question." *Walker Percy's Feminine Characters*. Eds. Lewis A. Lawson and Elzbieta H. Oleksy. Troy, NY: Whitston Publishing, 1995. 122-133.
- Page, Thomas Nelson. *In Ole Virginia; Or, Mars Chan and Other Stories*. 1887. Nashville: J. S. Sanders, 1991.
- Percy, Walker. Introduction. *Lanterns on the Levee: Recollections of a Planter's Son* by William Alexander Percy. 1941. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1973.
- . *Lancelot*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1977.
- . *Love in the Ruins*. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1971.
- . *The Moviegoer*. 1961. New York: Vintage, 1989.
- . "Random Thoughts on Southern Literature, Southern Politics, and the American Future." *The Georgia Review* 32.3 (Fall 1978): 499-511. Print.
- . "Why I Live Where I Live." 1980. *Signposts in a Strange Land*. Ed. Patrick Samway. New York: Farrar, Straus and Giroux, 1991. 3-9.
- Peterson, Merrill D. *The Great Triumvirate: Webster, Clay, and Calhoun*. Oxford: Oxford UP, 1987.
- "Pilgrimage Week Beings Tomorrow, When Ante-Bellum Days Will Be Re-Lived." *New York Times* 2 Apr 1933 p XX10. Print.
- Plommer, Hugh. "Vitruvius and the Origins of Caryatids." *Journal of Hellenic Studies* 99 (1979): 97-102. Print.
- Poe, Edgar Allan. *The Complete Tales and Poems of Edgar Allan Poe*. New York: Modern Library, 1965.
- Poesch, Jessie J. and Barbara SoRelle Bacot. *Louisiana Buildings: 1720-1940*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1997.
- Polk, Noel. *Faulkner's Requiem for a Nun: A Critical Study*. Bloomington: Indiana UP, 1981.

- Price, Kenneth M. "Charles Chesnutt, *The Atlantic Monthly*, and the Intersection of African-American Fiction and Elite Culture." *Periodical Literature in Nineteenth-Century America*. Ed. Kenneth M. Price and Susan Belasco Smith. Charlottesville: U of Virginia P, 1995. 257–274.
- Price, Reynolds. Foreword. *Eudora Welty: Photographs*. Jackson: U of Mississippi P, 1989.
- Randall, Alice. *The Wind Done Gone*. Boston: Houghton Mifflin, 2001.
- Ransom, John Crowe. "Old Mansion." (1931) Reprinted in *The Literature of the American South*. Eds. William L. Andrews, Minrose C. Gwin, Trudier Harris, Fred Hobson. New York: W. W. Norton & Co., 1998. 400-401.
- Reed, John Shelton. *Whistling Dixie: Dispatches from the South*. San Diego: Harcourt Brace Jovanovich, 1990.
- Roberts, Diane. "Living Southern in *Southern Living*. *Dixie Debates: Perspectives on Southern Cultures*. Ed. Richard H. King and Helen Taylor. Washington Square, NY: New York UP, 1996. 85-98.
- Robertson, Kathryn. "A House Reunited." *NYU Alumni Magazine*. 12 (Spring 2009): 24.
- Romine, Scott. *The Real South: Southern Narrative in the Age of Cultural Reproduction*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 2008.
- Ruppersburg, Hugh M. *Voice and Eye in Faulkner's Fiction*. Athens: U of Georgia P, 2008.
- Ruskin, John. *The Seven Lamps of Architecture*. New York: John Wiley, 1849.
- Rutledge, Archibald. "Return of the Native." *The Saturday Evening Post*. 26 March 1938. 210.39: 20-110. Print.
- . "The Old Plantations Live Again." *The Saturday Evening Post*. 15 January 1944. 216.29 (23-44). Print.
- Ruzicka, William T. *Faulkner's Fictive Architecture: The Meaning of Place in the Yoknapatawpha Novels*. UMI Research Press, 1987.
- Simpson, Lewis P. "The Southern Recovery of Memory and History." *The Sewanee Review* 82.1 (1974): 1-32. Print.

- Stipe, Robert, ed. *A Richer Heritage: Historic Preservation in the Twenty-First Century*. Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2003.
- Stowe, Harriet Beecher. *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. 1852. Ed. Elizabeth Ammons. New York: Norton, 1994.
- Summerson, John. *Heavenly Mansions and Other Essays on Architecture*. New York: Norton, 1963.
- Sweeting, Adam W. *Reading Houses and Building Books: Andrew Jackson Downing and the Architecture of Popular Antebellum Literature, 1835-1855*. Hanover: UP of New England, 1996.
- Tate, Allen. *The Fathers*. 1938. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 1977.
- Towers, Robert. "Southern Discomfort." *The New York Review of Books* 24.5 (31 Mar. 1977): 6-8. Print.
- "The Troubled Times of Longwood." *Southern Living* 10.10 (Oct. 1975): 24. Print.
- Twain, Mark. *Life on the Mississippi*. 1883. Boston: James R. Osgood and Company, 1883.
- Tyler, Norman. *Historic Preservation: An Introduction to Its History, Principles, and Practice*. 2nd ed. New York: Norton, 2009.
- Urgo, Joseph. "Faulkner's Real State: Land and Literary Speculation in *The Hamlet*." *The Mississippi Quarterly*. 48.3 (Summer 1995): 443-57. Print.
- Versaci, Russell. *Creating a New Old House: Yesterday's Character for Today's Home*. Newtown, CT: Taunton Press, 2003.
- Vlach, John Michael. *Back of the Big House: The Architecture of Plantation Slavery*. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 1993.
- Versaci, Russell. *Creating a New Old House: Yesterday's Character for Today's Home* published in 2003
- Welty, Eudora. *Delta Wedding*. 1945. New York: Harcourt, Brace & Company, 1974.
- . *One Time, One Place: Mississippi in the Depression*. New York: Random House, 1971.
- . *Eudora Welty: Photographs*. Jackson: UP of Mississippi, 1989.

- Williamson, Joel. *William Faulkner and Southern History*. New York: Oxford UP, 1993.
- Wilson, Charles Reagan. *Flashes of a Southern Spirit: Meanings of the Spirit in the U.S. South*. Athens: U of Georgia P, 2011.
- Wolff, Sally. *Ledgers of History: William Faulkner, an Almost Forgotten Friendship, and an Antebellum Plantation Diary*. Baton Rouge: Louisiana State UP, 2010.
- Yuhl, Stephanie. *A Golden Haze of Memory: The Making of Historic Charleston*. Chapel Hill: U of North Carolina P, 2005.