

ROBERTS, TAYLOR, M.A. The Language of an Exploitive Economy: Centering Women's Narratives in William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*. (2019)  
Directed by Dr. Scott Romine and Dr. Karen Weyler, 39 pp.

In this essay I will be focusing on William Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury* Jason Compson's narrative section. Contained in his narration is a violent linguistic system that commodifies women, primarily his sister Caddy Compson and his niece Quentin Compson. His exploitation and monetization of these two women turns them into a currency so they can be bartered. Jason's patriarchal-phallogocentric economy is driven by his need to acquire and hoard money. In the process, the women in Jason's life become a means for an economic gain.

This essay analyzes how Jason exploits Caddy's desire to mother her daughter even when she's denied access to her daughter and how Miss Quentin avoids being explicated in her uncle's exploitive economy. Caddy's motherhood, sexuality and economic status grant her the ability to freely maneuver through and within Faulkner's text and Jason's violent and manipulative tendencies. Miss Quentin is not granted the same freedoms as her mother. Miss Quentin's stakes in Jason's economy are much different than Caddy's, in that she has less to lose because she has already lost her mother and her father has never been present in her life. Miss Quentin rejects her uncle because there is very little left that he can take from her.

Caddy's maneuvering isn't always successful, but her ability is a hopeful approach to exploring spaces controlled by male speech and perspective. The fabric of Faulkner's text unravels when Miss Quentin escapes Jason's "economic game" in her rejection of familiar and familial ties to the Compson family. She avoids ever exchanging

with her uncle. When readers and scholars focus on Caddy's adherence to Jason's rule of paying to see her daughter, one question lingers: what "moves" does Miss Quentin perform to destabilize Jason's patriarchal-phallogentric economy that extend to how Caddy performs within her brother's authoritarian economy? This pursuit of centering Caddy and Miss Quentin's narratives is achieved through a close examination of how Faulkner's male-centered narrative works to marginalize his female characters, while close attention to Caddy and Miss Quentin de-centers the male perspective, making the reader inclined to see the two women as subjects who are present in the novel and have a language worth hearing.

ROBERTS, TAYLOR, M.A. Language and Loss: Modernity's Reckoning with Failure in William Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily" (2019)  
Directed by Dr. Scott Romine and Dr. Karen Weyler, 42 pp.

This essay will explore in William Faulkner's short story "A Rose for Emily" the difficulty of considering personal and communal loss beyond symbolic representation. Through patriarchal-phallogocentric language Miss Emily is propagated to the status of monument so far as she becomes a contact point for the men of the Southern town of Jefferson to access their past traditions of chivalry, gender, and class. An analysis of Emily Grierson is pivotal for critiquing the story's mistreatment of her life and her losses.

This paper proposes the difficulties of accessing sites of loss and trauma in the life of Miss Emily. This ultimately reveals the traditional gender and class structures that attempt stability through the language of a communal male narrator. How is Faulkner then making Miss Emily represent the loss and struggles of Southern town of Jefferson while simultaneously producing her own conflict with the loss of her father Mr. Grierson and the desertion of her lover Homer Barron? The reader cannot be tricked in feeling remorse for Mr. Grierson's death because it's not her father Miss Emily mourns, but the loss of a chance to marry that he prevented her from obtaining. Mr. Grierson is the suppressor of his daughter's life and he becomes the site for her "working through" loss and trauma.

This essay is organized into two parts: first, a close analysis of scenes in "A Rose for Emily" that call for close attention and scrutiny of the male-controlled depictions of Miss Emily as representing the losses endured by the South. Her symbolic status is problematized by her proximity to the story's investment in desire and time. The second

part of this essay, through psychoanalytic and feminist scholarship, attempts to undo the patriarchal-phallogocentric structural tendencies of Faulkner's narrative. These approaches and the scholars doing this work help consider the lacks in "A Rose for Emily" where Faulkner's treatment of personal experiences does not consider Miss Emily's unique struggle with loss and trauma as essential to the fabric of a Southern society grappling with loss on a personal and communal scale.

THE LANGUAGE OF AN EXPLOITIVE ECONOMY: CENTERING  
WOMEN'S NARRATIVES IN WILLIAM FAULKNER'S  
*THE SOUND AND THE FURY*  
AND  
LANGUAGE AND LOSS: MODERNITY'S RECKONING  
WITH FAILURE IN WILLIAM FAULKNER'S  
"A ROSE FOR EMILY"

by

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APPROVAL PAGE

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THE LANGUAGE OF AN EXPLOITIVE ECONOMY: CENTERING  
WOMEN'S NARRATIVES IN WILLIAM FAULKNER'S  
*THE SOUND AND THE FURY*

Jason Compson's section of *The Sound and the Fury* opens with the aggressive and shaming language: "once a bitch always a bitch, what I say" (Faulkner 180). Misogynistic language distinguishes Jason as a man who objectifies women's bodies, ultimately producing a language system that commodifies these women's bodies. Faulkner's Jason is an abrasive and volatile character and narrator in section three of the novel. Jason's duties to "protect" and "preserve" Compson standards of respectability are assigned to him by his mother Mrs. Compson, as she believes her son to be the only one without a trace Compson blood in his body. Jason is viewed as the sole member left to his mother: "Mother kept on saying thank God you are not a Compson except in name, because you are all I have left now" (Faulkner 196). He becomes the only one in his own imagining and in his mother's mind who will be able to regulate his niece and Caddy Compson's daughter Miss Quentin. Jason intends, through subjugation and constantly reaffirming his authority, to revitalize a respectable Compson household and mythology. Jason's ability to eradicate degeneracy from the Compson family ultimately fails. Yet, he nonetheless goes to extreme lengths to manipulate and flex authorial status over his sister Caddy's role as mother, while simultaneously commodifying her daughter

and his niece. A character analysis of Jason and close reading of his section exposes his tendencies toward manipulation of his sister's role as maternal figure and suppression of his niece's sexuality and right to the money that her mother sends to support her. Both women become "currency" in Jason's language of misogyny and authority. Jason's "necessity" to govern women's identities and behaviors is disruptive as Caddy and Miss Quentin expose openings as they maneuver through and out of Faulkner's masculinist narrative. The relationships shared between brother and sister, mother and daughter, and uncle and niece reveal how easily each relationship collapses under the weight of fallible language and space intending to be sustained through the exploitation and commodification of women.

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Jason's brutal landscape commodifies women, making them objects and currency in how he speaks and operates in *his* system of capitalist consumption. This essay will focus primarily on addressing Jason's commercialization of motherhood and sexuality. His capitalist language and logic(s) force his sister and her daughter to abide by his rules of exchange and access to goods. Either they listen to his pronouncements and continue to live in isolation as Caddy does or reject his manipulative system and vanish from the scene as Miss Quentin does. My objective then is to show how Caddy and Miss Quentin reinforce, maneuver through, and escape Jason's complex financial power and manipulative speech.

Caddy and Miss Quentin are peripheral characters, articulated through male speech that centers them in the discourse of the three Compson brothers. Mother and daughter are always filtered through masculine speech, becoming stage-like in order for the brothers to propagate their desires, anxieties, and fears. Jason's drive toward consuming economic capital is witnessed through his manipulation of his sister's financial status and desire to see her daughter. A reading that privileges the masculine perspective would argue then that Caddy only functions as a way to understand the drives and motives for his desire to accumulate money from his sister and hoard it from her daughter. This reading would then shy away from recognizing Jason's actions as harmful to Caddy and Miss Quentin. Caddy's desire for access to her daughter means she'll have to pay Jason's ransom for permission to see her daughter. Jason's scheming and supremacy over Caddy forces reader intervention into spaces of Faulkner's text where women are staged objects and male characters are allowed to perform their desires, need for economic excess, and authorial intentions on the silenced, but responsive and never truly quiet, female characters. The reader must read into the gaps where women are present in a male-controlled landscape and narrative. Caddy's motherhood, sexuality, and economic status are mobile in ways that allow her the ability to maneuver through and within Faulkner's text, specifically in Jason's narrative. Caddy's maneuvering isn't always successful, but it's a hopeful approach to exploring spaces controlled by male voices and perspectives. The fabric of controlled spaces unravels when Miss Quentin escapes Jason's "economic game," rejecting familial and familiar bonds by avoiding

exchanging with her uncle. I'll dive into Miss Quentin's refusal to adhere to her uncle's anticipations later on in the second part of my essay.

When we focus on Caddy's adherence to Jason's rule that she pay in order to see her daughter, one question lingers: what moves do Miss Quentin perform to destabilize Jason's patriarchal-phallogentric, capitalist, and masculinist economy that extend to how Caddy performs within her brother's exploitative economy? I argue that when Caddy and Miss Quentin subvert masculine structures of dominance, their involvement and histories in Faulkner's novel emerge from the subtext, exposing how the Compson brothers' narratives are formulated around the women of Faulkner's novel.

Despite Caddy's exile from the Compson home and her struggle to maintain her identity as woman and mother within the confines of Jason's economy, she never truly represents a newly reworked Southern woman once her narrative is placed at the forefront of an analysis of Faulkner's novel. This brings the reader into a realm where women's perceptions and complexities challenge normative systems of motherhood, economy, and sexuality. The uncomplicated reading of Caddy and Miss Quentin as being in accordance with *or* against male authority is thwarted when considering how both women trouble the notion of either for or against male authority and authority figures. What happens to the readers interpretation when a woman acts for and also against the male-controlled system? What happens when she refuses to tolerate being dominated, commodified, and exploited? Miss Quentin refuses to become an exchangeable object for her uncle to profit from and then hoard the earnings for himself.

The first part of this essay begins by orienting the reader around Caddy's other maternal role. Engaging with the language of Caddy's surrogate motherhood to her brother Benjy highlights how her role of mother is useful when Mrs. Compson is no longer willing to care for another child. Caddy's usefulness is vital to exploring later how Jason monetizes motherhood by making her and Miss Quentin useful for his pursuit of financial accumulation and a hoarding of his profits.

### **Caddy Playing Mother**

Caddy takes pleasure in her surrogate motherhood to her brother Benjy. Minrose C. Gwin borrows from Julia Kristeva in describing Caddy as using a "maternal language" ("Hearing Caddy" 41) that she implements in her relationship with her brother. The orientation of Caddy as mother, not sister, and how Caddy speaks of her position as mother to Benjy, is subtle but complex reconfiguring of the familial bond between Caddy and Benjy. Caddy replaces Mrs. Compson, who is Benjy's blood-mother, and becomes sister-mother to her brother:

"Don't, Candance.' Mother said.

'Let him look it and he'll be quiet.' Caddy said. 'Hold up just a minute while I slip it out. There, Benjy. Look.'  
I look at it and hushed

'You humor him too much.' Mother said. 'You and your father both. You don't relaise [sic] that I am the one who has to pay for it. Damuddy spoiled Jason that way and it took him two years to outgrow it, and I am not strong enough to go through the same thing with Benjamin.

‘You dont need to bother with him.’ Caddy said. ‘I like to take care of him. Dont I. Benjy’” (*SF* 63).

Mrs. Compson’s maternal resources were all used up “mending” Jason after the death of Damuddy, the grandmother. Benjamin becomes Benjy; Caddy the child becomes Caddy the mother. Thus, as Gwin points out, “the space created between Benjy and Caddy, then defies the hierarchies of time and structure; it’s language is the mother tongue” (“Hearing Caddy” 42). Benjy and Caddy’s relationship as brother and sister dissolves into sound and fury, where the sister-brother dynamic is converted into a mother-son configuration. Caddy knows more about how to care for Benjy than Mrs. Compson does:

“‘If you’ll hold him, he’ll stop.’ Caddy said. ‘Hush.’ she said. ‘You can go right back. Here. Here’s your cushion. See.’

‘Dont, Candance.’ Mother said.

‘Let him look at it and he’ll be quiet. Caddy said. “Hold up just a minute while I slip it out. There, Benjy. Look’” (*SF* 63).

Caddy knows that the cushion is the object that makes Benjy quiet and gives him pleasure. Mrs. Compson opposes Caddy’s motherly instincts to alleviate Benjy’ stress and show care toward him. Caddy’s compassionate attitude toward Benjy calls into question Mrs. Compson’s title as mother to Benjy when an emotional connection to her son is transferred to Caddy and her role as surrogate mother.

Caddy's performance as mother becomes problematized by the sexualization of her memory and her body in each brothers' imagining and engagement with her. Benjy's bellowing is more than an incoherent sound to Caddy. Benjy vocalizes his discontent for Caddy's relationship with Herbert Head, her sexual experience, and her eventual exile from the Compson family. Benjy's bellowing is a type of rhythmic, harsh masculine language intended to obtain a Caddy, or at least a memory of Caddy, once virgin and pure.

Mrs. Compson's dislike of Caddy's treatment of Benjy illuminates the shifting roles of maternity played out between the two women. Mrs. Compson rejects Caddy's attitudes toward Benjy. All Mrs. Compson's maternal faculties were used on Jason, who was spoiled by his grandmother and needed to "outgrow" his attachment to Damuddy. Mrs. Compson can't have another Jason who asks for the spoils and intimacy of a parental figure. Benjy has no access to Mrs. Compson's maternal faculties because they're depleted. John T. Matthews claims that Mrs. Compson's "coldness and inaccessibility [are] the root of the brothers' diseased obsession with their sister" ("Discovery of Loss" 68). As Mrs. Compson *turns away* from Benjy, so then does he *turn toward* his sister Caddy. Caddy replaces Mrs. Compson and accepts, as Matthews argues, "the mantle of surrogate maternity" (68). Mrs. Compson represents a loss for Benjy. He has been denied a blood-mother on the basis that his older brother Jason has used up all she could give to her children. Caddy is useful, in that her surrogate motherhood supplies Benjy with what Mrs. Compson cannot give. However, tension arises when Benjy bellows for Caddy, as Mrs. Compson considers what is best for her son: "Bring him

here.” Mother said. ‘He’s too big for you to carry’” (*SF* 63). Caddy nonetheless alleviates Mrs. Compson’s anxieties about “going through the same thing with Benjamin,” as she tells her mother ““You don’t need to bother with him...I like to take care of him. Don’t I. Benjy’” (*SF* 63). Unlike Mrs. Compson, Caddy finds pleasure in her role as “surrogate” mother to her brother. Mrs. Compson’s identity as mother is fragile and replaceable. As Matthews makes clear about Caddy becoming “surrogate” mother, she “replaces her mother (who fails to embody maternal fullness) and becomes the dangerous supplement, the necessary addition to what should have been self-sufficient” (“Discovery of Loss” 68-9). Because of this absence, Caddy fills in Mrs. Compson’s limitations, her “coldness and inaccessibility.” Matthews characterizes this move as a “dangerous supplement,” more evidence of the “diseased obsession” the brothers have with Caddy.

As Caddy becomes a maternal figure, motherhood and desire become intertwined. Caddy’s maternal nature complicates reader assumption about their relationship as siblings. As Matthews observes, “Benjy, like his brothers, sought his mother but found his sister” (“Discovery of Loss” 69). When searching for patience and care, Mrs. Compson’s “inaccessibility” forces Benjy to turn away, looking toward his to fill the lack of maternal care showed toward him.

Caddy’s semblance of maternity to Benjy is integral to how her maternal identity is made useful for others. This is apparent when Jason exploits her identity as a mother-outsider to Miss Quentin. While she takes pleasure in being Benjy’s “surrogate” mother, Caddy is not Benjy’s real mother. Mrs. Compson eludes being caretaker to her son, and Caddy’s willingness to care for Benjy in a way *more than* sister and more like *mother*



catalogues the various ways motherhood functions in *The Sound and the Fury*. However, proximity and absence play an integral role in defining Caddy's maternal relation to Miss Quentin. From a complete erasure of Caddy's name and memory on Compson grounds, to glimmers of Caddy being granted the chance to "see" her daughter, presence and absence become markers for being able to visualize Caddy and Miss Quentin's relationship as mother and daughter beyond the spatial and economic limits that separate them from each other.

### **Caddy's Second Motherhood: A Daughter's Name No Longer Spoken**

Miss Quentin is an extension of the "fallen" woman that's believed to run in the Compson family. For Jason, Miss Quentin running around back alleys with men in red ties is a fabric of her being if she's the daughter of Caddy Compson: "If it's in her blood, you can't do anything with her" (*SF* 232). The concept of engrained attitudes in women for Jason has two dimensions. First, it's in Miss Quentin's "blood" as a woman to act the way she does. Second, Miss Quentin was destined to act a particular way because Caddy's "blood" is in her. Mrs. Compson, conversely, places importance on dissociating Miss Quentin from Caddy. She boldly says: "'You can say nonsense,' Mother says. 'But she [Miss Quentin] must never know. She must never learn that name [Caddy]. Dilsey, I forbid you ever to speak that name in her hearing. If she could grow up never to know that she had a mother, I would thank God'" (*SF* 199). Mrs. Compson seeks to erase Caddy's memory from Compson language. Mrs. Compson believes it justifiable that Miss Quentin doesn't have a mother because the alternative is Caddy and she couldn't conceive of that reality. To annihilate the maternal figure in Miss Quentin's life is to

expunge the possibility of her growing up with knowing Caddy was her biological mother. The game is to remove the tainted figure of Caddy from the Compson home and from the members who inhabit the grounds. Miss Quentin's mother is obliterated from her memory, and she grows up not as a Miss Quentin Compson, but as Mrs. Compson intended, as a Miss Quentin Bascomb. Ultimately, nothing good is believed to come from being daughter to Caddy Compson.

However, can the reader interpret Caddy's exile in a favorable lens where her removal means she is still able to care for her daughter financially and emotionally, just that she has to do this from a distance? As Mimi R. Gladstein points out, "Caddy must exile herself to insure Quentin's future" ("Mothers and Daughters" 104). Gladstein argues that Caddy's "exile" from the Compson family isn't enforced by Mrs. Compson and Jason, rather is a self-governed move on Caddy's part to ensure that her daughter gets the "best" life imaginable even if she isn't present. Gladstein points out in Faulkner's novels, "it is the mothers and the sisters and the aunts who sacrifice or are sacrificed for the needs of others" (110). One could argue that Caddy is "sacrificed" for the benefit of Miss Quentin. I will later analyze Caddy's ability to send more checks if it means Miss Quentin is to have a "cared" for life, even if it means she must be distanced from her daughter.

As with Benjy, Caddy's memory and materiality linger, particularly her "maternal language" stated by Gwin earlier, even as she has moved *out* and *beyond* the Compson grounds. Caddy continuously negotiates her position as mother throughout Jason's narrative. As Caddy becomes a maternal figure to Benjy in the first section, she is exiled

from those same duties for her own daughter in section three of *The Sound and the Fury*. Jason's economy, a system that gains revenue through manipulating his sister to pay in order to see her daughter, forces Caddy to navigate this system if she wants to see her daughter. Caddy becomes the means through which her brother Jason can obtain financial excess. Jason's coercion of money from his sister collapses entirely as his niece escapes with all the hoarded money, revealing how fallible his system becomes when his source of revenue not only escapes, but takes all the hoarded money. How then will Jason be able exploits Caddy's desire to see and provide for her daughter if there is no daughter around to send checks for? Is Jason even assuming that Caddy will pick up on the fact that Miss Quentin has left the Compson home? Jason and his economy commodify, manipulate, and produce the façade of respectability that showcase the exclusive benefits such a system has for him.

### **The Motive of Money: Manhood, Motherhood, and the Mobile Woman**

Caddy and Miss Quentin function as economic tools and commodified objects in Jason's economy. Jason is driven by his desire acquire capital in the name of status and authority over women's agency. Jason's economy is motivated by a need to maintain a stable and respectable Compson home and identity. Matthews reasons that it is Jason who internalizes his masculine worth: "he believes himself expected from the demented attachments of his brothers and though he prides himself in upholding the responsibility, respectability, and routine of a 'civilized life,' Jason has not solved the Compson crisis" ("Discovery of Loss" 92). Natural order suggests that Jason pick up the mantle of patriarchal figure for the Compson family once Mr. Compson died. Yet, as Matthews

argues, Jason has not “solved” pressures of “responsibility, respectability, and routine,” which fester in the lives of the Compson family. Jason’s exploitation of his sister’s finances has not solved the Compson “crisis,” but he has merely “silenced it” (“Discovery of Loss” 92).

The actions and tendencies of the Compson family members are more overtly defined in the sections prior to Jason’s. The language of Caddy’s “fallen” purity heard through Benjy’s bellowing and brother Quentin’s obsession with Caddy’s virginity is less trenchant than in Jason’s section. Benjy and Quentin’s narrative sections create a language barrier between themselves and the audience, as it’s impossible to completely link each of their thoughts and cohesively understand their translations of memory and history. By contrast, Jason’s language is decipherable. That doesn’t mean his translation of Caddy’s memory, of Miss Quentin as economic product, and both as commodities, is palatable to digest as reader.

Unlike Caddy, brother Quentin, and Mr. Compson, Jason had never been “privileged” with time the way the rest of his family members have been. His brother Quentin was able to go to college, his father was able to drink himself into the grave, and his sister was able to seek the possibility of marriage with Herbert Head. In this way Miss Quentin embodies all the things she should be appreciative for because of how her uncle has to “work” to provide for her. Miss Quentin represents a deviation from Jason’s linear path, one where he has worked, not gone to school or “drank himself into the ground” (*SF* 181). She becomes aligned with Caddy, in that like her mother, she deviates from the path of respectable womanhood.

Jason's perception of Miss Quentin is that she is an extension of her mother Caddy, and that he needs to "follow her around and see what she does" (*SF* 181). Jason's willingness to quit the store job to follow Miss Quentin around town enables him to judge her "deviant" behavior. Jason believes he upholds "proper standards" of respectability that the rest of the family doesn't. He assumes this duty on the basis that he hasn't killed himself; drank himself to death; or been exiled. If respectability is to be restored to the Compson family, the responsibility of such a task will go through the newly established patriarch. One would expect Mrs. Compson to take up the mantle of power once Mr. Compson has died. However, her "inaccessibility" toward her children and the family has cost her power over Miss Quentin's behavior, as Jason acknowledges: "You haven't had much luck with your system. You want me to do anything about it, or not? Say one way or the other, I've got to get back on to work" (*SF* 181). In the same way Caddy replaced Mrs. Compson as mother to Benjy, Jason, too, becomes a surrogate paternal figure for the Compson family. He oversees respectability and discipline, previously void in Mrs. Compson's method of mothering. He believes he can mend the "Compson crisis." Jason's authorial system, with economy and excess at its root, projects a façade of fixing problems among the "cursed" Compson home and its inhabitants. Instead, his system produces tensions and the necessity to escape the confines of his authoritarian economy. If Jason believes Mrs. Compson's system to be unlucky, why then does Miss Quentin inevitably escape with all the money he has sealed off? Jason's authority produces an impression of rigidity, even as his little niece is able to break into his room and take his money and vanish through his window down the pear tree, never to be caught. Jason

never “reaches” Miss Quentin once she escapes, as if he was blinded by his own constructed mirror of power, believing that manipulating his sister and niece could be sustained forever.

As Jason’s masculine language and perspective takes center stage in section three, Caddy is “thrust... into Jason’s economy, in which she herself as woman is a commodity” (“Hearing Caddy” 57). Jason’s economy is forceful, pressuring Caddy to abide by his expectations or end up not seeing her daughter. As Caddy hands Jason the money to see Miss Quentin, she asks ““You’ll do it Jason?” she says. ‘I wouldn’t ask you, if there were any other way.’” (*SF* 204). For Caddy, there is no other way. Fast “like a fire engine,” (*SF* 205) Jason quickly vanishes with Caddy’s daughter after allowing her to see her daughter for only a second. Caddy’s trust in her brother was doomed. Gwin positions Caddy in Jason’s section as “both a sign (commodity) and a speaker of signs (an exchanger),” who is unable to “negotiate in Jason’s phallogocentric economy” (“Hearing Caddy” 57). Male-centered authority in Faulkner’s novel turns women into exchangeable objects silent to the point of not even being able to question their worth. Jason controls how the business between his sister and himself will function, even as she is the one producing the goods, the money. Under her brother’s exploitation of her financial status, she too becomes the commodity by which he’s able to profit. All monetary use is determined by Jason, never by Caddy. If she does not produce the sum of money her brother asks for, while also keeping a distance from her daughter and her childhood home, then he’s willing to bar Caddy from visiting her daughter. Caddy is

forced to abide by her brother's misogynistic rules or pay the consequence of living without the sight of her daughter.

Caddy is nonetheless eager to see her daughter if her brother will "fix it so I can see her a minute. I'll give you fifty dollars." (*SF* 203). Faulkner sets up Caddy and Jason's interaction with one another as an illusory device to convince the reader that Caddy is *actually* negotiating with her brother. This illusion of compromise convinces the reader that Jason will view Caddy as a person, not a commodity or exchanger of goods he can exploit. This is not the case. Jason pushes Caddy's price of fifty dollars. Fifty isn't enough if Herbert Head is still paying for her expenses Jason assumes. She is willing to pay a hundred dollars: "So I see her a minute. I won't beg or do anything. I'll go right away" (*SF* 204). Jason takes Caddy's one-minute promise to heart. Her compliance to pay more fails to give her more time with her daughter than what fifty dollars would've gotten her. Gwin reads Caddy's failure to obtain more time with her daughter as her inability to "negotiate in Jason's phallogocentric economy. She cannot get what she wants, nor can she become the valuable commodity, a virgin, that she once was" ("Hearing Caddy" 57). Caddy's "stock value" in Jason's economy is in a state of constant recession. Because of her "divorce" from her husband and family, Caddy is situated as an impure, unmarried, and unvirgin woman. Caddy's unfulfilling identity disrupts her exchangeable value for Jason. She has a value, it's just low, and can only be measured in cash, not in intrinsic value. Caddy's trust is forced to reside in her brother's schemes which is, to see her as "doubly trapped in male systems. [Caddy's] voice speaks panic and sorrow. To listen is painful and terrible, for what we are hearing is the female voice

of patriarchal culture speaking loss” (“Hearing Caddy” 57). Jason “giving” his sister the chance to see her daughter represents the bare minimum “goods” he is required to give his sister for upholding her end of their promise. There being a “requirement” or an expectation that Caddy’s desire to see her daughter is fulfilled assumes that phallogentric capitalist culture acknowledges women’s desires as worth being properly compensated.

Experiencing loss and chasing after desire represent Caddy’s act of maneuvering through Jason’s economy. Chasing after her daughter, Caddy symbolically runs toward recovering the motherhood and daughter that has been withheld from her. Never reaching her desired objective of seeing her daughter, Caddy’s attempt to seek what has been taken from her rearticulates how the one who is commodified by patriarchy can also challenge and maneuver within a phallogentric-patriarchal world. However, the possibility of engaging counter to Jason’s phallogentric-patriarchal economy does not mean Caddy exists in complete opposition to patriarchal society. Caddy’s voice, even as it’s bound to the narratives of her three brothers, speaks of how to exist in harmony with patriarchy. Gwin characterizes Caddy’s suffering and loss as “the female voice of patriarchal culture” (“Hearing Caddy” 57). Paying her brother’s demands doesn’t mean Caddy has defied the rigid structures of family and motherhood that have caused her to be exiled from the Compson home. Caddy trusts her brother if it means restoring her maternal identity. She has been forced out of familiar and familial relationships and roles because of her “fallen” status, so her attempt to negotiate with her brother Jason suggests the possibility that she’ll be let back into the environment that demonized her. Masculine discourse and imagination dominate Faulkner’s novel. Caddy speaks through the filtered



language of male discourse on the tragedy of being transformed into a commodified object and the consequences such patriarchal-phallogentric systems have on the lives of women. Gwin's essay "(Re) Reading Faulkner as Father and Daughter of His Own Text" iterates how Caddy speaks of difference filtered through Jason's male-controlled narrative section: "the Caddy of Jason's section continues to speak of difference. Filtered through the alembic of Jason's obsessive ('Once a bitch always a bitch') insistence upon male authority, her voice speaks the tragic results of the cultural objectification of the female subject and the disastrous effects of a system of barter that makes women commodities" (163). Ultimately, Caddy will never achieve in getting what she wants, in that negotiating with Jason will always end up in her grossly being undercompensated. Caddy struggles to speak of her desires and that was the reader hears of Caddy is "painful and terrible, for what we hear are hearing is the daughter of a patriarchal culture speaking loss, speaking what it means to be denied subjectivity and access to one's own desire" ("(Re) Reading" 163). The painful reality is that patriarchal-phallogentric culture is not attuned to hear the struggles and desires of women, but to continuously distort their utterances as garbled language. Regardless of Caddy's access to a reinstated position in the Compson home or from a distance, she is denied the right to be heard.

Caddy's removal from the Compson home represents both a spatial and personal erasing of her identities as mother and woman. Caddy is constantly "present" in masculine discourse and memory stockpiling, while the absence of her own first-person narrative presents Faulkner's novel as invested in male language and male stories. Te Ma's essay "'Who Was the Women?': Feminine Space and the Shaping of Identity in

*The Sound and the Fury*” addresses the issue of Faulkner’s novel lacking a feminine perspective: “Caddy has no narrative voice in the novel; she is a lacuna, and her story is told through the discourses of the masculine members of her family” (“Feminine Space” 45). Caddy’s speech, her identity, are faint and *almost* inaudible, but in order “to hear Caddy within the margins of... [the] text will require listening to a language which transgresses the bounds of consciousness, a language which must be listened to... beyond sound and syntax, between the lines” (“Hearing Caddy” 47). Recovering Caddy’s feminine speech, which Ma sees as “told through the discourse of the masculine members of the family” (“Feminine Space” 45) and Gwin argues is located “between the lines” (“Hearing Caddy” 47), recognizes Caddy’s ability to negotiate masculine economy, language, and space. Readers witness Caddy’s attempt to negotiate within Jason’s capitalist and patriarchal economy, then watch her fail in doing so. As Jason intimidates Caddy, she proceeds toward the daughter kept from her. In Caddy’s willingness to pay her brother, she’s granted very little time to actually see Miss Quentin. Caddy chases after Jason, attempting to recover her daughter and lost maternity. Because of Caddy’s divorce from Herbert Head, her name and existence are burned and banished, as is symbolized in Mrs. Compson’s burning of the checks Caddy sends to Miss Quentin. Caddy’s lack of access to her daughter is what “thwarts her attempted reconstruction of the maternal space she once occupied, while the patriarchal order negates the possibility of retrieving her lost familial space” (Ma 46). As Jason “took the raincoat off of [Miss Quentin] and held her to the window and Caddy saw her” (*SF* 205), Caddy reacts to the presence of her daughter by “sort of jump[ing]forward” (*SF* 205). Caddy emerges as

mother, or rather, the sign of maternity is revealed temporarily as she sees her daughter. Caddy's maternity and the desire to see her daughter are not reborn, but the presence of mother once again in the same space with her daughter reflects Caddy's temporary access to the spaces and identities from which she has been banned.

Caddy negotiates with Jason, attempting to pay his demands in order to see her daughter. She ends up betrayed and left unsatisfied. Jason's economy and his demobilizing logics reveal that "Caddy tries but fails to contest the patriarchal order" (Ma 46), while expecting her to accept its mandates. Caddy's negotiation of Jason's patriarchal economy unearths her "attachment to her family (mainly Benjy and her daughter) and that the attendant ideology is too strong for her to escape from the constraints of patriarchal space" (Ma 46). I'll argue later that Miss Quentin more completely escapes Compson standards, masculine language, and patriarchal society. Unlike her daughter, Caddy's regard for her identities as mother, sister, and daughter projects her desire to be reinstated in the Compson mythology and lexicon, even as she has been literally divorced from it. Caddy's quest to (re)retrieve these familial identities unearths how tectonic spaces and identities can be when oppressive systems like Jason's economy deny access to women who carefully maneuver and abide by the rules. Jason's game of consuming capital does not prioritize, or even account, for Caddy's success in such a system. Jason's economy is built for him and him only.

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I shift now to an analysis of the patriarchal society and economy that Jason's narrative intends to stabilize. This means addressing the normative principles and

practices of Jason Compson and how those norms adversely affect women like Caddy and Miss Quentin. Pressures of modern capitalism infringe on Jason's idealized Southern manhood, stretching him to social and individual limits in order for him to gain money and then hoard it. His constant accumulation of money means he is able to "maintain" a façade of power over the Compson family. This power, as Caroline S. Miles puts it: "[is] a means to assert his manhood and white mastery" ("Money and Masculinity," 154). Jason rigidly tries to adhere to codes of sexuality and gender under a capitalist gaze. He works for Earl at the hardware shop and continuously replays what could've been if Herbert Head had given him the bank position he was promised. Jason's ego and violent manhood are fragile fixtures, exposing the limits of his ability to maintain unyielding identity markers like "patriarch of the family" and his fitness to dictate who is to discipline Miss Quentin. Jason is a deceitful bigot with a lack of a plan, whose logic system thrives on being able to obtain and steal from women, with no deeper ulterior motive. Masculine Southern identities like Jason Compson's, and its fragility, were products of post-Civil War America that experienced shifts in economic priorities. The economic shifts in America greatly impacted masculine consciousness and behaviors. Hoarding was the game, at any costs, whether through scheming, exploitation, or commodification. Those men who failed to adapt to capitalist economic shifts would lose the status and position that defined Southern masculinity during and before the end of the Civil War. There are then shifts in America's capitalist economy which Miles sees occurring in Faulkner's novel: "the normative version of American masculinity, and men from classes and regions with alternative models of masculinity found themselves

compelled to adapt” (“Money and Masculinity” 144). Jason positions himself in the world of stock trading and white-elite society in that he “tries hard to understand the role of money in the New South and to construct an identity that can accommodate a dislocated sense of manhood and volatile market place” (“Money and Masculinity” 151). Jason’s economy adapts, profiting through his niece’s monetized exchange rate and her mother Caddy’s desire to see and provide for her.

In Jason’s economy, Miles outlines how Caddy has “lost” her value as a play on Jason’s coercive tactics: “just as Herbert Head gets tricked into an exchange with damaged goods— a pregnant Caddy— Jason extorts money from his niece by coercing her into signing checks over to him” (“Money and Masculinity” 153). Miles’s characterization of Caddy as “damaged goods” fails look past Caddy’s identity as woman made valuable only when she is “pure” and “non-impregnated.” Caddy can be valuable in Jason’s economy only if she is free of prior sexual relations and there being no possibility of being pregnant. This kind of commodification and devaluing of women’s behaviors exposes limits to *The Sound and the Fury* scholarship; most Faulkner scholarship fails to imagine women as active, present agents. Women like Caddy and Miss Quentin are made by Faulkner’s masculine tongue as the products of a gendered and sexualized based linguistic system. Readers come to interpret these women as *becoming* objects where much of the scholarship re-enacts Jason’s linguistic violence. The critic must encounter Faulkner’s text(s) with the task of not employing a similar masculine value system that commodifies and invalidates the experiences, desires, and speech of women.

Jason's coercion and trickery are emblematic of his pursuit of a durable phallogentric-patriarchal economy set to govern women's bodies and their value in his economy. Miles refers to Jason as embodying the "hostility and corruption" ("Money and Masculinity" 156) of the Southern man in the early twentieth century. Miles focuses on Jason's economy and his prioritization of Miss Quentin as his main source of profit. Jason and his economy function so that "white women, like blacks, exist as objects that white men need to control" ("Money and Masculinity" 156). Void of compassion, Jason's economy, attitude, and behavior toward women are all unattuned to sympathy for women's experiences. Miles sees Jason manipulating Caddy in that he "tricks Caddy by taking her money and then driving past her with his niece in the car" ("Money and Masculinity" 156). Jason isn't remorseful, in that after he "took the raincoat off of [Miss Quentin]" to let Caddy see her for a second, he "counted the money again that night and put it away, and didn't feel so bad" (*SF* 205). Because of how his economy is designed and how it intends to "pay" women their dues, he's fulfilled his end of the deal. In Jason's financial game, "Caddy has to take the loss because Jason has not technically violated their arrangement, even though he knows that Caddy assumed she would get to speak to her daughter" ("Money and Masculinity" 155-6). Jason's economy does not account for the presence of women's speech, of yearning to vocalize their desires and their losses. He has upheld his end of the contract, even if Caddy has taken a financial and emotional loss by having to pay to see her daughter for only a passing moment.

Jason's capitalist logics grant him the ability to claim himself as victor and women like Caddy as losers. He cheats in his ability to "hide theft and exploitation" as

way for him to “take advantage of [Caddy’s] desire to see her daughter” (“Money and Masculinity” 156). Jason exploits Caddy’s motherhood and her wish to see Miss Quentin as ways to steal more and more money from her. Caddy is desperate to have an impact on Miss Quentin’s life and well-being, even if that means trusting Jason: ““Listen, Jason” she says. “Don’t lie to me now. About her. I wont ask to see anything. If that isn’t enough I’ll send more each month. Just promise that she’ll— that she— you can do that. Things for her. Be kind to her. Little things that I can’t, they wont let... But you wont”” (*SF* 209). Caddy is willing to rely on the hope that her brother will look after Miss Quentin, give her things “they wont let” her give to her daughter. Caddy is open to possibility; if what Jason needs is more money, then Caddy can make that happen. The truth is that Jason deceives Caddy and hoards the money for himself. Jason’s trickery is that even if he doesn’t follow through on his promises, he isn’t losing anything to the extent that Caddy is if she doesn’t abide by his rules. When Jason “took the raincoat off [Miss Quentin] and held her to the window and Caddy saw her and sort of jumped forward” (*SF* 205), he’s technically upheld his promise and isn’t willing to push the limits of letting Caddy speak to her. Jason’s technical fulfillment justifies his claim that “Now get on that train like you promised” (*SF* 205). Jason has presented himself as a skillful and unscrupulous manipulator.

Considering Caddy’s monetized motherhood as more than a means of profit in Jason’s economy, maternity becomes an *opening* into masculine discourse and language. Through Caddy’s (in)ability to be granted access to her daughter, the reader witnesses scenes of repressed emotional fulfillment experienced by women existing and navigating

within the confines of exploitative masculine economies. In a way, Caddy is successful in being able to send checks “more each month” if it means her financial status will benefit the wellbeing of her daughter. However, the hopefulness of being able to provide for her daughter is an illusion, as Jason is stockpiling the sent checks his own benefit. In highlighting the real obstacle that is overcoming Jason’s severe authority, Caddy’s financial agency trades one layer of skin for another that rationalizes the idea that having her daughter back as “insane. I can’t take her” (*SF* 209). Yet Caddy doesn’t use her financial stability to renounce traditional standards of purity, womanhood, and maternity that are at play in the novel. Jason never attempts to compensate his sister’s emotional desires. After just a moment of seeing her daughter, and “Hit ‘em Mink!” (205), Jason vanishes with Miss Quentin, and no reparations for his coercion of Caddy occur. Jason’s ability to perform under modern normative capitalism, which serves to uphold the Southern respectability and manhood explored in Miles essay, reveals Jason’s section as a *performance* of the patriarchal figure, financial manipulator, and finesser of women and maternity. Reading Jason as “father” and Miss Quentin as “daughter” displays a compulsory need of phallogentric-patriarchal discourse to construct relationships based on binary constructions, even when relationships like Jason and Miss Quentin don’t exist as *like father and daughter*. The father and daughter relationship is too forgiving of Jason’s subjugation and commodification of his niece. This is also true of his manipulation of Caddy. Jason’s economy of accumulation and hoarding is oriented around the profit he can gain from exploiting Miss Quentin. Matthews reveals that the most “revelatory commodity in Jason’s complex economy, however, is neither his salary



nor his stocks, but his niece” (“Discovery of Loss” 98). Matthews reads Miss Quentin as an object *represented* in Jason’s economy. I argue that Jason’s economy is adapting to shifts in masculinity and profit in the U.S. and the South post-Civil war. Jason’s phallogentric, capitalist, and masculinist logic(s) create a reality where women lose their agency, reduced to objects who can be bought and sold. Matthews’s argument is helpful in how Jason’s economy uses Miss Quentin as a way for Caddy to send more checks. Miss Quentin then represents the “risk” Jason is taking in “allowing” Caddy to see her. Jason’s valuing of Miss Quentin reinforces the shame he believes Caddy should feel toward all that he could lose by being caught letting her be seen with him and her daughter. Jason posits that if Caddy isn’t to follow his commands, she too is jeopardizing the chance to ever see her daughter again. Instead, Jason’s economy is designed by rules that maintain the façade that neither party risks anything if they follow what’s expected.

Miss Quentin is involved in the language of economy *produced* in Jason’s section. She puts pressure on Jason’s language of control and his status as financial provider, not accepting her uncle’s logic about where the money he gives her is coming from. Miss Quentin refutes his claims: “‘Mother buys my books,’ she says. ‘There’s not a cent of your money on me. I’d starve first’” (*SF* 187). Miss Quentin denies that Jason provides for her; if he did, she’d revolt against such a realization. Miss Quentin directly associates “mother” with the \$11.65 paid for her textbooks, eliminating Jason’s role as “surrogate father” to her. However, Jason evades Miss Quentin’s judgments of where the money is coming from, instead mapping sexual promiscuity onto his niece’s body as a way of countering her claims: “‘Yes?’ I says. ‘You tell your grandmother that and see

what she says. You don't look all the way naked,' I says, 'even if the stuff on your face does hide more of you than anything else you've got on'" (*SF* 187). Instead of insisting that Miss Quentin's textbooks are paid by him, Jason becomes hostile and objectifies his young niece. In the same way I discussed earlier about "blood" and Jason's view of Miss Quentin's actions as an extension of Caddy's behavior. Miss Quentin is sexualized by Jason's focus on her makeup as covering more of her body than her clothes do: "even if that stuff on your face does hide more of you than anything else you've got on" (*SF* 187). Like Caddy, Miss Quentin is associated with everything that makes her "improper." If only Caddy hadn't gotten and pregnant and if only Miss Quentin had on more clothes to cover her body. Mimi R. Gladstein proposes that Caddy and Miss Quentin exist as one body/soul, who "both escape the Compson domain" ("Mothers and Daughters" 104). Specifically, they are escaping Jason's domain. Gladstein's scholarship is important considering in how much Jason's coercion affects Miss Quentin, and how much his projection of Miss Quentin's value affects Caddy. As will be outlined by Miss Quentin's refusal to abide by Jason's cultural standards of family and her rejection of her brother's authorial status, Caddy engages in Jason's economy much differently. Unlike Caddy, Miss Quentin is essentially a hostage and nothing like what's at stake for her mother is at stake for her. Caddy has much more freedom and means to exchange with her brother while Miss Quentin attempts to flee her uncle's confinement of her. Caddy's stakes are that she's been intimidated into sending checks for a daughter from whom she is separated. Caddy imagines: "If I send checks for her to you, other ones beside those, you'll give them to her? You wont tell? You'll see that she has things like other girls?"

(SF 210). Caddy is conscious of her own inability to mother Miss Quentin, but is aware that if her daughter is to grow, she must be provided for. Caddy's inclination to settle with Jason means her daughter's future can be well accounted for financially. On a personal level, Caddy's adherence to Jason's demands reiterates her own subjugated maternity and her identity as a "fallen" and impure woman.

Miss Quentin as *product* produced by her suppressed mother is attuned to masculine language's compulsory need to marginalize and commodify women. At Miss Quentin's birth, the maternal figure is symbolically erased as Mrs. Compson wishes Miss Quentin to grow up without knowing Caddy was ever her mother. Her blood proximity to Caddy causes crisis for the family. Caddy's name symbolizes a loss, a fall from the Compson standard and should not be traced or remembered in her daughter. Erasing Caddy's presence means Miss Quentin "loses her connection with the maternal space from the very start of her life and falls under the control of Mrs. Compson, who neglects maternal duties and forbids people from mentioning Caddy's name" ("Feminine Space" 49). Miss Quentin's "links" to her familial bonds are quickly abandoned, culminating in her complete escape from Jason and his economy. Unlike her mother, Miss Quentin doesn't attempt to align herself with familial markers. She has much less to lose. She has already lost her mother and has never had a father. The familiar and familial links that Caddy and Jason have to one another make it possible for them to "negotiate" prices. However, Miss Quentin deviates from the familial, violating Jason's status and control of the family. Gwendolyn Chabrier's *Faulkner's Families: A Southern Saga* characterizes Jason Compson as attempting to "preserve himself and his family from violation from the

outsider, as well as a profound need to reassure himself by safeguarding the status quo” (76). Reiterating the necessity for preservation, Jason cannot risk having his status threatened. His commodification of women’s engagement in “safeguarding of [his] status quo” is to reduce the chances of his status falling out so long as women are relegated to a language and position of monetization. However, Miss Quentin rejecting Jason’s designation of her as commodity threatens his whole system of status-stockpiling. Rather than expecting Mrs. Compson’s system of discipline to work, Jason’s attempts to control his niece are out of necessity to preserve his family from scandal. Jason intends to make sure his status in town is protected and maintained. From her birth to the present, Miss Quentin has symbolized the violation of respectability, status, and manhood that compromises systems of suppression like Jason’s, which are intended to reduce women to exchangeable goods.

As Caddy has already been referenced as detriment to the Compson family, Miss Quentin’s relation to her threaten the family’s respectability. Mrs. Compson claims “If she could grow up never to know that she had a mother, I would thank god” (*SF* 199). Removing the maternal figure and space in Miss Quentin’s life, Mrs. Compson argues, will have a more positive influence on her life than having *a mother like* Caddy around. Removing Caddy from Miss Quentin’s life attempts to prevent the same immoral sexual behavior and defiance from becoming facets of her life. Caddy is never mentioned as “respectable” and “proper.” Instead, shifts in familial power occur in order to control Miss Quentin’s body and behavior. Jason cannot tolerate Miss Quentin devaluing his status as worker and patriarch to the Compson family, as brother Quentin and Caddy

have done to the family name. He asserts, “I’ve got a position in this town, and I’m not going to have any member of my family going on like a n\*\*\*\*r wench” (*SF* 189). Jason’s status must be kept in pristine condition, and for him, women complicate masculine attitudes toward status and sustainability. Jason’s battering language positions women and their actions as having either a positive or negative impact on his reputation and status. As Caddy negotiates by offering prices with her brother, Miss Quentin opposes a middle ground, never hearing or consenting to the rules of her uncle. Miles positions Caddy and Miss Quentin in Jason’s section as providing him “either cash value [Caddy] or negative value [Miss Quentin]” (“Money and Masculinity” 156). Caddy asks her brother to *actually* take care of her daughter and Jason ends up “get[ing] a return with interest by keeping the money she sends for her daughter” (“Money and Masculinity” 156). Unlike her mother, who ends up running after her brother to see her daughter, Miss Quentin does not attempt to play or negotiate with Jason. Instead she breaks into his room, steals his money, deflates his tires, and vanishes from the home. In seeing Caddy and Miss Quentin as “players,” Miles understands Jason’s economy as a “game of economic exchange.” (“Money and Masculinity” 156). Miles reads Miss Quentin as obliterating and disobeying Jason’s game, never compromising or negotiating. However, with Caddy, Miles reads her play in Jason’s game as giving her agency, but she doesn’t entirely deviate from the game: “while to some degree, money provides Caddy with some agency to resist Jason’s dominance, by playing his game, she risks not getting the return she hopes for and allows Jason to take advantage of her desire to see her daughter” (“Money and Masculinity” 156). How then are Caddy’s identities as once mother, sister,

and daughter juxtaposed to Miss Quentin as *never linked* to the Compson family? Are Caddy and Miss Quentin's engagement with familiar and familial relationships two contrasting ways of maneuvering in repressive environments like Jason's economy? Do Caddy's attachments to her familiar and familial identities and spaces make it difficult for her to resist patriarchal culture and her brother's economy? Does Caddy enduring the burden of negotiating with phallogentric capitalist logic and culture make it "easier" for her daughter to defy these systems after Caddy is banned from the home?

Miss Quentin's escapes her uncle's economy by stealing his ill-gotten money, causing a catastrophic blow to Jason's manhood. Under phallogentric-patriarchal capitalist logic Jason "extorting money from his niece by coercing her into signing checks over to him" ("Money and Masculinity" 156) is a logical way for a man to operate in male privileged culture. Man's duty is to thieve and finesse women, not to be bested by women. Jason being bested by his niece was emasculating and a direct blow to his status as man and patriarch. However, Jason fears the loss of money as it unveils his deep resentment toward women having access to it: "If he could just believe it was the man who robbed him. But to have been robbed of that which was to have compensated him for the lost job, which he had acquired through so much effort and risk, by the very symbol of the lost job itself, and worst of all, by a bitch of a girl" (*SF* 307). To Jason, Miss Quentin stands as compensation, a hostage for the bank job her mother "lost" him. Being able to manipulate his sister through her daughter "satisfies" his "right" to the promised job. When Miss Quentin breaks into his room, which has a new lock even Mrs.

Compson doesn't have the key, she erodes the possibility that Jason's "effort and risk" is amendable or repayable.

Miss Quentin's escape explodes her uncle's logics and cultural conceptions of men as all-powerful controllers and concealers. Breaking into his room through the window, she goes unbound and unnoticed. Down the pear tree she goes. Jason argues that the money doesn't have a quantifiable value, but its value is more symbolic: "After all, like I say money has no value; it's just the way you spend it. It don't belong to anybody, so why try to hoard it. It just belongs to the man that can get it and keep it" (*SF* 194). Jason is a hoarder and his whole game is to obtain as much money from his sister as he can and hide it away in a safe in his room. Jason's language of money as belonging to no one...belonging to everyone...belonging to the person who can get it...being about spending it...being about keeping and hoarding it, is riddled with contradictions. His valuing and possession of money and its solubility is concurrent with how Caddy and Miss Quentin interact in his system of pricing, keeping, and spending money.

As Caddy moves closer toward desiring inclusion once again in patriarchal culture, it's difficult for her to be read as defying a system and set of logics that do not see her as a person. Caddy's craving to once again be aligned with patriarchal spaces and identities reveals how defiant and complicit, she is in systems deemed male-controlled like Jason's economy of commodification and exploitation. Miss Quentin's escape unveils Jason's fragile and hypocritical standards of respectability, properness, and money, showing that her uncle's ideals can become ruinous even through attempting to commodify and manipulate women. To *take* from Caddy and *keep* away from Miss

Quentin gives definition to the way Jason's "game of economic exchange" consigns women to be passive players, as never tasked in determining money's value and use. Caddy at moments and— Miss Quentin entirely— unmask how fragile social order becomes when culture functions under the universality that *only* men can determine money's worth and purpose.

### **Conclusion: Penetrating Jason's Speech**

Jason is unrelenting in his *need* to commodify women and their identities, making them feel small so they can fit neatly into his masculine controlled spaces. His language— "once a bitch always a bitch" (*SF* 180) — produces a culture of coercion that isn't accessible to women. Jason's linguistic system has one mode of operation, and that is to restrain women: "Why don't you either lock her [Miss Quentin] up all day too, or turn her over to me and quit worrying over her?" (*SF* 182). Jason intimidates Caddy by getting her to have checks sent to Miss Quentin and having his niece sign them over to him, an act of gendered manipulation that eventually disintegrates as Miss Quentin depletes all Jason's hoarded cash by taking what belonged to her and more. However, Caddy's ability to negotiate with her brother and Miss Quentin's escape down the pear tree don't entirely destabilize the patriarchal and capitalist power and logic that presides in Faulkner's novel. Rather, they present alternatives for coping within and outside of phallogentric-patriarchal systems. Masculine cultures and languages like Jason's economy are moveable even when they aren't intended to. Both women see *openings* in Jason's repressive rhetoric that denigrates women to commodified objects, where one is able to give more (Caddy) and one is able to take everything (Miss Quentin).



Caddy's narrative exists in the in-between of Faulkner's novel: between presence and absence. Gwin understands Caddy's narrative and her identity as "here" and "not here." Gwin's interpretation is invested in the *spoken* and *unspoken* truths uncovered in a centering of Caddy as having a narrative and place in Faulkner's novel. Caddy doesn't exist entirely as a memory. Her daughter is not a "product" of her mother. Caddy is neither a maternal figure nor made material by the discourse of her three brothers. Yet, there is no Caddy or Miss Quentin section, no Caddy or Miss Quentin perspective. Right? Caddy and Miss Quentin are "silenced" in their inability to tell their stories, which subtextually tells readers about the way's women can and cannot move through masculine language. Their histories take up much of Faulkner's material space, while occupying the entirety of the Compson brother's psyches. Mourad Romdhani suggests that "women's silence" in Faulkner's work "becomes a medium of expression that constitutes a threat to a patriarchal linguistic system" ("Female Silence" 720). Even narrated from a distance, Caddy and Miss Quentin create the possibility of collapsing Jason's phallogentric-patriarchal economy. Caddy's willingness to listen to Jason and Miss Quentin's refusal present dimensions to how women operate in and through male-controlled linguistics and space. Caddy and her daughter are commodified, modified, and likewise, made by Jason to fit into his phallogentric capitalist economy. It's at turns like Caddy's negotiating with her brother and Miss Quentin's escape with her uncle's money that these women find ways of defying the rigid codes of Jason's exploitation.

Miss Quentin's story is (un)bound to Jason's section. This comes about in fourth section that can be called the "Dilsey" section of the novel. A shift from the brother-

narrators allows the reader to interpret more options for escape by Miss Quentin that around bound to a masculine perspective. Glimpses of her presence show up earlier on in *The Sound and the Fury*. The deciphering of names, brother Quentin from niece Quentin, is no small task. Faulkner's text is invested in male performers like Jason who are able to play the role of puppeteer of speech. These male voices translate language into meaning so that it can be digested by an audience. Romdhani clarifies that "Caddy Compson is not allowed to a voice, for she never appears as a free direct speech, being told and retold by three brothers or three masculine tongues" ("Female Silence" 722). In Jason's telling, the "masculine tongue" is uniform and linear in its projection of sexist economic ideals. Neither Caddy nor Miss Quentin have sections in Faulkner's novel where they can (re)tell their accounts of history. However, their constant presence emerges in the fears, anxieties, and desires of their brothers and uncle; their acts of mediation and disappearance are created by a masculine linguistic system that privileges the masculine perspective. Caddy and Miss Quentin's presence points the reader toward the Compson brothers, but that this directionality underappreciates their presence as stretched beyond the speech and deep psychology of the Compson brothers.

Caddy disregards her position in Jason's economy by presenting an alternative where she is able to be Miss Quentin's mother again. Caddy must ask and go through Jason if she's going to gain ground on gaining back her maternal status. Caddy proposes the idea, "'If you'll [Jason] get mother to let me have her back, I'll give you a thousand dollars'" (*SF* 209). This doesn't happen, and her *hope* vanishes. Caddy considers her possibility of (re)emerging as maternal figure to her daughter as "insane." In bargaining

with Jason, she momentarily steps beyond the threshold where her name is no longer spoken. Get Mrs. Compson on board, Caddy explains, and she'll give her brother a thousand dollars. To pay Jason and have Mrs. Compson accept the terms is to regain her loss of motherhood. Paying Jason a thousand dollars is a means to an end. Jason conflates Caddy's ability to pay for Miss Quentin with the assumed deviant behavior that created her position as an exiled mother: "'I know how you'll get it,' I says. 'You'll get it the same way you got her'" (SF 209). Just like that, Caddy's hope of getting Mrs. Compson to agree to give Miss Quentin back to her disappears. Caddy knew that the only chance to get her daughter back would be through her compliance in paying Jason's ransom. She confronts Jason's language of finance, making herself present and initiating a price. Then, can it be considered that Caddy's willingness to pay a large sum to have Miss Quentin back is an attempt at rescuing her daughter from her brother's economy that commodities women as exchangeable objects? Or is she merely managing her way through masculine speech and arbitration practices? Can Caddy's maternal identity exist in the absence of a daughter? Caddy doesn't reclaim her maternity and Miss Quentin evades her uncle's power. Caddy's language of financial possibility and Miss Quentin's ability to physically escape from her uncle's authority proves that his phallogentric-patriarchal language is penetrable.

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Finding breath and space for Caddy and Miss Quentin in Faulkner's novel is a difficult task. The violent language of Jason's section presents readers with the impossibility of finding an access point large enough to locate and include women like

Caddy and Miss Quentin in a retelling of *The Sound and the Fury* that gives them agency. There is the drudgery of finding cracks in Jason's phallogocentric, masculinist, and capitalist logics. However unknowable, unhearable, and unseeable his section appears, the mirror that reflects an image of a stable patriarchy in his narrative is an already chipped sheet of glass the moment it's mounted on the wall.

Jason's section is a problematic mess. Caddy and Miss Quentin are inextricably connected to that mess. Faulkner's Jason Compson reveals the limits and penetration points of a mess of language and story telling that prides itself on being impenetrable. Jason's language is contradictory, exposing his hypocritical tendencies in attempting to uphold standards of respectability, status, and manhood. Caddy and Miss Quentin's narratives reflect the way women are hindered from uttering desire, anger, and discontent in a male-controlled world that prevents women from expressing themselves in the form of speech, movement, and appearance. Jason decides how Caddy and Miss Quentin will be treated. Their histories and identities are then tethered to his mistreatment of them. Do the two women, then, have their own "narratives"? Deconstructing the lives of the two women is made difficult in how Faulkner maps male speech and memory onto their bodies. The male voice and gaze is what interprets and transfers Caddy and Miss Quentin's meaning to the reader. Faulkner's novel is deeply invested in male consciousness and meaning-making. A study of Caddy and Miss Quentin as centered and mobile agents in Faulkner's book does not dismantle a masculine dominated and oriented reading of the text. It does, however, chip away at such a reading being a universality, opening up an inclusive reading of the novel.

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LANGUAGE AND LOSS: MODERNITY'S RECKONING WITH  
FAILURE IN WILLIAM FAULKNER'S  
"A ROSE FOR EMILY"

**Introduction**

The West is obsessed with memorializing the past without considering the long line of trauma and catastrophe that has shaped the present. In the case of American history informing the public about America's strenuous history with slavery, segregation, and mass incarceration isn't sufficient retribution, there must be a complete rupturing of the past and its engrained authority in the present. Interrogating time in William Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily" displays how history with its values and traditions burdens the lives of those in the present. As the reader will see, retribution for Miss Emily Grierson has been concealed from her, as it's difficult for her to contend with expectations of how she is to live. Miss Emily fails to dismantle a repressive past constructed by her deceased father. Can a complete annihilation through isolation and murder be the possible defeat of all the lost objects of the past? Was Miss Emily ever to be compensated for her wish-fulfillment at wanting a husband? Emily Grierson has a long and arduous relationship with desire, loss, and the past, even in death, each still lingers. Loss and failure thrive under Faulkner's modernist tradition of producing meaning-making systems sculpted and defined to (im)perfection by how his construction

of language and story-telling techniques are designed to make Miss Emily's purist of a life not bound to her father's repression impossible to achieve. Faulkner's oeuvre is a gold mine that sheds light on America's tumultuous relationship with itself; identity markers such as race, class, gender, and sexuality do not operate independently. Faulkner is just as concerned with race as he is with class, and just as concerned with sexuality as he is with class. Yet, the white male modernist writer always comes up short in his ability to express compassion and remorse toward people of difference. Miss Emily, for instance, becomes symbolic of the conflict between her home town of Jefferson and its (in)ability to move toward progress. Can compassion thrive when an author's investments are in symbolism, meaning-making, and critique, rather than honest portrayals of the lived experiences of? Is the town's expression of discontent toward Homer Barron, a working-class northerner, being seen with Miss Emily just as focal to the concerns of the community as Miss Emily's circumstances as a repressed and deserted woman are?

"A Rose for Emily" is, and is not, a perfect short story. On the one hand, it's a versatile narrative perfect to teach character development and description, plot progression, scene building, and stylistic and aesthetic invention. And yet, Faulkner's language and logic(s) of lineage, history, community, and the individual fail; the Town's ability to sustain a relationship with the past and adapt to the future fails; Emily Grierson's attempt to defy, while also being asked to cooperate with institutional forces like class, gender, sexuality, and marriage fails; modernity fails. It has and always will fail. Faulkner's language in "A Rose for Emily" attempts to rationalize and define loss, both personal (to Emily Grierson specifically) and more broadly with the community of



Jefferson. Both grapple with mourning the past, as is reflective of Jefferson being defined by its relationship with monuments and relics. Loss is coded in and through how Miss Emily navigates her own reckoning with the past and the inevitable struggle to settle the score in the present. Simultaneously, Faulkner produces a world troubled by keeping one foot in the past— men wearing their Confederate uniforms to Miss Emily’s funeral— while depicting a present not so distant from that historical marker. The South’s loss in the Civil War failed to give the Confederate uniform-wearing men an identity detached from the lost legacy of the war. These men are marked by a past no longer present, clinging to the values of old, as if that time were not dismantled. Modernity failed to compensate these men with a life not tethered to old doctrines of honor and identity. Yet, the problem is considering the old establishment as having principles worth implementing in the present. Eradicating the past completely, attempting to rid any traces of the old, tries to eliminate the legacy of the once was. There cannot be a progressive present where traces from the repressive past still remain.

This essay is invested in the way loss functions as a way of “working through” mourning. Loss is not an absence, but a necessity to fill what once was, but now no longer is. Mourning a loss, in Miss Emily’s case, her clinging to her repressive dead father, is an attachment to the losses created by her father. Miss Emily isn’t mourning her father, but rather, all the experiences of life lost because of him. Loss for the town takes on the form of a *monument* materially marked on the body of Emily Grierson. In its complexity, loss represents an unstable relationship between past and present, while exposing the failings of identity and tradition. Faulkner’s short story reveals a South— a

Confederate South that lost to the Union— that clings to that memory even as characters seek progress. The Confederate soldiers' uniforms are worn on the occasion of Miss Emily's death, as they remember a woman once born before Northern workers came to pave the dirt sidewalks. This essay grapples with the pressures of access and involvement. The town is obsessed with Miss Emily, even as she isolates herself in her home away from the townspeople. The townspeople are able to see shadows of Miss Emily in her windows, while the story is time-stamped by moments when Emily Grierson appears, vanishes, and reappears in Jefferson. The reader is only able to see what the gaze of the communal narrator sees. Miss Emily's movements through presence and isolation disturbs the order of the town, as she's considered a "hereditary obligation" (Faulkner 119) upon them, one "the rising generation" (122) isn't too fond of. The concept of being in debt to Miss Emily is what drives the men of the town to collect her taxes. Yet, it's Miss Emily's refusal to abide by a law that wasn't stated by Colonel Sartoris that says she is exempt from paying taxes. Constantly the men of the town are driven to confront and alter Miss Emily's home and her habits.

Yet, the woman as a "staged discourse," which I will address later, is outdated and problematic. Faulkner writes Miss Emily as a way to grapple with tensions and anxieties among time, desire, and tradition. Women characters become symbolic, forced to represent loss and struggle. Bringing it back to the individual, considering Miss Emily's own personal loss, trauma, and experiences, will engage how the personal problematizes the way people and spaces reduce individual experiences to symbolism. Faulkner's own patriarchal-phallogentric linguistic system and his communal male

narrator are empowered by history and its ability to de-center and confine women's experiences. Miss Emily's life is thus filtered through masculine speech and perspective, reduced to its impact on the men of the rising generation and the previous Confederate uniform-wearing generation. Faulkner's stylistic inventions, his ability to disorient readers through unconventional storytelling, and his countless attempts at addressing and critiquing the social and cultural upheavals of the times are what drive criticism and appeal to his work. I will address the lack, as Addie Bundren directs in *As I Lay Dying*, towards language, where language beyond mere symbolism can confront real personal struggles and how these individuals "work through" loss. Faulkner's male-controlled language isn't an isolated occurrence, but close attention to "A Rose for Emily" will reflect how people of difference are relegated to the duty and realm of representation and are not involved in the meaning-making process. The first part of my essay will closely analyze pivotal scenes in Faulkner's story, managing the history and communal and personal losses displayed through Faulkner's prose. By highlighting the thematic, stylistic, and linguistic moves by Faulkner, my close reading will attempt a project of continuity between the necessity of the story's own struggle for reconciliation between the townspeople's own attachment to a repressive past and a progressive present. Faulkner's story and his characters fail to successfully defeat the authority of time, which has drastic consequences for Miss Emily when she is unable to secure a marriage with Homer Barron and ends up murdering him. Was her father's supremacy over her ultimately going to win out and no matter the cost Miss Emily was never going to live long enough to find a partner?

Failure occurs most often at the site of loss. Possibility points the reader toward newness, but as we will see more closely with Miss Emily after her father's death and her relationship with Homer Barron, the burden of the past can become too much legacy to shed. Each site of loss and its proximity to failure is addressed through the gaze of the community, or by retrospectively remembering Emily Grierson as a *type* of symbol of loss and failure. Faulkner's patriarchal-phallogentric language *uses* Miss Emily to represent the losses felt by the townsmen but intervening at this point will expose that Miss Emily's personal losses reveal the unstable nature of a society fixed on controlling and determining how she is able to occupy space and the minds of the townspeople.

The second part of my essay will consider the questions: what is loss but what is not actively present? Can one lose something that never existed? These questions will be explored by closely considering psychoanalytic theory and its considerations of absence and loss, and the mourning of loss aligned with modernist tendencies. Each approach asks the reader to consider lacks, places in "A Rose for Emily" where Faulkner's patriarchal-phallogentric language comes up short in situating the personal experiences of Miss Emily as important to the story's fabric and trajectory.

### **Part I: A Close Reading of Emily Grierson's Symbolism**

"A Rose for Emily" begins at the end. Miss Emily has died, but the story in its non-linear fashion attempts continuity with the past and present. The reader is asked to consider the bygone as the narrator retrospectively accounts for Miss Emily's martyred and monumental status: "When Miss Emily Grierson died, our whole town went to her

funeral: the men through a sort of respectful affection for a fallen monument, and the women mostly out of curiosity to see the inside of her house” ( Faulkner 119). Faulkner presents a major tension: people die, monuments fall. Miss Emily’s body is a stone figure if the reader imagines a monument as erected to represent *something* distant, *something* worth remembering. Miss Emily is a placeholder for what is no longer, an access point to the legacy of the past. She is symbolic of those clinging to their relationship with the historical past and the ideals and traditions characteristic of that time. Emily Grierson exists at a time when this particular Southern town needs to embrace industrial progress, as we will see with Homer Barron, the working-class northerner who comes to pave the dirt sidewalks. The monument becomes an object for those dead set on clinging to the past even when the world around them is moving in new directions. Miss Emily’s status as a monument for the town is why the men come to her funeral. Miss Emily’s funeral is not important to the men of the town in that it is to commemorate her death, but for them to acknowledge that passing with her was all that she signified for them. The symbol of Miss Emily is lost when she passes, but this does not mean that the legacy as a product of meaning to the townsmen comes to an end. Time and its legacy are sown into the fabric of Miss Emily’s material body only temporarily. Rather, her material body is a means for accessing the desires of the past when the men of the town need confirmation of their identity as once soldiers in the Confederate Army.

Even as the reader at the beginning of the story has no physical characteristics to attribute to the dead woman but those the narrator gives us: she is a “fallen monument.” People die, and monuments fall. The reader learns mostly in this description about how

the town interacts with Miss Emily's spaces, as the "women mostly out of curiosity" came to Miss Emily at her funeral and "to see the inside of her house, which no one save an old man-servant— a combined gardener and cook— had seen in at least ten years" (119). The women foreshadow and introduce Miss Emily as a character distanced from the town. No one had seen her home "in at least ten years." This introduction into the town and its inhabitants as they are curious about one of their own props up Miss Emily as a temporal monument, bridging time, reflection, and place. There is a town paying its respects to one who has died, while simultaneously needing to see the inside of her home because it's been too long. Miss Emily presents readers with a mystery. The town as a place and the Town as a character both grow in scope. The town is principally concerned with its inhabitants and how those inhabitants occupy space, but this can also be said about the Town as a character. The Town's elderly men are given form and clothing, while the reader is confronted with these men in Confederate uniforms who are witnessing the blooming of a "new generation" (122). History here clashes between memorialization and reflection. Miss Emily was a member of the past and the present and the town/Town stops to memorialize her status as a member of the past, while simultaneously progressing beyond the practices of Miss Emily and the Griersons and the Confederate uniform-wearing generation. By confronting the life of the past generation, the reader is struck by how the repressive ideals of that past set up Miss Emily for failure. Her life is built on what is not left to her. This will be more fully formed when I analyze the inherited Grierson home that comes into Miss Emily's possession when her father Mr. Grierson dies.

Miss Emily's home is her one inheritance from her dead father: "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 seventies, set on what had once been out most select streets" (119). Miss Emily's once pristine home, now "[lifts] its stubborn and coquettish decay above the cotton wagons and gasoline pumps— an eyesore among eyesores" (119). Miss Emily's home and its decay are juxtaposed against the image of industrial progress: "cotton wagons and gasoline pumps." Yet, the Grierson home was once a mark of status, once set on one of the "most select streets." Now an "eyesore" that the town means to deal with. Even when the home begins to crumble, the Town still views Miss Emily as a monument. Is considering the physical decline of the Grierson home analogous with Miss Emily's appearance? Is the Town's investment in Miss Emily a kind of chipped-decoration on the town, but nonetheless a decoration, obliged to her having lived in a time between the fading out of the Confederate generation and the rise of the new generation? Is it just coincidental that she had lived in both times? The dilemma of rationalizing Miss Emily's "purpose" to one generation or both is that she is forced to represent *something*. When Miss Emily dies, the old generation loses an emblem of its history, but by that time the town has grown and shed the values of the past. This isn't exactly true. Miss Emily is made to symbolize both physically and emotionally the decay of the Southern town. The communal narrator obsessed with physically marking Miss Emily's changes in appearance which are paired with the societal changes that occur in Jefferson when she is seen outside of her home.

One page into the story and the reader only knows that a community of men and women have lost Miss Emily. But people die, monuments fall. As the fall of a monument highlights the town clinging to a past, even Miss Emily's burial is a symbolic of how the past continues to occupy space. Time persists even when the past and Emily Grierson have died. The town of Jefferson is progressing forward in paving its streets and coming closer to modernization. This will then have to be achieved without the presence of Miss Emily. Buried, "Miss Emily had gone to join the representatives of those august names where they lay in cedar-bemused cemetery among the ranked and anonymous graves of Union and Confederate soldiers who fell at the battle of Jefferson" (119). The cemetery as a space engaged with bodies has two purposes: one, there are the named soldiers and the unnamed soldiers. This anonymity can be from the fact of war, of bodies not being accounted for. There are the ranked and anonymous soldiers; a hierarchy exists in this space of loss and death. Where does Miss Emily fit in this hierarchy? Is comparing Miss Emily Grierson's death to a "fallen monument" symbolic of the "fallen" Union and Confederate soldiers? Miss Emily's grave is approximate to those soldiers lost at the Battle of Jefferson, directly placing her in the same earth and same space as the men she had come to represent in her life.

The story embraces Miss Emily's value as mirror to inheritance: "Alive, Miss Emily had been a tradition, a duty, and a care: a sort of hereditary obligation" (119). When alive, Miss Emily stood for rank, a person the town would have to care for. Miss Emily as a "hereditary" object is time stamped by the event in "1894 when Colonel Sartoris, the mayor— he who fathered the edict that no Negro woman should appear on



the streets without an apron on— remitted her taxes, the dispensation dating from the death of her father into perpetuity” (119-120). If Miss Emily is to be financially secure after her father dies, Colonel Sartoris becomes the authority figure able to “invent an involved tale” (120) that the Jefferson people would be indebted to Miss Emily Grierson. By remitting Miss Emily’s taxes, writing it as a law to last beyond his death, Colonel Sartoris expects the townspeople for years to come to care for Miss Emily as if she gained historical status. Not only that, but the remission of Miss Emily’s taxes represents Colonel Sartoris’ wish to protect the status of those elite members of town. Miss Emily was born in a time when the Grierson’s still held that kind of elite status in town. Miss Emily’s slow retreat from being involved with the town is marked by the death of her father. She becomes a duty to the Town when Mr. Grierson dies. The townspeople aren’t in service to Miss Emily as a Grierson, but to a duty to preserve the complex interaction between class and gender instituted by her father and his generation’s thinking. Even as the Grierson home has become a victim of “coquettish decay” in the hands of Miss Emily, symbolic of the Grierson name losing its value in Jefferson, it once held meaning and status, thus the town is in debt to the Grierson name. Yet, if it were the Grierson’s who were in debt to the town it would reveal how easily social relations in the town could unravel. The once elite family would have no financial means to justify their status and the town would be confronted with the fact, they couldn’t preserve one of their own. The tax remission that Colonel Sartoris imposes on the townspeople affirms that Miss Emily belonged to a family once important, so he “invented an involved tale to the effect that Miss Emily’s father had loaned money to the town, which the town, as a matter of

business, preferred this way of repaying. Only a man of Colonel Sartoris' generation and thought could have invented it, and only a woman could have believed it" (120). Colonel Sartoris props up gendered class structures that benefit the traditions of himself and Mr. Grierson.

However, there are men that are not aligned with the traditions of the past, as becomes the case with Homer Barron the Northern working-class man who represents everything that Mr. Grierson isn't. The townspeople then hold firm that Miss Emily can't conceivably believe that she could marry someone *like* Homer Barron. Colonel Sartoris' reduction of Miss Emily's taxes is a propping up of the Grierson family, one that benefits the town and Miss Emily. Miss Emily's inheritance of the Grierson home and her not having to pay taxes causes her to live a life of isolation, which is assumed to benefit both the town and Miss Emily because the townspeople believed the "Griersons held themselves a little too high for what they were" (123). Miss Emily only interacts with the town only when she feels it fitting. However, is Colonel Sartoris and his ability to prop up class and gender structures revealing of how powerful and entrenched in past traditions places and spaces can be? Even after Colonel Sartoris has died, the town and Miss Emily exist separated from one another. What, then, are the stakes for Colonel Sartoris and his proliferation of gendered class structures that function to isolate and restrict women? Is he ensuring that the traditions of his generation are propelled into the consciousness of the people even after he dies? The townspeople are firm in their judgment of Miss Emily and her life, which prevails even after her death in the obsession to see into her home that no one had been inside in ten years.

The “obligation” to Miss Emily and the remitting of her taxes becomes to the “next generation, with its modern ideas,” an arrangement of “some little dissatisfaction” (120). Tension is created as the new generation attempts to hold its citizens liable for their own accounts and duty to the town. Why is Miss Emily important to revealing the strain between the past and the present? Miss Emily’s important insofar as she presents a rupture between the past and modernity, which is undermining the South’s traditional class structure. She represents how the present grapples with history and its memorializing and myth-making processes, while highlighting how the past contends with its loss of sovereignty. Miss Emily’s life has been predicated on what the reader knows about Jefferson thus far: the Griersons once had status, and Confederate customs are important to the lineage of the town. The rising generation attempts to undo both. There is then the mystery of Miss Emily’s *own* life. She lived in isolation, with only glimmers of her activity visible to the townspeople. The community members “[knock] at the door through which no visitor had passed since she ceased giving china painting lessons eight or ten years earlier” (120). This matters because there is a smell coming from Miss Emily’s house, which is death, which is the stench of Miss Emily’s decaying lover, Homer Barron, whom she has killed. But Homer Barron is not introduced in the story until later. Stylistically, the story trades linearity for ambiguity. After several reads, one will begin piecing together that the event at the end of the novel happens before the funeral at the beginning. Homer’s death occurs before the reader even knows who Homer is. The smell and decay of Miss Emily’s home introduces the town’s inability to confront Miss Emily in her space, as she has been protected by her class, gender, and age. Miss

Emily lives as inaccessible town member beyond communal supervision and intervention. To then trespass onto Miss Emily's estate is upset her remission from public involvement.

The narrator initially presents the town going to Miss Emily's home for the taxes which was some "thirty years before the smell" (121). The loss of her father and of Homer Barron are why she separates herself from the community. The reader is introduced to the home before this occurs. The Board of Aldermen are led into Miss Emily's home by her servant Tobe into the parlor:

It was furnished in heavy, leather-covered furniture. When the Negro [Tobe] opened the blinds of one window, they could see that the leather was cracked; and when they sat down, a faint dust rose sluggishly about their thighs, spinning with low motes in the single sun-ray. On a tarnished gilt easel before the fireplace stood a crayon portrait of Miss Emily's father (120).

The town is granted access not because Miss Emily wanted them inside, but because they granted themselves admittance on the basis of needing to collect taxes from her. The fragile state of Miss Emily's home is reflected when the light touches the furniture and that light hasn't touched the parlor furniture in ages. Dust accumulates, and light exposes the cracking. Miss Emily hasn't been occupying this space of her own home; even in her own home, she occupies a limited space. Even in now inherited home she is not able to avoid her father as his "crayon portrait" "stood before the fireplace." Even in death the trenchant power of the deceased and their authority over the living still triumphs.

Miss Emily corroborates her tax exemption by the myth Colonel Sartoris originally planted in the records of Jefferson and minds of the people: “Her voice was dry and cold. ‘I have no taxes in Jefferson. Colonel Sartoris explained it to me. Perhaps one of you can gain access to the city records and satisfy yourselves.’” (121). Even when the Town tries to reason with Miss Emily, her claim to a tax exemption is cemented in what Colonel Sartoris told her, regardless of what merit those words have in the present. Miss Emily has power over the men of Jefferson, even as they attempt to reason with the fact Colonel Sartoris has been dead some years:

“‘But, Miss Emily—’

‘See Colonel Sartoris.’ (Colonel Sartoris had been dead almost ten years.) ‘I have no taxes in Jefferson. Tobe!’ The Negro [Tobe] appeared. ‘Show these gentlemen out’” (121).

Miss Emily is deliberate in her choice to cling to the belief that she is tax exempt. So too then does Miss Emily cling to the “invented tale” that grants her tax exemption. Miss Emily attaches to the elements of the past that give her security and an ability to flex her social position. Miss Emily speaks over the Board of Aldermen, ordering her servant Tobe to get them to leave, is a deliberate obfuscation of what the men are asking of her. Miss Emily’s refusal to acknowledge the Board of Aldermen coming to collect her taxes is her showcasing her power over the town’s male authority while maintaining a level of financial independence and security.

The crayon portrait of Miss Emily's father represents the omnipresent power of a man no longer living. When Miss Emily loses her father, she clings to all the life and experience Mr. Grierson kept from her. Miss Emily mourns the loss of her father, but only as a means of recognizing the life he burdened her with. She lost out on a life beyond what her father thought right for her. Now in his death she must live with the consequences and legacy of her father's capability to isolate and suppress her even from his grave. The crayon portrait in the parlor unlived in by Miss Emily spatially illustrates how Mr. Grierson still lingers in what has then become Miss Emily's property. In coming to collect Miss Emily's taxes, the town intrudes into her space in the same way her father does, as a means to govern and order to her to abide by their expectations of her. However, the town's desire for Miss Emily to pay her taxes fails, as she's unwilling to accept the fact that Colonel Sartoris, who made her tax exempt, is dead. The parlor room with the portrait of her father represents Miss Emily's own refusal to come in contact with the main person who suppressed her the most.

Miss Emily's ejection of the Board of Aldermen from her home is symbolic of her force as a monument in Jefferson. She was able to "[vanquish] them, horse and foot, just as she had vanquished their fathers thirty years before about the smell" (121). Miss Emily's "vanquishing" of the men is her capability to turn out the fathers of the past and the sons of the present from her home. Miss Emily's force is generational. Her life and her resulting isolation are stamped by two major losses in her life: "after her father's death and a short time after her sweetheart [Homer Barron] — the one we believed would marry her— had deserted her. After her father's death she went out very little; after her

sweetheart went away, people hardly saw her at all” (122). Loss organizes how the story projects Miss Emily and how the reader interprets her life, her losses, and her experiences. Both losses result in Miss Emily engaging with Jefferson less and less, while the reader comes to realize what Miss Emily has actually been doing in her home with Homer Barron after he returns to Jefferson and is seen entering her house but is never seen outside again.

The smell of Miss Emily’s home is linked to her further detachment from Jefferson because of the loss of her father and her lover. When the smell intensifies, the Board of Aldermen can either tolerate the smell or act: “The next day he [Judge Stevens] received two more complaints, one from a man who came in diffident deprecation. “We really must do something about it Judge. I’d be the last one in the world to bother Miss Emily, but we’ve got to do something.” That night the Board of Aldermen met— three graybeards and one younger man, a member of the rising generation” (122). The town is in conflict with what to “do” with Emily Grierson: on the one hand they need her home to be kept clean, but on the other, are they willing to “bother Miss Emily”? There is the town’s duty to keep its distance from her. There is also the “problem” of the smell that the “graybeards” of the old generation and the “rising generation” attempt to resolve. The decay-like smell of Miss Emily’s home creates unity between the old and new generations: they bond over their common discomfort with Miss Emily.

To tread on Miss Emily is to trespass on chivalric codes that dictate how men should and shouldn’t make claims against the cleanliness of women:

“It’s simple enough,” he said. “Send her word to have the place cleaned up. Give her a certain time to do it in, and if she don’t...”

“Dammit, sir,” Judge Stevens said, “will you accuse a woman to her face of smelling bad?” (122).

To accuse Miss Emily of smelling bad is to suspect that she has failed to live up to her status as a Grierson and has succumbed to a state of decline. These are the standards of the graybeard generation, and the younger generation is willing to put aside chivalry to rid the town of the festering smell from Miss Emily’s home.

The stench of deeply engrained class, gender, and race privilege is not only symbolic of a spreading of the present generation’s discomfort with the lingering decay of the past, but representational in regard to Miss Emily and her family’s decent in social standing in the town. The thought of the Board of Aldermen creeping through Miss Emily’s lawn with lime sparks the narrator to reflect on the Town’s discomfort with the Grierson family: “That was when people had really begun to feel sorry for her. People in our town remembering how old lady Wyatt, her great-aunt had gone completely crazy at last, believed that the Griersons held themselves a little too high for what they really were” (123). The Town isn’t shocked by Miss Emily because she isn’t the first woman to supposedly unveil that the Grierson family barely clung to its status. The narrator reflects on “old lady Wyatt,” who was Miss Emily’s great-aunt, and how she “had gone completely crazy” (123). The speaker and their connection to the rising generation assert a state of regression that is cyclical in the Grierson family. Miss Emily is not the first to



experience this, but the Town's sympathy toward her is a knife-in-the-back way of being able to judge her and her family as being a "little too high for what they were" (123).

Miss Emily's relation to a lineage of fallen Griersons becomes engrained in her identity, which the communal male narrator cloaks her in as an un-wed older woman.

There are subliminal-like forces that have hindered Miss Emily:

None of the men were quite good enough for Miss Emily and such. We had long thought of them as a tableau, Miss Emily a slender figure in white in the background, her father in the foreground... So when she got to be thirty and was still single, we were not pleased exactly, but vindicated; even with insanity in the family she wouldn't have turned down all of her chances if they had really materialized (123).

The image of the tableau itself is symbolic of the positioning and forces that have kept Miss Emily from having a fulfilling life. Her entire existence has been molded in that she is to exist in the background and tolerate blindly the rules of her father. Miss Emily's father has died and so too with him has vanished the material possibility of possessing a partner. The father is the force in the "foreground," as he comes to represent a powerful "spraddled silhouette" (123) that looms over his daughter in the portrait and in her material life. Mr. Grierson does not face his unwed daughter but has "his back to her and [is] clutching a horsewhip" (123). She is his shadow— both hiding behind him and obscured by him. She later hides from the familial representation of her father, as she detaches herself from his memory through her relationship with Homer Barron, who stands in appearance everything her father represents. The speaker and Faulkner's prose

revel in a family that has lost position on one of the most select streets in Jefferson. The daughter who remains in Jefferson, after everyone is gone, becomes a social pariah in the town. The town expected Miss Emily to marry, and when this doesn't happen, and her father dies, she is forced to reckon with the loss of her opportunity to marry. At work again are the forces of class and gender. The assumption that Miss Emily will marry the lost object of desire, which is a possible union with Homer Barron, inevitably doesn't happen, and Miss Emily is left unfulfilled in trying to obtain a partner after her father is no longer alive to verbally express his discontent on who she has chosen.

Miss Emily's status depends on her father or her potential husband. Mr. Grierson means everything to Miss Emily's history of lost chances. Miss Emily's fallen status humanizes her: "When her father died, it got about that the house was all that was left to her; and in a way, people were glad. At last they could pity Miss Emily. Being left alone, and a pauper, she had become humanized. Now she too would know the old thrill and the old despair of a penny more or less" (123). The plate glass image of the Grierson family was a façade. Miss Emily's relative poverty sparks the Town to consider her a person worth calling a person because now she can recognize loss and struggle. Miss Emily's lesser inheritance symbolizes the decline of the Southern elite while also making visible the ways in which female Southerners depended on male relatives for socio-economic status. Even when Faulkner's prose attempts to grant Miss Emily agency, his patriarchal-phallogentric language revels in depictions of her loss of social ranking and its representation of a Southern society and town forced to deal with fragility and the deterioration of generational sovereignty. When Miss Emily is finally made to bury her

deceased father, her father's repression of her is exposed, opening a window and letting in the light to how power dynamics worked between the father and daughter. The crayon portrait of him remains in the home and in life of Miss Emily. The Town "remembered all the young men her father had driven away, and we knew that with nothing left, she would have to cling to that which had robbed her, as people will" (124). In the second part of this essay, I will address how even when an event is traumatic, the victim will cling to that which has caused the trauma. Miss Emily's traumatic mourning, as I call it, is her having to mourn the loss of her father if she is to cope or gain back the substance of her life which her father drained. Miss Emily's feelings for her father are not directed *at* her father, but the consequences of her life *caused* by her father. The traces of her lost life remain as long as the portrait of her father stays in the parlor of the inherited home. Even the home itself being passed down to Miss Emily, belonging to Mr. Grierson and becoming hers, has the trace of her father because without him she could not have the house. Living in the same home once her father's and containing a portrait of him, Miss Emily is trapped in being face-to-face with her father's memory. She is forcefully positioned toward her repressor, her losses, and her failures as she is constantly reminded of what her father has kept from her.

Part III of "A Rose for Emily" opens, then, with a changed Emily and finally introduces her sweetheart Homer Barron. The changed Miss Emily has the air of something angelic: "When we saw her again, her hair was cut short, making her look like a girl, with a vague resemblance to those angels in colored church windows— sort of tragic and serene" (124). This is the first time Miss Emily, who is well beyond girlhood,

is characteristically described as a girl, and it is her looking “like a girl.” Faulkner’s male-centered language has “properly” come to characterize Miss Emily through objects (like monuments) and abstractions (like inheritance, a duty, an obligation). The gendered body as it appears “tragic and serene” only occurs when Miss Emily leaves her home and appears in the town. Miss Emily’s materiality becomes aligned with a language of the incomprehensible, like, status, history, and institutions. If the Miss Emily who re-enters the gaze of Jefferson with short hair and the appearance of a girl ends up not fulfilling duties and standards of what it means to be a girl, will she no longer resemble “those angels in colored church windows”? Up to this point Miss Emily has failed to get married and her failure to do so has not “pleased” the town, but it has at least “vindicated” them by the fact that if chances had actually “materialized” then she wouldn’t have turned them all down.

Miss Emily’s last name doesn’t expect anything. It creates expectations. One is that she must attract a partner. However, it’s one thing to attract *a* partner and another for her to attract the *right* partner: “At first we were glad that Miss Emily would have an interest, because all the ladies all said, “Of course a Grierson would not think seriously of a Northerner [Homer Barron], a day laborer”” (124). Miss Emily’s Southernness, and even her declining status as a Grierson, would be called into question if she were to consider seriously a relationship with a working-class Northerner. Class and geographical mixing can’t happen, even though the Town considers Miss Emily to be from a family that “thought themselves a little too high for what they really were” (123). Even as Miss Emily seriously shouldn’t consider a member of the Northern working-class as a partner,

the Town nonetheless sees Miss Emily as possessing a declining reputation: “She carried her head high enough— even when we believed that she was fallen. It was as if she demanded more than ever the recognition of her dignity as the last Grierson” (125). If the Grierson family once belonged to what had “been our most select street,” then Miss Emily would want that considered when the townspeople attempt to criticize her. Even when the Grierson name has lost its station in the town— even if it’s considered to have never had station to begin with— once having rank in the town gives Miss Emily an air of dignity. Status and the expectations created by her father are carried by Miss Emily as surviving traces of her father’s hostile legacy, revealing her struggle to move beyond his forcefulness to keep her unfulfilled.

As the Town begins to sympathize with Miss Emily, the narrator and others begin to refer to her as “Poor Emily” (125). With her head held high, she goes out into the town and buys arsenic, which will be used to kill Homer Barron. Homer Barron left town even after the Town believed he would marry Miss Emily. Being deserted by her sweetheart, “Then we [the Town] said, “She will persuade him yet,” because Homer himself remarked— he liked men, and it was known that he drank with the younger men in the Elks’ Club— that he was not a marrying man” (126). Between the dash is the knowledge that Homer Barron drinks with young men, while the image wraps back around to him simply not being the marrying type. The Town is not “surprised when Homer Barron— the streets had been finished some time since— was gone” (127). But the Town knows Homer Barron isn’t gone for good: “And, as we had expected all along, within three days Homer Barron was back in town. A neighbor saw the Negro man [Tobe] admit him at the

kitchen door at dusk one evening. And that was the last we saw of Homer Barron. And of Miss Emily for some time” (127). As Miss Emily reverts to a state of isolation, out of the Town’s view, she is partially seen. Miss Emily becomes a mirror to her own, as well as, the communal past of the town. She too is defined by the forceful nature of her father, a quality “which had thwarted her woman’s life so many times had been too virulent and too furious to die” (127). Miss Emily lives, if only when the Town is confronted with her existence by a chance glimpse of her through her window. The town makes Miss Emily visible in these moments when she has clearly closed herself off from presence. Miss Emily becomes a figure of perseverance only because her father “thwarted [in] her woman’s life.” Mr. Grierson’s repression of his daughter is still persistent even after he dies. Trauma lingers. So too does Miss Emily still live.

When Miss Emily does reappear, she is changed: “She had grown fat and her hair was turning gray. During the next few years it grew grayer and grayer until it attained an even pepper-and salt iron-gray, when it ceased turning” (127). Miss Emily once appeared with “her hair cut short, making her look like a girl.” She was once that angelic figure seen in church windows; now she is older, with hair turning gray until it can no longer turn gray. Miss Emily is re-gendered, as she transforms into a man: “at seventy-four it [her hair] was still that vigorous iron-gray-like the hair of an active man” (128). Decades have passed, marked only by her weight and hair color. It’s when the loss of her father has settled and her and Homer Barron will not be getting married that her womanhood is described as that of an every-graying man. Miss Emily began graying earlier, earlier “from that time on her front door remained closes, save for a period of six or seven years,

when she was about forty, during which she gave lessons in china-painting” (128). The reader learns about Miss Emily being seventy-four before they know the period when the front door “remained closed” when she was in her forties. But the reader has been here before; the reader knows about the china-painting lessons, and about a time when Miss Emily was open to the town and its people. Remember, Miss Emily gave china-painting lessons to the children of whose fathers wore Confederate uniforms. Those children grew up, and Miss Emily closed her doors.

Her home once, shut off to the townspeople of Jefferson, is opened one more time. This time, Miss Emily has died. After her death, the town “waited until Miss Emily was decently in the ground” (129) before pushing toward knowing and discovering what was going on in her home when she shut herself off from the rest of the town. The townspeople know what’s in her room: the corpse of Homer Barron. The community “respects” a proper lapse in mourning the loss of Miss Emily before entering her home. The town adheres to death’s tradition of time and respecting those recently deceased. If Miss Emily has become a monument, has she genuinely died? Falling and dying cannot be conflated for the same. The “violence of breaking down the door” (129) is followed by a long pause of looking at the lifeless body of Homer Barron: “the body had apparently once lain in the attitude of an embrace, but now the long sleep that outlasts love, that conquers even the grimace of love, had cuckolded him” (130). Death, “that long sleep,” shattered the idyllic desire of conquering time and love on the part of Miss Emily. Her struggle with time, embodied in Homer Barron, is finally laid to rest.

Yet, in “A Rose for Emily’s” final section, there is a trace of Miss Emily “that in the second pillow was the indentation of a head. One of us lifted something from it, and leaning forward, that faint and invisible dust dry and acrid in the nostrils, we saw a long strand of iron-gray hair” (130). Laying next to the sweetheart she killed remains a trace of Miss Emily. In that bed lays the one who the town believed was the only materialized possibility of Miss Emily getting married. Does Miss Emily’s killing of Homer Barron defeat the struggle between an attachment to the past and to what that past has forced her to lose? Loss for Miss Emily— even as it functions for Faulkner— stands for a mourning of lost life, a willingness to “work through” loss to defy the traditions and systems that have produced this loss specifically for her. Loss can be tied to traumatic experiences, as I will explore more closely in Miss Emily’s loss of her father.

As has been expressed in a closely analyzing “A Rose for Emily” and the play of symbols and loss, I explore how loss set by Faulkner’s patriarchal-phallogocentric linguistics must approach the losses specific to Miss Emily.

## **Part II: Loss Beyond the Symbolic for Miss Emily**

If readings of “A Rose for Emily” can be more than static attempts to address symbolic representations of generational events and obsessions in a Southern town, what possibilities rise out of interpreting loss in Faulkner’s story as experienced, struggled with, and shattered beyond mere symbolic meaning? The question directs any reader toward modernist traditions of historical and personal loss. In *Mourning Modernity: Literary Modernism and the Injuries of American Capitalism*, Seth Moglen uses the



phrase “modernism of mourning” to argue that “what distinguishes our most firmly canonized modernism is not its affirmation of modernization, then, but its sense of helplessness... it’s a literature often angry, and usually grief stricken, about the alienating effects of advanced capitalism” (9). Catapulted into a world mourning loss, modernist writers were concerned with the deep-psychology of human consciousness and the production of loss, grief, and alienation by systems like advanced capitalism that flourish off the struggle and suppression of people. Society collapses as people grapple with their newly acquired loss, grief, and anger. Society adapts as it approaches modernization through the monetization and exploitation of people of difference. In Jefferson, the Grierson family would be considered one of those bloodlines that lost its station due to change and adaption. Chivalry and respect are traded for paved sidewalks. The decay of a lingering past is symbolic for Faulkner; Miss Emily’s estate smells of death, but the town’s codes of respectability consider it indecent to tell a woman she’s unclean. However, in a literal sense, Miss Emily’s home is unclean because of Homer Barron’s decomposing body. This comes after Homer Barron initially left and after Miss Emily went and bought arsenic at the druggist and the “complete outfit of men’s clothing, including a nightshirt” (127). Homer Barron returns three days later, and Tobe admits him into the house; after this final admission “her front door remained closed” (Faulkner 128). Homer Barron’s death creates both a symbolic and literal stench. Both the symbolic and literal are at play with one another, as the reader is unaware of Homer Barron at the time of initial mention of the odor. Miss Emily’s smell is brought up when Judge Stevens is unwilling to say to her face that she’s unclean. The town itself questions its own tactics

and traditions, deciding whether or not they should or shouldn't call Miss Emily out for being dirty. The dirt itself is Homer Barron, but it also represents all the influences manipulating Miss Emily toward a life of decay where the chance of actually acquiring a partner that her father would disapprove of is lost.

Miss Emily represents the “grief stricken” that Seth Moglen's *Mourning Modernity* sees modernist writers like Faulkner being invested in. The Grierson name and home have also lost their status, as the home that had “once been white” and “had once been on our most select street” (119) is now in a state of decay. Aesthetics and class station are lost to the entire Grierson clan, Miss Emily, principally, is made to feel the repercussions of all the family has lost.

Miss Emily's losses—not her own but inherited—reflect a society of domination, where the rigid patriarchal system of her father's generation produces the effect of her being unable to stay afloat without his presence. Upon her father's death, Miss Emily inherits the family home with no finances to keep her secure. The traditional societal system in the world of “A Rose for Emily” does not consider women's needs and the possibility that her newly acquired life requires tools for survival that were not left to her. Mr. Grierson never considered Miss Emily's life after his death. Caroline S. Miles addresses in her essay “Money and Masculinity: Economies of Fear in Faulkner's *The Sound and the Fury*” how male-driven systems control women's lived experiences, illustrating how masculinity failed to adapt to the pervading forces of capitalism post-Civil War: “many men struggled to reconcile traditional Southern life not only with an emerging modern capitalist economy and vast changes in value, labor, and the workplace,

but also with new configurations of race and gender. Both money and masculinity became tricky and confused sites that were especially difficult and precarious to navigate” (144). In order to adapt to an altered setting, identity and space needed to catch up with a changed America. Southern masculinity as far as Miles is concerned, was not always accepting of change. Instead, it preserved itself in the values and traditions of the South before and during the war. Miles’ reading of Jason Compson’s section of *The Sound and the Fury* is applicable to an analysis of Faulkner’s “A Rose for Emily” in that both are unable to merge the harsh conditions of a south defined by its harsh past even as it tries to move toward a progressive present. Miss Emily’s losses and her attachment and reconciliation of those losses are her own. Mr. Grierson functions as a major embodiment of mourning and insight to how Miss Emily contends with trauma. Mr. Grierson “robbed” his daughter of the chance to marry. Yet, the narrator argues, if Miss Emily had chances to marry then she wouldn’t have turned them all down. Mr. Grierson is the cause of Miss Emily’s squandered chances to get a partner. How then does one mourn the source of trauma? Loss, even negatively impacting the one mourning the loss, is not a feeling that is absent, but rather a feeling that is no longer present. The object lost is not Mr. Grierson, but rather a life experience denied by Mr. Grierson. Miss Emily’s loss and how she mourns the “young men her father had driven away” and her “cling[ing] to that which [he] had robbed her” is a *displaced mourning* when her father dies, because she isn’t mourning her father’s death, but rather the potential future he denied her.

Miss Emily when her father dies is left to compensate on her own for the unfulfilled desire in her life to marry. When a loss takes place, the mourner attempts to

“move through” the loss in order to come out the other end properly compensated in new ways that aren’t attached to the lost object. Dominick LaCapra poignantly supports how loss grapples with its lack of fulfillment: “loss is often correlated with lack, for as loss is to the past, so lack is to the present and the future. A lost object is one that may be felt to be lacking, although a lack need not necessarily involve a loss. Lack nonetheless indicates a felt need or a deficiency; it refers to something that ought to be there but is missing” (“Trauma, Absence, Loss” 703). The lack does not imply a sensation that is *permanently* missing, but rather that the mourning individual “works through” their loss in order to compensate for a “deficiency” as the missing object *feels* missing. The process of working through loss is constructed so that the individual can work toward a newly imagined and not always entirely, but partially, fulfilled life. The loss of Mr. Grierson represents not the lost relationship between father and daughter, but rather a long line of “missing objects” that are the result of Mr. Grierson’s suppression of his daughter’s life. Miss Emily can only access that which is missing to her when she “clings” to the acts and history of her dead and lost father. The loss of Mr. Grierson, then, signals a past where the desired objects of Miss Emily’s life— getting married or receiving a larger inheritance — are not traceable in her lived present, thus leaving her life and desires deficient of the sensation of fulfillment.

The death of her father is the site of the traumatic experience for Miss Emily. From this event the missing objects are given form, presented as a necessity to cling to the father, and from his inanimate body extends the life which he kept from her. The father is deceased, and what remains is lost possibility. Dominick LaCapra demands

critics and scholars not to conflate loss and absence: “when absence and loss are conflated, melancholic paralysis or manic agitation may set in, and the significance or force of particular historical losses... may be obfuscated or rashly generalized.” LaCapra furthers this argument, claiming that a conflation of absence and loss “would facilitate the appropriation of particular traumas by those who did not experience them, typically in a movement of identity formation that make invidious and ideological use of traumatic series of events in foundational ways or as symbolic capital” (712). The personal loss for Miss Emily, then, becomes an event “worked through,” a loss, not an absence experienced more generally. The personal loss and trauma lived by Miss Emily cannot be reduced to a “traumatic series of events” felt by the general public, regardless of how invested in communal feelings Faulkner is. Miss Emily’s “working through” and “clinging” to process is her *own* mourning

When one turns a loss into an absence this tendency disregards the fact the lost object was once present. Conflating Miss Emily’s longing for marriage as a feeling absent once her father dies signals to the reader that her desire marriage was never originally present. The lack and loss of Miss Emily’s chances to marry means that the possibility or the feeling of possibility was once present. To consider trauma as producing absence, then, is to consider what no longer asks to be fulfilled. Miss Emily’s relationship with Homer Barron and eventually closing him into her house indicates that she desires a partner. When an object is lost, there remains the sensation, the rippling of what once belonged. Losses can thus “conceivably be avoided or, when they occur, at least in part be compensated for, worked through, and even in some extent overcome” (LaCapra 712).

In “working through” grief, Miss Emily reconciles her father’s lingering presence as that deathly force which “conquers even the grimace of death” (Faulkner 130) by becoming involved with and eventually killing Homer Barron.

To overcome the death and meaning attached to the loss of her father, Miss Emily reappears in the town with her hair cut short, “making her look like a girl” (Faulkner 124). This present Miss Emily has changed her appearance, an act of mourning Mr. Grierson and his connection to the generation of men who wore Confederate uniforms; those same men have relegated Miss Emily to the realm of symbolic monuments. Miss Emily has been positioned and given station by the Southern gentry. Now, with her father gone, Miss Emily defies her father’s old logics, as she is seen with a man that represents everything he wasn’t: “the town had just let the contracts for paving the sidewalks, and in the summer after her father’s death they began work. The construction company came with n\*\*\*\*\*s and mules and machinery, and a foreman named Homer Barron... presently we began to see him and Miss Emily on Sunday afternoons driving in the yellow-wheeled buggy, and the matched team from livery stable” (Faulkner 124). Miss Emily embraces the possibility of newness once her father has died. Her carrying on with a northerner, and a laborer at that, helping pave the sidewalks, highlights the physical changes toward a more modern South that the town is undergoing, as well as the modernized love relationship between a woman of once renowned status and a Northern laborer. The town is at a place of contention: one the one side, Miss Emily being seen with Homer Barron is counter to old codes of behaving that define the social and class relations of the town. On the other end, Homer Barron is in the town in order to bring the

community closer to modern standards by improving the sidewalks. The town objects to the relationship initially. Inscribed in her inherited home is that life which Miss Emily's father had robbed her. The loss of the object of marriage also needs to be "paved" over in order to alleviate the trauma of having to endure misfortune caused by a misogynistic father.

Miss Emily's willingness to be seen outside of her home with Homer Barron is a "working through" her loss, even when being with him is disapproved by the community. The town is certain. "Of course a Grierson would not think seriously of a Northerner, a day laborer" (Faulkner 124). Miss Emily and Homer Barron's relationship rests on the town's ability to undo its problematization of class and geographical relationships, where a Grierson who once lived on a select street could be seen with a Northern day laborer. Miss Emily and Homer Barron challenge what it means to occupy space together and challenge how those in authority positions cling tightly to the practices of a not-so-distant repressive past. Thus, Miss Emily and Homer Barron's relationship attempts to "overcome" Miss Emily's own loss of her father and his connection to her struggle to defeat the repressive past.

Yet, the key to Miss Emily's relationship with Homer Barron is not the overcoming of rigid traditional-based ideals engrained in the town, but that the relationship attempts to undermine the legacy of her father's repression. Miss Emily acts in defiance to the expectations of Jefferson. However, her lived experiences among the Jefferson community are lost because of what was stolen from her. Edmond L. Volpe's analysis of "A Rose for Emily" in *A Reader's Guide to William Faulkner: The Short*

*Stories* details the pressures of Miss Emily and Homer Barron's relationship on the mechanics of history: "Homer Barron embodies everything Mr. Grierson would have disdained. A laborer of a gang of black street workers, Homer is a Yankee, the enemy of the Old South, who has come to town because the community is moving into the modern world and paving its sidewalks" (102). Homer Barron's Northern working-class identity is positioned next to Miss Emily's once prominent identity in the town, revealing their relationship as defying the community's commitment to tradition and prestige. When Miss Emily dies and the townspeople attend her funeral wearing Confederate uniforms, her death and the men mourning her death, are both representative of a community not willing to consider shedding its wardrobe of the past. The town's unwillingness to seriously consider the two together suggests the struggle of the town to accept intersecting differences like class and geography. Not only is the town unwilling to accept Miss Emily's relationship on the basis he's a laborer, but also that there is discomfort in him being from the north. For the townsmen, Miss Emily is an access point to the past even as her relationship with Homer Barron is in conflict with the competing forces of the repressive past. Her love affair with him complicates the traditions of the past in the present: "Miss Emily, however is a symbol of the community's hereditary obligation. Emily dies sometime in the second decade of the twentieth century, but the old men come to her funeral dressed in Confederate uniforms" (Volpe 100). If the town loses Miss Emily, then they lose an object of meaning that has defined the social and cultural fabric of this antebellum town. The Confederate uniform is an emblem, a patch on the body that marks each Jefferson man with the identity of Southerness. Miss Emily's death allows



access into the past. For Miss Emily to pursue Homer Barron undoes all this Southern town has done to cling to its heritage as “outside” the influence of the north. Allowing the streets to be paved by Homer Barron and his workers is one step toward a unified future.

This reading trades the stakes of Miss Emily’s personal loss for that of the community, even as Miss Emily’s actions with Homer Barron point her away from the obligations and traditions of her father and the past generation. Mr. Grierson’s legacy of repression over his daughter lingers, in the form of the community speech putting pressure on Miss Emily conceiving of a possible marriage with Homer Barron. Thwarting the grasp of the past, Miss Emily never truly satisfies the possibility of marriage defined by her father. However, her murdering of Homer Barron resists the need to be fully compensated for lost chance of marriage. Miss Emily does not kill Homer Barron because of the town’s unacceptance of the union even when they “were glad that Miss Emily would have an interest.” Rather, once Homer Barron has returned and she closes the door behind him, his murder negates the power of the institution of marriage, of even considering the need for the town’s acceptance of their union. Miss Emily’s pursuit of Homer Barron is not concerned with being accepted by the town, but rather, her eventual killing of him symbolizes her need to annihilate the desire to marry that her father denied her. Does, then, the murder of Homer Barron undo the years of historical entrapment and forced trauma and loss that have been inflicted on Miss Emily or does she fail and deny tradition?

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In failing to rectify traditional systems of social ordering, Miss Emily is forced to maneuver in compliance to the system that governed her life experiences. To not obey her identity as unmarried and isolated woman, the life presented to her by her father, is to move toward a life of fulfillment that was previously unfathomable if only in a desire to obtain it. Miss Emily never fully submits to the town, but she never rejects their principles to the point of facing a social reckoning. Miss Emily ultimately fails to reconcile her loss, as the town determines to keep the townspeople from mixing with members of “outsider” classes and spaces. Miss Emily is kept from the one she desires only until he returns one final time and is never again seen leaving her home. Miss Emily’s murder of Homer Barron is no small occurrence, but the difficulty of the scene hangs on understanding the murder as more than a *symbolic shattering* of marriage and the fulfillment of loss.

The conundrum Miss Emily is faced with is the Grierson reputation that she is trying to defeat. Her murder of Homer Barron, a complete annihilation of the symbolic past and present once he is dead, is also the death of Miss Emily’s struggle to marry a man her father would have found suitable. Homer Barron represents everything Mr. Grierson isn’t and to marry him would be a complete rejection of Mr. Grierson’s expectations. Marrying Homer Barron doesn’t just mean Miss Emily would finally fulfill her desire to marry but would topple the reputation of the Grierson family that once lived on the most select street in town. A class and geographical defying relationship with Homer Barron is counter to what Mr. Grierson stood for in his life. Miss Emily preserves

the dead Homer Barron as a figure of love, of possibility, even when the town considered him a suitable mate for a Grierson woman. Everything in Jefferson is hypocritical. If Homer Barron can't be considered appropriate for Miss Emily, but town eventually comes around to it, can this same logic argue that the Griersons believed themselves too highly respected? Thus, Miss Emily's separation from the town is, in effect, a way to counteract the persistent hypocrisy of the town. Miss Emily's sweetheart Homer Barron enters the Grierson home one last time and dies in the Grierson home because the couple would've experienced social death if their relationship endured. This doesn't justify murder, but it's also difficult to consider this Southern town as willing to include *all* of Miss Emily's experiences and choices. Miss Emily becomes a social pariah, always isolated, turned to murder not as a surrender, but as a one last struggle with desire, tradition, and time.

Whether it's a constant obsession with Miss Emily's lack of involvement and isolation from the town, or her life choices from what the town can observe, Faulkner's story produces the effect of an obsessional-like wonder at the losses of one member of the society. There are grave consequences that follow, as the reader is immersed into the sensations felt by the community which relate the struggles Miss Emily has had to endure. This contact point between Miss Emily and the town as forming a relationship built on loss explodes with the murder of a man who was not really a member of the town, but whose purpose was to bring Jefferson into the modernized world.

Miss Emily challenges the town's norms and expectations of how she should interact with a working-class northerner as she's seen laughing with Homer Barron. A

Southern and Northern relationship unearths the town's own anxious history with its lineage as a South annexed to the North. Seth Moglen economically explains how the obsession with a remembrance of history is bound to an inability to adapt after loss, and how this breeds repression: "All [melancholic modernists] for example, indicate that violently hierarchical class, gender, and race relations are substantially responsible for alienation, but all manage to represent these catastrophic and historically particular social practices as if they were symptoms of ineluctable, transhistorical impulses in human nature" (*Mourning Modernity* 35). Faulkner's "A Rose for Emily" is, then, a story about the legacy of communal wounds. But what happens when broad historical losses bleed into the lives of individuals, producing violence and alienation? The misogynistic principles of the town perpetuate a cycle of loss that will always be experienced if it doesn't adapt.

Miss Emily's reckoning with the loss of her independent life is a crisis in deconstructing a system of living and language built by her father's generation. Mr. Grierson's history, tied to a patriarchal-phallogocentric linguistic system, pervades even the present. Miss Emily is alienated and critiqued from the outside. The smell of her home is to be fixed without her knowing; the Grierson reputation is disputed, and the townspeople refer to Miss Emily as "Poor Emily" while she mourns the death of her father and Homer Barron initially deserting her. The townsmen speak of Miss Emily with fake sympathy. The old generation of men preserves the viewpoint that Miss Emily holds her head high in mourning while simultaneously acting below her station because of her affair with Homer Barron. Miss Emily is not able to construct a world where she is able to

peacefully “work through” her losses. Mourad Romdhani’s essay “Female Silence in William Faulkner’s *The Sound and the Fury*, *As I Lay Dying* and ‘A Rose for Emily’: Crossing the Borders of the Speakable” imagines how “women are silenced in the ‘symbolic’ stage because they are totally alienated from the discourses constructing their body” (720). Miss Emily’s legacy of living with loss is filtered through the gaze of a communal male narrator, predominately through the speech of the male townspeople. Miss Emily is placed upon a “stage,” her body like a monument, for the male-centered discourse of the town to grapple with the anxieties of modernization and historical loss. Mourad Romdhani furthers her inclusion of the silently staged woman in Faulkner’s prose:

a woman is bound to voice her body through the medium of a phallogentric linguistic system that excludes her. Subsequently, her body remains ‘unspeakable’ and unspoken in the symbolic realm... If a woman attempts to articulate her body and her desire, she might overpass the borders of the symbolic linguistic system, for she is impelled toward new signifying structures, that destroy the ‘Law of the Father’ and the phallogentricism of the symbolic order (720).

Miss Emily’s appearance in the town and her relationship with Homer Barron threaten the “Law of the Father.” They represent her own desire to rebel against the language and structures of her father and the townspeople. Miss Emily is herself occupied with an attempt to “overpass” the patriarchal-phallogentric linguistic system of her father: “we remembered all the young men her father had driven away, and we knew nothing was

left” (Faulkner 124). Miss Emily’s failure to marry was caused not by a lack of initiative on her part, but by calculated necessity on the part of Mr. Grierson to keep his daughter bound to himself and his codes of morality and respectability.

To cling to Homer Barron and keep him bound to that home which she inherited from her father, to eventually kill him, is to relinquish the possibility of reconciling her desire for a man her father wouldn’t have allowed her to pursue. She binds Homer Barron to the home just as her father did to her. In Homer Barron’s death, “Emily’s inner struggle between her desire to enter time and her attachment to the past has ended... the community knows that Homer is dead, knows how he died and where he lies. It knows because Emily’s tormented struggle with the past and her defeat are its own struggle and defeat” (Volpe 103). Thus, Miss Emily’s fight to defeat the forces of desire and time is overcome by an even more supreme force, death, allowing her own struggle to pass beyond the threshold of desire and time. Mourad Romdhani sees “Miss Emily’s imprisonment in her father’s house as an empowering role, for the more silent and introverted the lady is, the more obsessed with her the townspeople become. Thus, the silence of Faulkner’s females can arguably be described as an act of mobility that enables them to overpass the limits of patriarchy and reside in eternity and timelessness” (722). Upon Miss Emily’s death and the discovery of Homer Barron’s dead body, the town faces their own obsession with Miss Emily. Homer Barron’s body is preserved in a decayed state, but with the presence of an embrace; he was kept away from the mortal town by Miss Emily, away from the pervading power of time and social criticism. Love does not outlast death. But is it love that Miss Emily was trying to outlast with Homer

Barron? In her life, she struggled to pass beyond the limits of desire and time. She was bound to a life of silence and isolation as the town criticized her involvement with Homer Barron and its impact on her reputation as a Grierson. To live and die in a divine-like state with Homer Barron is to live beyond the past that festers.

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