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THE LADIES AND THE WOMEN

AN EXPLORATION INTO FAULKNER'S RHETORIC OF FEMALE HOOD

A Thesis Presented

by

CAROLINE V. JAUCH

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

MASTER OF ARTS

September 2016

English

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AN EXPLORATION INTO FAULKNER'S RHETORIC OF FEMALE HOOD

A Thesis Presented

by

CAROLINE V. JAUCH

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ABSTRACT

THE LADIES AND THE WOMEN

AN EXPLORATION INTO FAULKNER'S RHETORIC OF FEMALE HOOD

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With his novels, Faulkner takes us on a journey to the South. He invites us into his character's surroundings, homes, landscape, smells and especially into their hearts and minds. His portrayals of the white and black people that populate the South, his acute sense of observation regarding their external and internal dialogue, as well as his unique narrative style, all contribute to making him into a reliable witness of the deep issues that plagued America then and are still hurting the nation today as social, racial and gender based challenges daily defy the collective consciousness, raising issues of equality pertaining specifically to blacks and women. In my opinion, Faulkner was a visionary, sensing already, in the years he writes his novels that much of America's problem was, is, and would for a long time to come, be racism. Yet, one other important aspect of Faulkner's writing that is pertinent in his characterization of the oppressed is his portrayal of the different female characters that populate his novels. The reason this is coming up in parallel with the issue of race is because the fight for gender and race equality have similar characteristics and that the struggle women endure every day for equal treatment is in many ways similar to the pains, stereotyping and stigmatization that black people

go through for the same goal. This fact was already addressed by Simone de Beauvoir in her famous work *The Second Sex* where she claims that the obstacles women faced regarding their emancipation were in many ways similar to those black people faced for the same goal. Keeping this in mind, the idea in this research is to observe Faulkner's heroines from the specific angle where their stories intersect with black people's narratives of oppression. Not to prove De Beauvoir (or anyone) right, but because it is an angle from which not much criticism has stemmed so far and I believe that, especially in Faulkner's oeuvre, there are a lot of meeting points regarding the problems that these two oppressed groups face.

In his depictions of women, Faulkner avoids categorizing: no two characters are alike or stigmatized in any way. His female characters are sincere, honest and pathetic yet they all escape stereotyping. This does not mean that critics have not tried to organize Faulkner's women and ladies into specific archetypes. There has been much criticism and analysis of Faulkner over the years, and it is interesting to observe the evolution of such discourse as it plays out against the backdrop of the different political and moral fluctuations of time. A lot has been said about Faulkner: He has been hailed as a misogynist, and even as a white supremacist, by literary critics that mainly identified with his characters' views and one must be discriminating while engaging with such material. Yet, the feminist literary criticism on his characterization of women is quite homogenous, suggesting that his portrayal of the female sex is consistent and definitely deserving of an analysis, as the amount of criticism on the subject has already proved.

In this research, I will engage with feminist theory and criticism as well as with critical race feminism, including the concept of "intersectionality" as coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw and I will separate the "ladies" from the "women" in an effort to give each the same amount of

attention. As the scope of this work is limited, I will not be able to go in depth with as many characters as I would like. Therefore, my analysis will focus principally on Drusilla Hawk for the ladies, Dilsey Gibson for the women and Clytie Sutpen regarding the theme of family dynamics. These characters will be looked at in context and along with the other characters that appear in their respective novels and who, through their interactions with them, help define their discourses. I will address more generally other characters such as Caddy Compson, Temple Drake, Eula Varner and Granny Millard and include as many others as I can in my discussion as far as they are relevant to my arguments.

This thesis will start with an overview of Faulkner criticism in context, which will lead me into a discussion on feminism and race. I will then develop a chapter on the ladies, a chapter on the women and a chapter on family dynamics in Faulkner's work. Hoping to offer the rounded argument that, by his intricate portrayals of the different victories and defeats the females evolving in his novels go through, with his southern belles inching their way out of their hoop skirts and his earth-women poetically assimilated to the elements, Faulkner was actually giving women a voice.

note:

As I was shaping up this research and engaging in the criticism already published on William Faulkner, I realized that much of my own discoveries were echoed by some feminist critics and historians like Anne Firror, Diane Roberts and Kathryn Lee Seidel and that they had come to similar conclusions as I have, based on very resembling arguments. As issues of plagiarism may arise, I can hereby only defend myself against such accusations. If my findings

mirror those already expressed on Faulkner, it must be regarded as proof that his message was effectively conveyed.

As you have probably noticed already, this thesis is developed in an English that is rather plain. This is not only because English is my second language but it is also a deliberate choice on my part, as I firmly intend to advocate for a more graspable rhetoric and against the hegemony of the literary jargon that has come to pollute literary criticism today. In my opinion, it is an elitist (and patriarchal) dictatorship that has literally come to supplant the literary pieces it means to review. I want to argue that, in general, it would be really crucial for the most relevant literary theoretical material to be accessible to the greater number of readers and not limit its acquisition to an academic elite. In this claim I am echoing critical race feminist theorist Barbara Christian and her essay "The Race for Theory" in which she argues that the academy's preoccupation with a way of theorizing that is based on Western ideals and expressed in academic "jargon" is actually impairing marginalized scholars by forcing them to use a language that is not their own.

I hope you will also kindly tolerate the few gallicisms that may have remained in my discourse and escaped my overall editing. I hope these will not lead to any undue confusion.

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INTRODUCTION

Faulkner, Freud and Feminism

Feminism appears in America at the famed Seneca Falls Convention in 1848, and it is perhaps a telling fact, that, in America, the women's rights movement developed alongside the abolitionist movement, as it seems only natural that women would claim the same rights for themselves than the ones they were aiming to obtain for black people. In fact, it actually seems difficult to understand why it took women so much longer to obtain the same basic right to vote which was awarded blacks in 1870! The Seneca Convention was created as a reaction to the fact that in 1840, when Elizabeth Cady Stanton and Lucretia Mott attended the World Anti-Slavery Convention in London, the conference refused to seat Mott and other women delegates from America because of their gender. Stanton, the young bride of an antislavery agent, and Mott, a Quaker preacher and veteran of reform, talked then of calling a convention to address the condition of women in an event that shows how intertwined the struggle for race and gender equality are. Women in America, gained the right to vote with the 19th amendment to the constitution in 1920, fifty years after the emancipation and consequent voting rights of blacks and a year after Faulkner published his first story: *Landing in Luck*. This is to say that Faulkner most likely grew up with an awareness of the struggle for women's rights and of their fight for, amongst other things, the right to vote and to practice law. But, as much as women were successful at creating an age of enlightenment for themselves in the 1920s, the 1930s depression saw a backlash of feminist fervor. In a depressed economy and with escalating unemployment,

women were suddenly viewed as competitors for men's jobs and thus discouraged from taking further emancipatory actions.

In literature, with the advent of the Modernist movement, it appears as though issues of class and gender mingle with new ideas about the senselessness and alienation of the times and the term "depression" embodied more than just the 1930s American economical crisis. It was an international feeling of hopelessness felt by many, particularly in the Western world where, alongside the American Depression, Europe saw similar economical setbacks that notably sparked the rise of the Nazi movement as a response to a degrading economy. In a society where nothing was concrete or predictable any more, the Modernist literary movement caught this malaise and expressed it with new narrative techniques such as stream of consciousness, the interior monologue and fragmented chronologies that did not necessarily respect the natural order of things. Women writers happily embarked on the Modernist movement which saw the rise of writers such as Virginia Woolf, Gertrude Stein or even Djuna Barnes, offering depictions of women that strayed from the Victorian ideal and were instead portrayals of fully rounded and psychologically intricate characters with a mind, (and sometimes a room) of their own. With the Modernists, female characters graduated from being men's complements to being portrayed as full individuals.

In his world-famous novel *The Sun Also Rises*, Ernest Hemingway acknowledges the rapid changes which society has seen take place, as well as the way these changes have affected women and their status. His character Brett literally embodies feminine emancipation and freedom while the male characters struggle with issues of alcoholism and emasculation. In *The Great Gatsby*, Scott Fitzgerald portrays three women, only one of whom shows full agency, a

boyish demeanor and a superior attitude towards men: Jordan is an emancipated woman whose skills allow her to entertain a glamorous career paired with notoriety. In his novels, notably in *The Sound and The Fury*, with the characters of Caddy and her daughter Quentin, Faulkner is able to highlight the paradox of the "new woman". Unable to completely let go of the old, established, feminine version of the traditional female character, "the womanly woman", Faulkner designs characters who are hybrids between the old womanly woman and the new woman, blurring the lines between the two. But he offers such an extensive list of diverse female personas that any attempt to categorize his writing as being either misogynist, feminist or even condescending is futile. The only thing one can assert when it comes to Faulkner's tendencies, is that his writing does not imply a play of its method, rather it is a fully rendered testimony to the state of things for men, women, blacks and whites in the rural southern community that he invites his readers to enter.

It is undeniable that Faulkner's female characters have a certain sense of their rights and that is clearly visible notably among the "daughter" characters like Caddy Compson or Dewey Dell Bundren, who have an obviously different vision of the possibilities offered by their destinies than their respective mothers Caroline Compson and Addie Bundren. Yet, the question of how really aware Faulkner was of the ongoing internal struggle of these women remains. After all, at the time Faulkner writes, Freud is the only known authority in psychology to have expressed himself on the subject and, although credit must be given him for doing so, his deductions about the woman's psyche have the generally ongoing characteristics of the times; they are mostly perceived as the "other", the weaker sex, inexplicable, mysterious and therefore inferior beings to be envisaged as territory to explore, conquer and colonize in any possible

metaphorically absurd way one can conceive. Anything but, that is, to exchange with them on the basis of equality. Women, at the time that Faulkner writes his first novels, are viewed as utterly different from their male counterparts, not only physically, but mentally, emotionally and psychologically.

In his 1905 piece, "Three Essays on the Theory of Sexuality," the starting point of all his subsequent assessments of female sexuality, Freud stresses that he will discuss the psychological as opposed to the biological aspect of women. In these essays, Freud employs himself at giving readers a realistic image of human sexual developments and natural or "perverted" sexual instincts. His writing is somewhat perverted in itself, in that it oscillates between societal considerations (the way society, at the time he writes, experiences and defines sexual practices) and personal observations and conclusions of his own. If one is not extremely careful in the handling of his texts, his position is not always clear. What is extremely clear on the other hand, is that all these observations stem from a unique point of view; "normality" is represented by the adult (white) male and everything else, woman, child or "pervert" are deviations of that model and are lacking something that would make them whole, or "normal", whether it is a penis for the little girl/woman, maturity for the child or sanity for the perverted being. Some of Freud's considerations, such as: "We are ignorant of what characterizes a feminine brain." (Breuhl, 92) are a testimony of the way women are viewed at the time as mysterious beings in comparison to men. Further along in the "Three Essays", Freud states that the erotic life of women "partly owing to the stunting effect of civilized conditions and partly owing to their conventional secretiveness and insincerity is still veiled in an impenetrable obscurity" (Breuhl, 98). This might shed some light on the way Faulkner, in the early Twenties and Thirties might be

influenced by the theoretical thinking of his times in his portrayal of women, as his female characters often embody these characteristics of inexplicable behavior, secrecy and insincerity as this quote from *Light in August* illustrates: "It was the woman who, with a woman's affinity and instinct for secrecy, for casting a faint taint of evil about the most trivial and innocent actions." (*Light In August,* 168) Yet, Faulkner's women are certainly not devoid of power, and one senses the author's fascination, admiration and respect the writer has for women through the characters he designs. He might often not give them the voice of narration, but his depictions are certainly as replete with relief as his male representations, whether they be black, white or an imperceptible mixture of the two.

The relevance of the Freud comparison is pertinent when it comes to Faulkner, not only because of the potential influence of Freud's findings at the time of Faulkner's writing, but in a much more direct and apparent way when one observes the real women that populated his life in comparison with some of his richest characters. The most important female presence in William Faulkner's life must have been his black nanny, or "Mammy" Caroline (Callie) Barr, the woman who raised him and is the undeniable inspiration for the character of Dilsey Gibson in *The Sound and The Fury*, a character that embodies wisdom, patience, piousness, courage and endurance. The affection and deep admiration Faulkner had for this woman definitely comes through in the absolutely endearing character of Dilsey. The same can be said for Caddy Compson, whose exuberant personality is most likely inspired by Faulkner's cousin Sally Murry Wilkins, the little girl he and his brothers grew up with and who, being two years younger than William, was like a sister to them: "as close to her three male cousins as if they were siblings,

and almost with them a paradigm for the Compson children in age and distribution" (Blotner in *Fowler&Abadie*, 14).

As for the austere and sick mothers in his novels, they are always older and disconnected from their offspring. Faulkner's white women are either very young and irresponsible or old and spinsterly. He rarely shows a woman going through the whole cycle of life, they are either at the beginning or at the end of the adult cycle, and the ones that are at the end of the cycle are either ill and/or near death. Whether it be Addie Bundren in her coffin or Mrs. Compson on her bed, Faulkner's mothers are undeniably older and often mean. They are never the ones taking care of their children and are usually stuck in some kind of ailment, incapable of tending to their own basic needs, not to mention those of their children or husbands. Of course, I am referring here particularly to Caroline Compson and to Addie Bundren who seem to be modeled after the perception that Faulkner had of his own mother. Maud Falkner did not appear to have neglected her son but she was busy from the time Faulkner was about two years old, with his younger brother Jack and then with two subsequent brothers; one three years younger, and the last one ten years younger than William.

In his well-known Faulkner biography *One Matchless Time,* Jay Parini exposes the possible influence his mother Maud, might have had on him, as well as his father's, explaining some of his paternal characters as well: "Faulkner was, in fact, the product of an intellectually ambitious mother and a weak, recessive father who really preferred "manly" activities, such as drinking. In each case, the boy identified with the mother's aspirations, the high value she placed on the world of books, of art, of refined things, though still longing for connection to the manly world of the father" (Parini, 20). When they are not mothers, Faulkner's older women are

old maids and spinsters, stuck in the dreams of their virginal past like Miss Rosa Coldfield in *Absalom, Absalom!* or, in a way Johanna Burden in *Light in August*. In his book, Parini reports many instances of women in Faulkner's life being an inspiration for the creation of his female characters. Notably his own grandmother, Sallie Mc Alpine Murry Falkner, who had a fascination for the Civil War and encouraged him in his writing, appears to be the very influence for "Damuddy" a character that is never seen in *S&F* but whose funeral seems to be the very replica of Faulkner's own grandmother's funeral. According to Jay Parini : "The death of his grandmother (when he was nine) struck him so forcefully that memories of this event precipitated *The Sound and The Fury,* his first great novel." and that it was: "The image of the children being sent away from the house during the grandmother's funeral that triggered the narrative" (Parini, 21). Yet, despite this rich legacy and the obvious positive influence of the women in his life on his career, Faulkner is often described as a misogynist.

One such critic is Albert J. Guerard, who, in his critical 1976 book *The Triumph of the Novel,* makes the claim that Faulkner's misogyny as "unrepressed and even undisguised, is often comically and extravagantly explicit, and offers little resistance to analysis." (Guerard,107) In the tenuously argued chapter entitled: "Forbidden Games (III): Faulkner's Mysogyny", he implies the identification of Faulkner with some of his most chauvinistic characters, such as Jason Compson, and makes the claim that "the ultimate and repugnantly forbidden game to the Faulknerian imagination was normal intercourse with a woman of marriageable age." (Guerard, 110) He then embarks on an enumeration of Faulkner's underage or otherwise considered "bovine" characters as proof of his deeply ingrained misogyny. Unfortunately, Guerard's criticism eludes the many admirable female characters that Faulkner has created as well as the

fact that he was not only happily married to a woman his own age, Estelle Oldham, but that he is also known as having entertained several extra-marital affairs with women that were neither underage nor necessarily women of disreputable mores. It is also interesting to note that the only examples Guerard can produce in his chapter are the examples of Lena Grove, Eula Varner and Temple Drake, to whom two thirds of the chapter are dedicated. He ignores the fact that the attitudes and behaviors of individual characters must always, in Faulkner, be seen in the full context of the books to which they belong and that the fates which befall Faulkner's women are not notoriously more disastrous than those which befall his men. Therefore, it can be argued that Guerard's assumptions appear as insufficiently examined, implying that the misogyny could very well emanate from Guerard himself.

In his essay "Faulkner's critics and Women, The voice of the Community" (in *Fowler&Abadie*) John N. Duvall puts two voices into dialogue: the one, more widely believed, that his female characters are all promiscuous and deviant from the moral codes of the time and the second, that women are all encompassing beings, closely linked to the earth and nature and possessing both good and evil qualities. While the first voice relies on examples of promiscuous and self-indulgent characters the likes of (again) *Sanctuary*'s Temple Drake, *Light in August'*s Lena Grove or Eula Varner in *The Hamlet*, not to mention (again) Caddy Compson and Dewey Dell Bundren who all engage in premarital sex and systematically end up pregnant and/or abandoned by the men who originally seduced them, when they don't sell them into prostitution, condemning them to a life of shame and sin. Or, worse, characters like Charlotte Rittenmeier in *Wild Palms* who voluntarily abandon their decent, moral family lives to fall into decadence and sloth. The other voice, sees in Faulkner's women, metaphorical beings who embody the

elements and are the sustainers of life as well as the vessels for both good and evil. This second voice, views Faulkner's females as powerful beings, in full possession of their means and whose choices are dictated by themselves rather than by faith. A good example of this dichotomy at play is Lena Grove, who can either be viewed as a dumb and bovine character, a lost wanderer who just takes the road and lets destiny, in the form of the different men she encounters, take her wherever. A "serenely comic creation" as coined by Guerard. (114) Or, Lena Grove can be perceived as an earth goddess, in full possession of the confidence that her femininity, enhanced by the child she is carrying inside her womb, is enough to get her everything she needs to sustain herself and her unborn child. This unconditional confidence is apparent in many instances in the text as she is represented, walking barefoot, with her sun washed blue bonnet and her voluptuous form, slowly de-ambulating down the road, giving Armstid and Winterbottom, two Mississippians in *Light in August,* the vision of a traveling Venus: "The woman had now gone on, slowly, with her swelling and unmistakable burden… in a shapeless garment of faded blue, carrying a palm leaf fan and a small cloth bundle" (*L in A*, 9). This image definitely conveying more of the empowered female than that of the lost soul.

Duvall notices that critics, notably critics of the Agrarian school, often appropriate the voices of the southern community for their own writing practices, and he subsequently asks the question: "What does it mean for a critic to participate in the systems of labels used by the characters within a story or novel?" (*Fowler&Abadie,* 42) It is an important aspect of literary criticism that Duvall points out in his article, as he shows notably how critics all agree with the "southern male patriarchal view" on account of Charlotte Rittenmeier: "The interpretive community's condemnation of Charlotte Rittenmeier, for example, with its implicit judgment of

female sexuality, all too frequently sounds like the voice of "They", the forces of respectability and conventionality in Wild Palms (*Fowler&Abadie,* 43). In his article, Duvall goes on to comment on the fact that the sexism apparent in Faulkner's critics is sometimes more subtle, but almost always present. Duvall also astutely draws attention to the fact that Faulkner's critics, Cleanth Brooks notably, participate in the dichotomy that the sexes must maintain their roles, very much like Freud and the thinking that is rampant at the time Faulkner writes, that man is an acting subject opposed to woman as an acted on object (*Fowler&Abadie,* 45). This way of perceiving woman is consistent with Freud's theories that male sexuality places the man as aggressor and the woman as victim: "The sexuality of most male human beings contains an element of aggressiveness, the desire to subjugate; the biological significance of it seems to lie in the need for overcoming the resistance of the sexual object by means other than the process of wooing." (Breuhl, 102) Duvall is nonetheless successful in pointing out the array of characters that do not correspond to this description of the male aim, like Horace Benbow or Byron Bunch, both suitable examples of men who are soft spoken, non aggressive characters and Charlotte Ritenmeier or Laverne Shumann as representative of female power and agency (*F&A*, 46). Duvall points out how Faulkner's patriarchal critics, when they fail to categorize the female characters according to their Freudian views, tend to assign them negative qualities, dismissing such women as women who: "desire something more than the limited roles allowed as masculinized and warped or twisted" (*F&A,* 46). In a more feminist treatment of Faulkner's oeuvre, Duvall is pertinent in asking the question of whether it is Faulkner who is misogynistic and old fashioned in his portrayal of women, or whether his critics are. (*F&A*, 45) Of course, the arguable answer to that question could very well be that both Faulkner and his critics are

misogynists, yet in his concluding remarks, Duvall warns about falling into the trap of interpreting Faulkner through a masculinist lens, he states that: "The overvaluation of the paternal voice within the texts of William Faulkner has reduced the scope of Faulkner's message about human interaction to the play of acting males and acted upon females" (*F&A* 55). He invites contemporary critics to rethink the way they envisage Faulkner's characterization of women and male-female relationships by avoiding to systematically envision his female protagonists as victims of premeditated male violence. Faulkner's writing is extremely subtle in his depictions of human relationships, whether they be between men and women or between Blacks and whites and it would be condescending to limit the interpretation of his characters to such a biased and dichotomous level. Faulkner's immense respect, admiration and awe of women put him in a unique position at the time, because he gives them power, in part by linking them to the elements, a power that goes way beyond the organized and anti natural laws of the dominant patriarchy at the time.

In fact, some scholars argue that Faulkner was a feminist because his rendition of women are not stereotyped and his characters are unpredictable. Such a critic is Joseph Blotner, in his essay: "William Faulkner: Life and Art" (*F&A*, 4) where he explores the relevance of the women who shaped Faulkner's life as inspiration for the characters he wrote, pulling out different versions of "woman" as they appear in his novels. In his essay, Blotner cites Linda Welshimer Wagner, who, in a 1976 conference, stated: "I term Faulkner a feminist because he neither denied or disapproved that variety. Instead he celebrated it, immortalizing it in some of his greatest fiction, and giving Western literature some of its most memorable women since Shakespeare" (*F&A*, 4). According to Blotner, Faulkner was not only inspired by the women

directly present in his life, he also drew from literature and mythology as well as from more generic working class and aristocratic women he was able to observe in his surroundings, "and he did his best to portray them as they were, dealing as best they could with their difficult lives" *(F&A*, 15). Finally, Blotner repeats a comment that Faulkner made to him one day: "It's wrong to think about women as if they were dishonest men, they ain't. They're just women" (*F&A*, 18). Whether this was said in jest or whether it was a true reflection of Faulkner's feeling, one thing appears clearly, Faulkner refused to refer to women as a botched version of their male counterpart, he was well intent on considering them as full and equal subjects, in his life as well as in his writing, and, in this vision, was well ahead of the thought that was prevalent at the time.

Ostensibly, Faulkner and feminism are not mutually exclusive, even though the writer is often associated with a region known for it's rampant racism and sexism. In her essay "Faulkner Studies and Women's Studies", Ilse Dusoir Lind is intent on bringing to light the numerous ways in which Faulkner studies and women's studies can intersect. She cites Andre Bleikasten and his implying that there is a relevance between Faulkner's characterization of fathers and "Freud's ideas about the father as they appear in his psychological writings" (*F&A*, 24). Bleikasten thus concludes that Faulkner is as patriarchal as Freud, but, as mentioned earlier in this research, it seems as though Freud was the only reference on such matters at the time, making it easy to link the two writers in an ideological manner. More interestingly, as Lind develops further on, southern female writers might have had an influence on Faulkner. In the American south, women were viewed not only as the embodiment of grace, beauty and chastity, but also as the keepers of culture, and women were therefore much more encouraged in cultural endeavors such as writing than their Northern counterparts. Lind astutely suggests that Faulkner's rendition of

women was stemming more from the desire to highlight his region's perception of the female than to expose his own, giving as an example his later fiction which: "expresses revulsion against female biological functioning by permitting his male characters to describe so natural a function as menstruation as filthy and vile" and in this way: "giving voice to the paradoxes that are inherent in his culture's veneration of white women" (*F&A*, 30).

Lind notably addresses the theme of mother-child relationships in Faulkner's early fiction, with mothers and older women being systematically depicted as nightmarish creatures who often smother and engulf in dungeonlike prisons while showing untreatable "emotional unavailability to their young, even those who have a desperate need of maternal love, like Quentin Compson and Darl Bundren" (*F&A*, 34). On this topic, Lind also suggests that Faulkner might have himself lacked in maternal nurture, she also nuances that: "as the pioneering studies of early child development make clear, even children whose nurture is adequate when judged by the common standards may experience what they feel to be an insufficiency of mothering, since infants vary markedly in the degree and quantity of maternal closeness they require" (*F&A,* 34). According to Lind, Faulkner was an infant with intense needs, not letting his mother get a full night's rest for the first two years of his life. With the subsequent arrival of siblings and the low involvement of the children's father, Maud Falkner appears to have been in extreme demand. Lind hence suggests that this early childhood existence explains Faulkner's characterization of mothers as always old and inaccessible, emphasizing the mature female's autonomy and authority in negative terms, while "the seductiveness and sensuous appeal of the mother which characterizes the Oedipal conflict is present far less often." (*F&A*, 35) Yet, alongside the portrayal of absent or non involved fathers, Faulkner likes to depict the mysterious pre natal

stages, when life is still within. Such a moment can be seen when in the opening chapter of *Light in August* when Lena Grove has just eaten sardines and she suddenly stops, only aware of her baby's movement within her womb. Descriptions of early childhood activity are important in Faulkner's work. This can notably be observed with the early story of Joe Christmas at the orphanage, where the child's perception of things is accurately described along with the early manifestations of his budding sexuality that the toothpaste scene highlights. Such close attention to the small details of the beginnings of life are expanded by Faulkner's many renditions of nature which show his broader concern for the world itself. Faulkner images the earth as female and is the first to denounce the disrespectful acts that men perpetrate on her. And, while Lind argues that Faulkner's concerns with the early stages of life and his imaging of earth as female "soften the impact of his misogyny" the question remaining is rather, whether there is such a thing as Faulkner's misogyny; while his depictions of mothers can be experienced as hateful towards women in general, they are to be explored rather as an attestation of the drama of the mother-child relationship rather than a requisitory against women themselves.

To conclude this chapter, it is important to note one thing; much like Freud in his writing, Faulkner's narration is a mixture of personal appreciations and a reflection of the rampant themes of the times, usually uttered by the characters themselves. Faulkner often steps out of his own narrative to let his characters take over the story telling, and their considerations are not to be mistaken for Faulkner's own. It is a mistake that is apparently being indulged in by many critics, then and now. Faulkner's attention to the details of early childhood, his observations of the mother-child connection and his fascination with the dynamics of family actually link him to consequent feminist issues, because through the creation of many passionate,

happy or unhappy, active and intelligent female characters, Faulkner was letting women be seen and heard.

The Dark and the Feminine

At the time that Faulkner writes, both women and blacks are considered as second class citizens who cannot be the full masters of their destinies, either because of their gender or because of the color of their skin. These two forms of discriminating have very similar traits and are often paired within Faulkner's most disturbing characters such as Jason Compson or Thomas Sutpen who both show a deep contempt and distrust of both women and blacks. These concerns come into play to assess whether the struggles that blacks and women go through express themselves when it comes to the narrative techniques Faulkner uses to portray them.

With Jason's perception of both blacks and women it is pretty clear that, at least for Jason, women and people of color are on the same level: "niggers and bitches" to use his own terms. Jason has the same attitude of contempt and distrust towards women that he has for blacks and that is apparent in a lot of his lines, the opening of his section for example, talking about his niece, Miss Quentin: "Once a bitch always a bitch, what I say … she ought to be down there in that kitchen right now … instead of up there in her room, gobbing paint on her face and waiting for six niggers that can't even stand up out of a chair unless they've got a pan full of bread and meat to balance them, to fix breakfast for her." (*S&F* 119) Or further on, still talking about Miss Quentin: "When people act like niggers, no matter who they are the only thing to do is to treat them like a nigger." (*S&F* 120) Show to which extent his hate and distrust is equally potent

towards both groups. Jason's intimate relations with women are summarized by the exchange he has with Lorraine, a prostitute in Memphis, who basically performs service for him in exchange for money in the same way that the blacks in his house perform service in exchange for room and board. Yet, what Jason is most likely feeling deep down towards the two castes represented by blacks and women is undeniably fear, which would explain why he is trying so hard to control them. As for his mother, Caroline Compson and much to her sorrow, he seems to have more contempt than respect for her since having taken over the position of "man of the house". This amalgam of women and blacks is nothing new or revolutionary and had already been noticed by second wave feminists like Simone de Beauvoir.

In her internationally acclaimed book *The Second Sex,* Simone de Beauvoir makes an observation about the similarities in the discriminations that women and blacks endure in their struggle for equal treatment, often stemming from within the oppressed groups themselves. In asking the question, "What is a woman?" De Beauvoir immediately sets the tone of her writings. Unlike Freud, who speaks from a male standpoint to an implied male audience, she will consistently question and reflect upon subjectivity throughout her book, being careful to comment on every single instance where a definition of the position of woman in society is necessary. When she states that: "To define herself, a woman must first say: I am a woman, whereas a man never begins by presenting himself as an individual of a certain sex. (It goes without saying that he is a man)" (41) She is touching, in a clear and understandable language, on the major themes of her work and pointing out to which extent we are conditioned to view the human concept as being represented by the masculine model. De Beauvoir observes to which extent woman is defined and differentiated with reference to man. (41) and by the fact that: "No

group ever sets itself up as the One, without at once setting up the Other against itself." (42) This can undeniably be applied to racial as well as gendered relations. In her book, De Beauvoir mentions Richard Wright's novel *Black Boy* and quotes how he showed to which extent the ambitions of a young African American man are barred from the beginning, and the obstacles he must conquer to attain a level where problems only begin to posit themselves for whites. She also notes that the black Africans living in France face similar difficulties as the ones women encounter, thus not limiting her observations to the African American situation.

In asking the question: "Why are women oppressed by men?" De Beauvoir is pertinent in comparing the situation of woman to that of the "negro". One of the examples she uses for this comparison, is that there exists a caricature of "the good negro" in the same way that there exists a caricature of "the feminine woman". In both situations, the protagonists are viewed as ideally submissive to the paternalist system. (44) They are subjected as "the other" the one one who must constantly be defined as "woman" or as "negro" and, because they are being kept in this situation of inferiority, the fact remains that they are, in effect, inferior. (44) De Beauvoir, in reflecting on the Hegelian idea that "to be" really means "to have become" is successful in raising the crucial question of subjectivity, but, more than that, she constantly repeats the question throughout her work, never letting the reader forget that our whole (western) way of apprehending humanity is through a (white) masculine lens.

With the advent of third wave feminism, this amalgam between women and blacks is being challenged. In effect, critical race feminists have pointed out that feminism was mainly a white, middle and upper class women's prerogative and that being issued from an ethnic or cultural minority added a different set of problems regarding women's rights that white feminists were

not addressing. Furthermore, it seems like white feminists have consistently relied on the help and services of "brown" women to attain their emancipation, as the tasks they deemed were unfairly designated for them were not taken over by men, but by other women, precisely issued from oppressed and dominated populations. As Ann Firror states in *The Southern Lady* (1970) : "The presence of many Negro women willing to work for very low wages reduced still further the (domestic) work of many wives and mothers." (Firror, 135) Moreover, it seems as though even early feminists who also happened to be abolitionists like Elisabeth Cady Stanton and Lucrecia Mott were intent on keeping the frontier between white and black women very clear.

Born Isabelle ("Bell") Bawnfree, Sojourner Truth (1797-1883) was an African-American abolitionist and women's rights activist. In "Ain't I A Woman?" her speech claiming rights for women and that she delivered at the Ohio Convention in 1851, Truth invokes her own strength: "look at me. Look at my arm!" to argue that she is by no means weaker than any man and that her work capacity is equal to a man's despite the added burden of child-bearing. In her speech, Truth amalgamates the struggles of the "negroes of the South" and of the "women of the North", "All talking about their rights" As a negro and a woman herself, she points out the similarities in both struggles and singles out white man as the common enemy: "the white man will be in a fix pretty soon."

The audience at the Women's Rights Convention comprised mostly women, some of which were hostile to the idea of having a black woman speak there because they were afraid of the possibility of assimilation between abolitionists and women's rights activists. It is unclear how the speech was received at the Convention as reports on its reception differ widely from largely friendly to being greeted by hisses from haters wanting to keep her from speaking. There are at

least two recognized versions of her speech, the first account was transcribed by Marius Robinson June 21st. 1853 in the *Anti-Slavery Bugle*, but the better known version was re-written by Frances Diana Burker Gage in 1863. Truth was not literate, and did not write the speech, but it is believed that she collaborated with Robinson on a version made for the Bugle, a newspaper more concerned with the rights of African-Americans than with the rights of women. Gage's version encompasses comments made by Gage herself on the overall atmosphere of the Ohio convention and of the reception of Truth as a speaker. The most remarkable aspect of Gage's version of the speech is the fact that she (re)wrote it very clearly and purposefully in the southern black dialect otherwise known as African-American Vernacular English, whereas in fact, Sojourner Truth was raised in the North, speaking Dutch and prided herself on her correct spoken English. The way that Gage's version is written is in fact reminiscent of a minstrel show stump speech; a discourse written in black dialect, and meant to exaggerate and ridicule black culture for the amusement of white folks. These speeches contained lots of malapropisms and purposefully butchered terms in order to elicit laughter. In 1863, when Gage's version came out, minstrelsy was in full bloom, and white actors in black face were portraying an exaggerated rendition of black people and culture all over America and even in Europe. The concern here is whether to look at Gage's initiative to make Truth sound more "black" and give the clear sound of southern black dialect to her speech, a way to make it more emotional and accessible or as a way to clearly differentiate black women's cause from the white feminists cause? In any case, the result is that the stigmatizing speech went down in history in its dialectical version. Gage therefore succeeding at keeping Truth in her place. However, on the New York department of

Education's website, it looks as though reparation has been engaged as Gage's version of the speech is currently featured in academically correct English.

With the advent of third wave feminism, the particular situation that black or "brown" women face, on top of being discriminated against their sex, is defined within an "intersectionality" of these two forms of oppression. The term has been coined by Kimberlé Crenshaw in 1989. Born in 1959, Kimberlé Crenshaw is known for her work in the late 1980s and early 1990s, which was especially important in influencing and developing the idea of intersectionality. The theory suggests that, and seeks to examine how, various biological, social and cultural categories such as gender, race, class, ability, sexual orientation, religion, caste, age and other axes of identity interact on multiple and often simultaneous levels. This framework can be used to understand how systemic injustice and social inequality occur on a multidimensional level. Intersectionality holds that the classical conceptualizations of oppression within society, such as racism, sexism, classism, ableism, biphobia, homophobia, transphobia, and belief-based bigotry, do not act independently of one another. Instead, these forms of oppression interrelate, creating a system of oppression that reflects the "intersection" of multiple forms of discrimination. In her work, Crenshaw discusses black feminism, which argues that the experience of being a black woman cannot be understood in terms of being black, and of being a woman, considered independently, but must include the interactions, which frequently reinforce each other. Crenshaw argues that the intersectionality experience within black women is more powerful than the sum of their race and sex, and that any observations that do not take intersectionality into consideration cannot accurately address the manner in which black women are subordinated.

In her essay “Mapping the Margins”, Crenshaw responds to the tendency within politics to overlook or silence intra-group differences, a dynamic repeated throughout anti-racist and feminist movements to the detriment of black women. Crenshaw explores the simultaneously raced and gendered dimensions of violence against women of color, specifically by looking at responses to domestic violence and rape. In doing so, she draws attention to the way the specificity of black women’s experience of violence is ignored, overlooked, misrepresented and/or silenced. The essay aims to explore the race and gender dimensions of violence against women of color, while contemporary feminist and antiracist discourses have failed to consider such intersectional identities: “Focusing on dimensions of male violence against women - battering and rape - I consider how the experiences of women of color are frequently the product of intersecting patterns of racism and sexism.” (1242) In the third part of her essay, Crenshaw presents intersectionality as a way of framing the various interactions of race and gender in the context of violence against women of color. (1296) and she concludes by arguing that: “The narratives of gender are on white middle class women and the narratives of race are based on the experiences of black men.” (1298) asking the question: “What does it mean to argue that gender identities have been obscured in antiracist discourses, just as race identities have been obscured in feminist discourses?” (1299) But what Crenshaw is really arguing for is the fact that our identities are constructed through the intersection of multiple dimensions. She is the first theorist who really looks at the merging point of the two socially constructed elements that are race and gender and in that she brings a lot of, until now avoided, issues and questions to the conversation.

These dynamics can clearly be observed in Faulkner's novels, where women, blacks and black women are depicted as having similar yet different struggles in order to survive with their "condition". And particularly in the way that violence towards women is depicted; Temple Drake's rape is shown as being a particularly brutal and unjust act, but the few instances where black girls are being used sexually in Faulkner's stories appear as a predictable milestone in a Southern boy's coming of age. Because Faulkner's characters are mostly based on real people, they are in a perfect position to beautifully exemplify exactly what Crenshaw stipulates in her work. And Faulkner seems to have seized factually what was at play regarding gender and race at the time he writes.

CHAPTER 1

THE LADIES

Belles and Rebels

"I was taught that there is no halfway ground, that a woman is either a lady or not."

Caroline Compson, (*S&F*, 69)

"Attention, immediately after the war was fixed upon two things: The Negro and politics. as a consequence it was some time before many people noticed, or reflected upon what was taking place in the "woman's sphere" of southern life" (Firror, 106)

Between 1830 and 1930, women's situation in America is evolving, as an increasing number of women have been reported entering the workforce. Also, an increasing number of girls were going to college and the discussion on the idea of a companionable marriage as opposed to an arranged one was taking shape in a South which appeared to be the last stronghold of Victorian sexual attitudes. Yet, in the rural South, this change was slow to be adopted as the family remained at the center of many women's lives. In her book *The Southern Lady,* Ann Firror notes that: "More than other Americans, perhaps southerners had put their faith in the family as the central institution of society, faith that was slow to change" (Firror, 213) Firror also quotes Ernest R. Groves, an early family sociologist who lived and worked in North

Carolina and who thought that by 1929 “only extremely isolated and traditional” women were entirely removed from the current of change and that nearly all women were voicing some desire for a larger role. (Firror, 216) Groves also makes the important observation that the authoritarian family of the patriarchal type effectively concealed discord and that “the rapidity with which women have aged in the past, their invalidism, mental breakdown and early death have been in part because of the strain of concealing irritation that was not permitted self expression.” (Firror, 216)

Faulkner’s young ladies are often promiscuous and unable to resist sexual attraction, inevitably leading them into pregnancy. They are beautiful and irresponsible just waiting for life or men to take care of them and to make decisions regarding their destinies. Like slaves, they possess no agency whatsoever and pass in a way from the hands of one master, usually their father, to the hands of the next master, the husband, when they can find one, usually after their pregnancy is discovered or, like in Drusilla Hawk’s case; suspected. They end up, if they are lucky or smart, with decent ones. Faulkner’s young aristocratic heroines illustrate a yearning for change, showing how unattainable the ideal of the Southern belle was. When this ideal is represented, as it is in an older character like Caroline Compson, who appears to be the perfect embodiment of the repressed female, the older belle is often portrayed succumbing to an ailing health, such is the constraining nature of her obligations as a matron. To summarize the situation in the South at the time Faulkner writes his first novels, this can be deducted: that while many choices were increasingly available to women, the image of the Southern lady as a model to strive to imitate was slow to die. This pull towards a more emancipated condition is clearly visible in all of Faulkner’s younger female characters who strive, each in their own way, for a

different experience than that of their mothers. Ernest Grove also saw one area of maladjustment in the realm of sex, as women, who previously contented themselves with pleasing their husbands, were now beginning to believe that the right to satisfaction was also theirs. (Firror, 220)

What drives Caddy and other younger female Faulkner characters, that fall under the umbrella of the Southern lady, is a fierce yearning to break out of the mold of the Southern belle, whether it be by her discourse or her actions. Caddy explains to Quentin: "There was something terrible in me sometimes at night I could see it grinning at me I could see it through them grinning at me through their faces it's gone now and I'm sick." (74) Expressing thus to which extent the draw of her physical urges is powerful and irresistible. There exists only one remedy to Caddy's sickness and she knows what that is: "I've got to marry somebody." (75) Caddy, like other Faulknerian beautiful and stubborn heroines, seems to be desperately waiting for a man to take care of her and to rule over her life, (but what other choices does she have?) highlighting how difficult the ideal of the Southern belle was to attain for young aristocratic ladies who had usually benefited from a rural upbringing at the hands of a "Mammy" and often in the company of the latter's own offspring, in a childhood realm where there were no or very few differences between the black and the white children.

But what of the men, who were issued from the same society and who eventually found themselves in the position of courting and marrying these ladies? How did they handle the very strict boundaries of their wives' "proper behavior"? While Southern ladies were either struggling to attain or battling against the perfect ideal of the belle, miscegenation appears to have been one of the outlets for Southern men, who still turned to black women: "to ease, in some measure the

frustration that came to him through the code of conduct he himself had imposed upon his own womankind." (Firror, 217) So, it seems that it was accepted and agreed upon that white men had easy access to black women as an outlet to express the sexual yearnings that their own ladies, for the reasons cited above, were not in the position of offering them, thus setting a double standard. One that allowed men to freely explore the realm of their own sexual longings but that defended their female counterparts from doing the same thing.

In *Faulkner and Southern Womanhood*, Diane Roberts reports on this particular subject, observing that white men (as well as some white women) experienced the aftermath of the Civil War as a period of loss of control over their land, legislature, blacks and women, (Roberts, 104) giving birth to groups like the Ku Klux Klan and to myths like that of the Southern belle: a well brought up young lady, usually of aristocratic descent and, of course, wealth, who's modesty only equals her puritanism and proper behavior, in other words, a female heir who encompasses all the values of the Old South. Aspects of the belle appear in stark contrast to her opposite; the black man, whose main stereotyped traits are an uncontrollable and bestial sexuality that is unabashedly directed at the virtuous white woman. Roberts states that: "The economy of sexuality became a new battleground as the symbolic order struggled to keep its hierarchies intact: women's bodies had to be protected from external menace." (Roberts, 105) But she also nuances that: "Parallel to the fear of lower-class rapists assaulting white ladies was the fear that ladyhood wasn't what it used to be." (Roberts, 105) Suggesting thus that the desire for emancipation might have come from the women themselves, yearning to get free from the yoke of an unsustainable virtue.

Surveying different representations of the "Belle" in modern literature, Roberts remarks that often: "The Belle is no longer the light of the plantation but a vehicle for exploring a shift in the understanding of female sexuality." (Roberts, 106) and the novels tackling the subject enter a playground "documenting the struggle between the free play of sexuality and the social discourse demanding containment of the female body." (Roberts, 109) This illustrates exactly what is at play with Faulkner's belles such as Drusilla Hawk, Temple Drake, Caddy Compson or Eula Varner. Roberts also points out, echoing John N. Duvall, that there are two distinct ways to apprehend Faulkner's ladies: "one that she should be the untainted vessel of all goodness, the other that she is a cauldron of boiling vice." (Roberts, 110) Yet, it is important to state that no Faulkner heroine is either all one thing or the other, one of Faulkner's achievements in his portraying of women being that they escape common categorizing and that what shines through them is a human quality of being rather than the expression of a social myth. In that way, Faulkner, by showing the internal struggles that go with trying to attain impossible perfection and virtue, can be apprehended as a liberator of the Southern belle. These dynamics are clearly at play in the character of Caddy Compson as she is torn apart between the demands of her society and the deep urges of her physical body.

Faulkner's ladies possess very little agency. Again, these women's fate is to be observed in parallel with the fate of blacks at the time, who are similarly victimized by the stereotypes that are weighing heavily upon them, and not necessarily in command of their own destinies. Again, it is interesting to see Faulkner's women in comparison to their situation. In that sense, *S&F* is a good example of this parallel as it presents two families: a white one, the Compsons and a black one, the Gibsons. The offspring of these two families grow under the watchful eye of Dilsey,

who can arguably be viewed as the quintessential "Mammy". In fact, as long as the children are children, there is not much insistence on their different provenance, as white and black children evolve alongside and with similar christian values enforced by Dilsey as the supreme authority. Dilsey is aware that, at some point, the rules of the South will mean that they are not equal, that the whites will rule over the blacks and that the men will rule over the women. Yet, during childhood they are all on the same level as this line from Benjy's section, uttered by Versh, one of Dilsey's children, towards the group of children, black and white, that have gathered at the "branch" illustrates: "I'm going to tell mammy on you all. Versh said." (13) This explains perhaps why Caddy rebels against her condition.

Caddy Compson, The Beautiful and Tragic Little Girl

As a child, Caddy is motherly and bossy, yet loving and nurturing, a little miniature Dilsey in a way, who likes to be in charge of her siblings: "Let them mind me tonight, Father. Caddy said." (16) But the society she is growing up in will not allow her to retain this personality and to be a functioning part of it. In fact, as Caddy grows, she continues behaving like a black woman, at least according to Quentin: "Why won't you bring him to the house, Caddy? Why must you do like nigger women do in the pasture the ditches the dark woods hot hidden furious in the dark woods." (61) Like the black children she grows up with, Caddy has no agency whatsoever on her destiny, because, as Roberts points out: "Women and blacks are both Other, marked by race and gender. The blackness of sexuality becomes a metaphor for Caddy's life and subsequent fall from ladyhood into exile." (Roberts, 116) Despite her beauty and stubbornness,

she will be forever at the mercy of the men who support her (as the appendix to *The Sound and the Fury* suggests) like a slave going from master to master, and her intelligence only allows her to end up with good masters (or so it appears).

Caddy Compson perhaps represents Faulkner's fullest female character despite the fact that she never really speaks for herself and practically lacks an internal life. Caddy exists through the eyes and narration of her three brothers and Faulkner manages to draw a very complete persona out of her. In the opening of the "Caddy" chapter in her book *The Feminine and Faulkner*, Minrose Gwin quotes Andre Bleikasten:

> "Caddy, as we have already seen, is first and foremost an image; she exists only in the minds and memories of her brothers…. She is in fact what woman has always been in man's imagination: the figure par excellence of the Other, a blank screen onto which he projects both of his desires and his fears, his love and his hate. And insofar as this Other is a myth and a mirage, a mere fantasy of the Self, it is bound to be a perpetual deceit and an endless source of disappointment." André Bleikasten - "The Most Splendid Failure: Faulkner's The Sound and The Fury" (Gwin, 34)

Bleikasten, by suggesting to envision Caddy as "other" is obviously referring to De Beauvoir's use of the term as the lens she suggests women are viewed through. This validates itself very well in the case of the narrative strategies employed to define Caddy. It can therefore be implied that Faulkner was following Freud's footsteps by representing women as the eternal "other". This argument is intensified by the fact that Faulkner while he sometimes narrates from a feminine voice, almost never narrates from a black voice. Such a choice on Faulkner's part definitely verifies itself in *The Sound and The Fury*, where the two main female characters, Caddy Compson and Dilsey Gibson are precisely not given either their own section or a narrative voice. They are consistently described from a masculine point of view, to the point that Faulkner

breaks his own narrative strategy in *The Sound and The Fury* by introducing a third person narrator for the last section, which happens to be Dilsey's, while the other three sections are narrated from three different male points of view. Caddy, arguably the main protagonist of *S&F*, doesn't get a section at all, she doesn't even get a voice. Which is not to say that Faulkner disliked her, quite the contrary Caddy's narrative in *S&F* is clearly letting the reader suspect that not only Quentin Compson but Faulkner himself must have been in love with his character. Minrose Gwin senses this when she states: "We know Faulkner's passion for Caddy, his beautiful one, his heart's darling. Yet we also are aware that Eric Sundquist is right in saying, There is probably no major character in literature about whom we know so little in proportion to the amount of attention she receives." (Gwin, 37)

Caddy's voice, in Gwin's terms: "floats up to us muted but articulate out of the feminine space of *The Sound and The Fury*." (Gwin, 35) A feminine space she describes as: "the concentric and bisexual spaces between the manifest text of Faulkner's male creative consciousness and the unconscious discourse of its own feminine subjectivity." (Gwin, 37) She suggests a radical strategy in apprehending Faulkner's text by "tracing the elusive shape of Faulkner's bisexual artistic (un)consciousness" (Gwin, 37). These observations are interesting in that they force to assume that there is such a thing as Faulkner's femininity and, if that is the case, that there should be a form of expression of this femininity. If that expression cannot be detected by direct assertions from the author, it should appear in the character's dialogue, but what Gwin is implying is that, in Caddy's case, and perhaps because of the fact that Faulkner had special feelings for this character it must be looked for somewhere else: "continually arising from and fading into her brother's discourse, always in the process of emerging and disappearing

from the male text." If we decide to go with such assumptions, it is important to state that Faulkner's femininity, must express itself somehow, which would explain why his female characters are so "real". But, the fact that there could be a feminine Faulkner, does not imply that there is a "black" Faulkner or a "blackness" that would express itself somewhere in his texts. This could be a possible explanation for the fact that he almost never endorses the black voice, while the feminine voice (coming, as Gwin suggests, from his own femininity) expresses itself, at least in *S&F,* through the male characters' narration.

Faulkner most likely drew Caddy's character lines from his cousin Sally Murry, who spent a lot of time with him and his brothers growing up and was like a sister to them. Yet, Faulkner only had brothers and the presence of a little girl amongst them must have been a fascinating thing that was tinted with mystery. In that vein, it is to be noted that with *As I Lay Dying,* Faulkner also proposes a family of boys with the unique sister, giving these two particular heroines a special place in their respective family dynamics. The two girls are shown as having a sense of responsibility towards their brothers as well as a yearning for a different kind of existence, but they are unwaveringly oppressed by their circumstances as well as enslaved to the reproductive functions that their bodies seem intent on expressing, relegating them to the condition of vessels. Caddy is particularly interesting in that aspect, as the love Faulkner feels for her is visible in the way he depicts her relations with Benjy and Quentin as an enticing mixture of innocence and irresistible sexuality conveyed through a form of rebelliousness against the proper manners according to which she is brought up. This rebelliousness, which expresses itself mainly with her becoming promiscuous is foreshadowed in Benjy's section where Caddy is pictured with soiled undergarments: "Caddy was all wet and muddy behind" (13) symbolizing

her future shameless behavior as well as the taint on the family's "honor" and when she utters the threat: "I'll run away and never come back!" (13) it is also something the plot shows her as eventually doing.

In fact, Caddy will be forced to run away, abandoning her baby girl in the process, not because she lacks the maternal instinct to take care of her but because the circumstances of her existence do not allow her to raise her own child. Caddy is disowned and rejected by her family, yet, this rejection, in her case, becomes liberating as it enables her to escape an environment in which she does not really belong. But Caddy does not lack maternal instinct, it is clearly present in her relationship to Benjy as the following dialogue with Mrs. Compson suggests: "you don't need to bother with him. I like to take care of him. Don't I. Benjy." (*S&F*, 42) So Caddy appears as a little mother to Benjy and an almost lover to Quentin, fulfilling within her own family the destiny that she will not be able to live out in society. She definitely shows concern and remorse for leaving Miss Quentin and Faulkner makes that clear when he brings her back, at the moment of Mr. Compson's funeral, begging Jason to let her get a glimpse of her progeny: "Jason, she said, looking at the grave, if you'll fix it so I can see her a minute I'll give you fifty dollars." (134) Caddy's fate is pretty typical of Faulkner's young mothers in that as soon as these young mothers have their babies, they disappear from Faulkner's stories. As a matter of fact, Faulkner portrays very young women becoming sexually active and therefore pregnant but never shows them raising their children. Faulkner actually never portrays sexually mature women with children. Caddy will become an outcast and Dilsey will take over as mother to Caddy's child, just as she took over as mother for Mrs. Compson's children: In fact, it appears as though Dilsey steps in whenever mothers fail, and the authority with which she announces that

she will be taking care of Caddy's daughter, Miss Quentin, is obvious: "Who else gwine raise her 'cep me? Aint't I raised eve'y one of y'all?" (p.131)

Caddy's daughter, Miss Quentin, appears to pick up exactly where her mother has left off. Rebelling against moral constrictions in an even more overt way. The passage from Jason's section where he aims at physically abusing her with a belt, depicts her as wearing only a kimono under which, and in Jason's terms she is "damn near naked" (121) and repeatedly showing shoulder or leg. This image strikes a very telling metaphor of the thin veil that still preserves young Miss Quentin, and her southern female peers, from the complete abandon of restricting moral values. It shows the female body as being very weakly contained and merely covered and very close to being fully liberated, "her kimono unfastened, flapping about her." (121) In contrast, the masculinity represented by Jason appears close to bestiality, as he seems on the verge of not only beating her but also perhaps intent on violating his niece as his answer to Mrs. Compson's concern shows:

"Remember she's your own flesh and blood," she says."

"Sure," I says, "that's just what I'm thinking of - flesh. And a little blood too, if I had my way. When people act like niggers, no matter who they are the only thing is to treat them like a nigger. (120)

Because Jason Compson is undeniably the most misogynistic and racist character in all of Faulkner's creations, his amalgamating of blacks and women is visible to the point of exaggeration, with the opening line to his section (referring to Miss Quentin) being the famous utterance: "Once a bitch always a bitch what I say" (119) Jason illustrates exactly the tendency at play in the "othering" of women and blacks by Southern patriarchy, in a way that was

undeniably accommodating to the white male, by making any population straying from that definition a subservient subject, there to cater to his needs without necessitating any kind of retribution on his part. It is therefore no wonder, that while blacks might have remained in the subservient position for lack of means to get out of it, Southern ladies in Faulkner's novels really show a push to break out of their constraining situation. This is even more visible with the story of Temple Drake.

Temple Drake's lot in *Sanctuary* is definitely not to be envied; raped and sequestered she represents the victimized woman. In fact, Albert J. Guerard does have a point in his misogynist criticism of Faulkner, (*Sanctuary* is actually the main example on which his article centers on) because Temple Drake's lack of defensive action for herself is truly appalling. But *Sanctuary* was, admittedly, a "pot boiler" made to bring in some very much needed income. So Faulkner served his American readers with a smoky, scandalous and highly stylized little piece. Sufficient to quench depression era readers' thirst for intensely dramatic action, yet just subtle enough to unveil the social myths linking women, sex and crime that were rampant at the time. In fact, it looks as though Temple is the continuation of Caddy, in that Faulkner, intent on deconstructing the myth of the Southern belle, starts challenging her immaculate whiteness by showing Caddy's dirty behind and then drags her even deeper in the mud with the story of Temple Drake. There is a lot of symbolism in *Sanctuary* as the good girl/bad girl myth is exaggerated to a superfluous point. In fact, it doesn't take much for Temple Drake to quickly slip from one universe to the next as she shows practically no resistance to the events that will shape her destiny. It may seem extremely misogynist of Faulkner to stage such a cruel descent into inferno, but by portraying Temple Drake thus, he is illustrating to what extent the Southern belle ideal is harmful. By only

teaching obedience to the male supremacy, the South has created ladies that are incapable not only of defending themselves but of actually even questioning male authority. Such is the pathetic story of Temple Drake, reminiscent of a Southern, depression era Little Red Riding Hood!

With *Sanctuary,* Faulkner attacks the myth of Southern ladyhood by denouncing the unsustainable position Southern ladies find themselves in. By showing Temple Drake embracing the low life without much protest, he actually helps her to reclaim her sexuality. In Temple Drake's case, rape is the only thing that can do that, as she cannot enter the realm of a liberated sexuality by herself but must be forcibly taken there by a representer of the male sex. Temple quickly embraces her new condition, discovering, with Red, that she too, possesses a strong sexual desire, a desire whose expression is acceptable in the new universe she is evolving in: "Room, she said, Hurry!" (*Sanctuary*, 238) as she orders a space for Red and her to have a sexual encounter, then begins to say: "Ah-ah-ah-ah in an expiring voice, her body arching slowly backwards as though faced by an exquisite torture." (238) and finally uttering: "Please, please, please, please. Don't make me wait. I'm burning up." (239) These lines, while they can be interpreted as a form of misogyny on Faulkner's part as he shows Temple going lower than decency will permit, are rare in Faulkner's writing. By showing a woman's desire without retorting to powerful metaphor or symbolism and by offering thus Temple's sexual longings crudely to the reader, Faulkner is definitely breaking with his usual style and literally liberating his character's deepest expression of sexual need, something he doesn't do with most of his other ladies. With this particular novel, Faulkner also explores a new literary dynamic, that of the sexual predator, paving the way for the *Lolita*s of the future by giving this kind of literature a

way to exist. But what he is ultimately really illustrating with temple Drake is the choice every woman has to make: to either embrace her wild, true side (and in that case, follow her heart) or to make a wise decision, one that will admit her as an acceptable representer of Southern ladyhood, with its attire of virtue, predictability and boredom. With the creation of Temple Drake, Faulkner is denouncing an unsustainable condition for women as well as destroying a myth; that of the Southern belle, and by revealing a woman's desire he is validating it. With Temple Drake, Faulkner shows a victim who embraces her captivity, discovering there something of intrinsic value, herself perhaps. Some of Faulkner's ladies go further than using their situation and turning it around, some of Faulkner's ladies, by the force of their all powerful femininity are actually depicted as dangerous to the male will. Such a character with whom it is hazardous to tamper is *The Hamlet*'s Eula Varner.

This gallery would not be complete without the mention of the enchanting Eula Varner: the epitome of femininity in everything that is most archetypal. Eula's overflowing sensuality borders on the magical and the power she derives from it is undeniable. She is described as something more than human, goddess-like: "Her entire appearance suggested some symbology out of the Old Dionysic times - honey in sunlight and bursting grapes, the writhen bleeding of the crushed fecundated vein beneath the hard rapacious trampling goat-hoof." (*The Hamlet*, 105) Although she is the most passive of all of Faulkner's female characters, refusing to even walk until an advanced age, the strength that emanates from her is truly fantastic. This is perhaps best shown when the school teacher, Labove pathetically tries to molest her and she just brushes him off with that line of lines: "Stop pawing me. You old headless horse-man Ichabod Crane." (*The Hamlet* p. 135). She adds humiliation to insult by not even mentioning the attack to her brother.

Nonetheless, like the others, Eula will not escape the fate of pregnancy and motherhood, and, like the others, she will be paired with the first available gentleman/master and little will be said about her after that.

The Sartoris Belle

Published in 1938, *The Unvanquished* is one of Faulkner's lesser known works as it does not exhibit the same level of sophisticated, innovative prose that can be found in the likes of *The Sound and The Fury* or *As I Lay Dying*. It is arguable that, in the same way, the characters populating the stories of *The Unvanquished* might not appear as rounded and complex as the finely chiseled, psychologically tormented likes of Quentin Compson or Darl Bundren. The narrative evolves through pieces that are each individually titled and that were written at different times for the *Saturday Evening Post* among other publications.

Set during the Civil War, the novel's main characters appear to have been chosen among Faulkner's ancestry; Colonel Sartoris in particular, being a recurring figure throughout other novels as well. While Faulkner unambiguously celebrates the Sartorises' gallantry, heroism and high moral values, the racism underlying the Confederate cause is only partially -if at all- and certainly not directly, addressed. Instead, the novel focuses on the Sartorises' losses and how they handle them as a family. The lives of blacks are only experienced through the lens of the white -Southern- characters. Faulkner's choice of depicting the black exodus that followed abolition from a white, Southern child's point of view, shows the tragedy of the former slaves' situation right after abolition from a uniquely Confederate standpoint. Moreover, *The*

Unvanquished shows blacks who do not necessarily want their freedom and stay attached to their masters. Only one character, Loosh, is willing to embrace this new found freedom, but his character is depicted in negative tones. As for Ringo, Bayard's faithful companion, he embodies the complexity of whites and blacks' relations when those were constructed in early childhood. Ringo and Bayard behave in many ways like brothers, faithful to the family bond and honor over everything else, and one must wait until the penultimate chapter of the novel for Ringo to suddenly realize that he has, in fact, been emancipated: "I done been abolished!" (199) But the bond that links him to the Sartorises is much stronger for him than the -abstract- concept of freedom.

While *The Unvanquished* has often been singled out of Faulkner's work as a controversial novel regarding race, one must always remember to read Faulkner as a witness of his times and of Southern history. Faulkner reports, more than he offers original ideas or doctrines, and his writings must be apprehended as a recording of the American South's beliefs, thoughts, ideas and actions rather than as a celebration of white supremacy. Or, as Steven M. Stowe suggests in the Preface to his book, *Intimacy and Power in the Old South*: "His combination of journalistic squint and wide eyed cultural gaze sized up the complexity while never getting quite free of it." (Stowe, Preface) This comes through with the portrayal of Ringo in particular as he is depicted as clever and heroic and in many ways as smarter and quicker witted than Bayard. Rather than as conflictual, whites' and black's relations are shown from an intimate and mundane point of view, observing everyday life and the subtle psychological mechanisms that appear throughout their interactions. In this Bildungsroman, Faulkner explores Bayard and Ringo's friendship from childhood on and is successful at getting to the core of their

relationship: “Ringo and I had been born in the same month and had both fed at the same breast and had slept together and eaten together for so long that Ringo called Granny “Granny” just like I did, until maybe he wasn’t a nigger anymore or maybe I wasn’t a white boy anymore…” (7) With this particular relationship, Faulkner is able to bring out the absurdity of the socially constructed concept of race. Through Bayard and Ringo’s friendship, the natural evolution of human interactions becomes clear, as we see whites and blacks that are linked more by the bonds of family and community than by a biased connection.

Faulkner features the exodus that directly followed abolition, but the characters of *The Unvanquished*, both black and white experience it as an external wave of sudden migration that, for the most part, they are more keen to observe than to join. The character of Loosh appears as an exception, an example of a black who is informed of what is happening and who is intent on following the movement, forcing his wife, Philadelphy, to join him. Loosh however is portrayed as a sort of traitor, a person who cannot really be trusted and who harbors feelings of aggressiveness and vengeance. The sea of negroes migrating away from the South is really shown as some sort of impersonal movement, a collective mass. By portraying the black exodus in this way, Faulkner gently eludes the tragedy that this mass displacement of people represented, to focus principally on the issues faced by the Confederates and their families. Writing with the help of hindsight, it is astonishing that a writer who was such a visionary as Faulkner contoured the issue of race in a novel about the Civil War, portraying negroes as either loyal and family centered or as traitors that quickly rejoined the impersonal mass of fleeing people: “They were coming up the road. It sounded like about fifty of them; we could hear the feet hurrying, and a kind of panting murmur. It was not singing exactly, it was not that loud; it was just a sound, a

breathing, a kind of gasping murmuring chant and the feet whispering fast in the deep dust." (83) It is only when one woman is singled out, left behind (84) that the human dimension is, again, attributed to the "sea" of black people fleeing the plantations. By having Granny reach out to this woman, Faulkner allows readers to experience the human absurdity of racism: It seems as though blacks as en entity are viewed as a common enemy and even as the cause of the Civil War, yet blacks taken individually are perceived as persons, deserving of help, attention and compassion. In that way, Faulkner manages to highlight one of the greatest paradoxes of the South, showing the Confederates in a light that lets their human dimension shine. Characterizing Uncle Buck and Buddy's way of life, Faulkner suggests a different way of thinking, he introduces the idea harbored by the two brothers that: "land did not belong to people but that people belonged to land." (48) It just seems as though there are too many decent and human characters, be they black or white in Faulkner's story, to really consider it a racist novel. *The Unvanquished* does not have the poignancy of a fiction written in the style of a slave narrative such as Ernest J. Gaines' *The Autobiography of Miss Jane Pittman* which portrays the migration away from the plantations in much more detailed, tragic and personal ways, bringing out the full set of problems that these people faced, because Faulkner's portraying of the confusion they grappled with is only experienced from the point of view of white, Southern people.

In the midst of the issues pertaining to blacks and their new found freedom, it is really crucial to notice how the two main female characters from *The Unvanquished* fiercely struggle for their own freedom. In his novel, Faulkner camps two ladies that both fight for their freedom as women, in a society where their liberation was still in a rather far away future. Blacks had just gained their emancipation, they would obtain the right to vote in 1870 while women would

have to wait another sixty years to obtain that same basic right and despite the fact that feminism and abolitionism were interdependent movements. In *The Unvanquished*, Faulkner portrays two women who are oppressed by Southern values. Yet, despite this oppression, both Granny Millard and cousin Drusilla exhibit powerful agency as they strive to survive in the devastated South. Through these two characters, Faulkner highlights the enormous responsibility that Confederate women found themselves faced with during the War.

The horrors of the Civil War took the lives of 30% of Southern men aged 18-40 and the women had to step up and take their place on the home front. This enabled many of them to show what they were capable of; handling the chaos of the roaming, newly freed slaves and trying to survive after the destruction of their homes. This feminine entrepreneurial spirit really shines through in *The Unvanquished*, as Granny Millard thrives with her shady mule business while Drusilla manages to actually fight as a soldier. In *The Unvanquished,* the atmosphere of desolation in which the women conduct their day to day business is in many instances devoid of the strong patriarchal order that traditionally ruled the South. Although a good part of this moral order is maintained by some of the remaining aristocratic ladies, there remains a space for some women to show their aptitude at roles that were traditionally reserved for men. It is interesting to observe the parallel between a newly freed group of oppressed people, the former slaves, as they grapple with their newfound freedom and identity paired with lack of opportunity, knowledge or direction, and the women portrayed in the stories, who are using the absence of the men who rule their lives to access an authority and agency that would traditionally elude them. But what happens in the end? can blacks use their freedom to advance themselves and their cause, or are they just moving into a new kind of slavery? as for the women: are they able to maintain their

empowered positions after the war is over? *The Unvanquished* serves the reader with answers that remain open ended, but that perhaps offer a glimpse into what exactly consists of the values of a Southern lady, or belle, as they are still called today.

In her 1970 book: *The Southern Lady, From pedestal to Politics*, historian Anne Firror Scott shed new light on the evolution of the female condition in the South. In the opening chapters she describes the situation and the set of oppressing rules that weighed on women in the antebellum South, stressing that devotion (to husband and family) was one of the quintessential conditions to ensure a successful and fulfilling family life. By observing correspondence and other diverse sources, notably the evangelical power that religion had over its followers, she is able to put together a realistic tableau of what was expected of a young girl and, later, a woman in the American South. One of the important aspects that appears through her findings is the extent to which devotion was a quality that was pressed on women and girls, as this father writes to his daughter:

"The wife's conduct alone, he asserted, determined the happiness or misery of a marriage. She must resolve at the outset never to oppose her husband, never to show displeasure, no matter what he might do. A man had the right to expect his wife to place perfect confidence in his judgment and to believe that he always knew best. She should be amiable, prudent, sweet and devoted, she should regulate her servants with a kind but firm hand, cultivate her mind by reading history and not corrupt it with novels, and manage her domestic concerns with neatness, order, economy, and judgment" (Firror, 6)

Whether such models actually existed is debatable, as women, like blacks, are (only) human with the same amount of flaws and desires as their (white) male counterparts. It is actually very hard to find a character presenting the amount of devotion that is described in the above example in all of Faulkner's work. His young women are always doing something or other to try and step out of this mold, and his older ladies are often spinsters, women who might have tried for the

model but certainly did not reap the benefits of happiness and fulfillment that it promises. These women are either unmarried widows, whose fiancés died before they could get a shot at marriage or, like Caroline Compson, they are sickly mothers whose husbands' irresponsibility and/or alcoholism leaves no doubt as to the state of the matrimonial relationship they entertain. In fact, living up to these expectations proved incredibly difficult for young women who had been raised like princesses, with servants, as this novelist expresses: "To repress a harsh answer, to confess a fault, and to stop (right or wrong) in the midst of self-defense, in a gentle submission, sometimes requires a struggle like life and death." (Firror, 8) and women made heroic efforts to live up to what was expected of them.

In her opening chapter, Firror notes the relationship between slavery and the emphasis on the dignity of family. The set of rules for women and girls were directly imported from 16th century England and to maintain them was crucial in a society where white men had everything to gain from the patriarchal order. Therefore, obedience was a quality that was highly stressed in women, (as well as in slaves of course) and it is arguable that women's behavior toward their husbands was intended to be a model for the slaves to imitate in regards to their masters as Firror stresses: "If the need to maintain the slave system contributed to the insistence upon perfect, though submissive women, so did the simple fact that a male-dominated society was good for men." (Firror, 17) She insists that, like aristocrats, communists and bourgeois businessmen, Southern men had no trouble finding theoretical support for a way of life that was decidedly to their advantage. Yet, women still managed to wield their power, be it in the home. Raising the children and setting the standards for behavior: "the legislative and executive power of the house belong to the mistress, the master has nothing to do with administration; he is a monument of

uxoriousness and passive endurance." (Firror, 19) with such testimonies, Firror is able to asset the big fear underlying this kind of power, because if women were able to exert such power in their restricted quarters, who knew what they might do with more power? Hence the tendency that Southern men developed to connect the work of the hated abolitionists with the work of strong minded modern women. This is exactly the type of murky, shaky and changing grounds that *The Unvanquished* unfolds in. In his novel, along with slaves that deal differently with their new found freedom, he portrays two women who are also trying to make the best of what the situation during the Civil War has to offer.

A constant presence in the first half of the book, Granny Millard is most likely modeled after Faulkner's own grandmother, Sallie Mc Alpine Murry Falkner, who entertained an almost fanatical interest in the Civil War and spent a good deal of her time in various group meetings where memorials to the Confederate cause were planned. (Parini, 21) Granny embodies a certain form of heroism which first appears as she is trying to protect the children, Bayard and Ringo after they attacked a Yankee soldier. Her bravery then takes a more definite form with the smuggled mules business that she develops with the help of Ab Snopes and Ringo. Whereas Colonel Sartoris' heroism remains on the same plane throughout the novel, Granny Millard's heroic quality evolves exponentially as the narrative progresses. The war is rife with the exploits of men, but Granny's struggles represent a more mundane and much more useful kind of heroism. Her death comes as a crippling blow: Granny Millard has pushed her freedom and confidence too far.

Her first act of heroism happens in "Ambuscade" when she decides to hide the two boys under her skirt, while keeping a straight face throughout the interview with Colonel Dick. In

“Retreat”, we see Granny appear in full heroic splendor; wearing her black silk and bonnet: “with her shawl over her shoulders and carrying her parasol and the musket from the pegs over the mantel.” (43) Later on we witness Granny hitting Yankees with her umbrella and managing to keep everyone in the traveling party safe, despite the danger of the situation: “all sweating horses with wild eyes and men with wild faces full of yelling and then Granny standing up in the wagon and beating the five men about their heads and shoulders with the umbrella…” (58) Yet, throughout the whole attempted journey to Memphis, Granny remains a lady, not forgetting to take genteel care of the delicate rose cuttings she has brought with her: “Dip the roots into the spring after you drink.” (55) she orders Ringo on the way. That Granny can be at the same time a lady and the keeper of a very straight, Southern morale while toting a musket and defending herself and her family with her parasol is quite an astounding feat that prefigures the alluring multitasking existence of the modern woman. By the very end of the chapter, Loosh finally proclaims his freedom and imminent departure: “I going. I done been freed;” (75) Almost as a response to this strong act, Granny appears at the opening of the next chapter, “Raid,” as the leader of the group: “Granny came out with Mrs. Compson’s hat on and got into the wagon and told Ringo to open the parasol and took up the reins.” (78) showing by this symbolical gesture that she is now in charge of her and her family’s destiny. Putting Loosh’s departure and Granny’s taking over in parallel, shows that the Civil War, for all its destruction, death and damage, certainly served two major causes: It advanced the situation of colored people, despite the hardships, lack of means, ignorance and the overall feeling of intolerance and cruelty towards them, and it gave women the opportunity to take over what was traditionally conceived as men’s responsibilities.

Granny Millard does not stop at merely taking the reins and guiding her family back home, in the process, she devises, with the help of Ringo, a clever and corrupted machination of Yankee mules smuggling. Granny will then become a sort of Confederate Robin Hood, helping poor white families with her (criminal) earnings, while all the while maintaining her Southern lady's attitude and keeping her paternalistic white Christian values by making the families she helps write down how they spent the money that she awarded them. As the narrative unfolds, we see Granny Millard taking more and more risks and feeling more and more invincible as she plays with her image of helpless old lady. It's as if the taste of freedom was akin to a drug that she needs more and more of in order to be satiated. This establishes Granny Millard as a definite warrior, her physical frailty serving as a stark contrast with her strong will. The idea that women on the home front could be as important to the war effort as male soldiers was a new one during the Civil War, as the Southern chivalric code had always stressed the importance of deferring to women and protecting them from harsh realities. Yet, as the war progressed, Union generals increasingly began to drive the war home to the women left behind on the plantations, forcing them to react and to take drastic measures in order to protect their families.

Granny Millard is on a ride and she will not stop, feeling untouchable due to her status of (old) lady, and having an absolute confidence in the Confederate ethic, she takes increasing risks. This leads her to her death, murdered by Grumby, thus creating the climax of the story and turning point in the narration, establishing *The Unvanquished* as a story of revenge. Granny's murder takes the novel into a turn, making the subsequent sections about justice and setting things right. For all her newly found power and freedom, Granny ends up paying the high price for it, that of her life, or, in Diane Roberts terms: "Granny miscalculates; while operating in the

male realm of violence, she assumes that men will not hurt her because she is a lady." (Roberts, 16) and that: "What really kills her is transgression: she has strayed out of bounds, out of the enclosure of Big House and plantation fence, into a masculine territory she cannot regulate, where chivalric values are not paramount." (Roberts, 16) As is habitual with Faulkner narration, the actual traumatic event of Granny Millard's death is only metaphorically expressed by the smell of gun powder. Granny's death conveys the message that too much freedom is dangerous for women and that they might well pay for it with their lives, just like the black people going into the unknown, drunk with the feeling of being free.

In "Raid" another female character appears "As Drusilla Hawk takes over from Granny as the central woman character, a more disruptive kind of transgression threatens definitions of masculine and feminine." (Roberts, 17) Drusilla completes the picture of the heroic Confederate woman, and she will take more and more of the story's focus: Cousin Drusilla is a fierce Joan of Arc-like girl, who, after having lost her fiancé in the early months of the war, has decided to join the ranks of the army as a soldier. Drusilla cuts her hair and dons men's clothes in the hopes of joining her uncle, John Sartoris' regiment. Drusilla's first appearance: "riding astride like a man and sitting straight and light as a willow branch in the wind…" (89) is that of a strong, proud and free spirit. When Bayard first lays eyes on her, this is what he sees: "She was not tall, it was the way she stood and walked. She had on pants, like a man. She was the best woman rider in the county." (89) Her situation of unmarried widow is quickly explained: Her fiancé, Gavin Breckbridge, with whom she formed "the finest looking couple in Alabama" (89) was killed at Shiloh. But Drusilla has better things to do than to dwell on that loss and let it incapacitate her. She is actually able to use the opportunity that her situation offers to "remove herself from a

sexual economy she declares now irrelevant, denying that the purpose of her body is to bear children and reinforce the plantation order." (Roberts, 19) In fact, with all her wild desire for war and agency, Drusilla might feel some connection to the newly freed negroes as she is intent on visiting them at the river where they are waiting for a chance to cross. It is arguable that she relates to them in the sense that she and they come from the same cultural background and that the negroes' universe, like hers has been reduced to ashes. Yet, as Roberts argues: "Drusilla may try to free herself from the restrictive category of ladyhood, but she aligns herself fully with the reactionary anti-Reconstruction vigilantism that seeks to keep power in the hands of plantation lords." (Roberts, 21) When her mother tries to keep her from going to visit them she replies: "Those negroes are not Yankees, Mother. At least there will be one person there who is not a Yankee either." (93) By uttering this, Drusilla unveils two truths: the Yankees are responsible for the negroes' emancipation, yet in a way, they are also responsible for Drusilla's situation and therefore the reason that makes her own freedom possible. But, in Drusilla'y mind, the Yankees are primarily responsible for the chaos and destruction that are now her everyday reality and at the same time, she realizes that this wind of change contains some interesting perks for her, as she explains to Bayard:

"Who wants to sleep now, with so much happening, so much to see? Living used to be dull, you see. Stupid. You lived in the same house your father was born in and your father's sons and daughters had the sons and daughters of the same negro slaves to nurse and coddle, and then you grew up and fell in love with your acceptable young man and in time you would marry him, in your mother's wedding gown perhaps and with the same silver for presents she had received, and then you settled down forever more while your husband got children on your body for you to feed and bathe and dress until they grew up too; and then you and your husband died quietly and were buried together maybe on a summer afternoon just before suppertime. Stupid, you see. But now you can see for yourself how it is, it's fine now; you don't have to worry now about the house and the silver because they get burned up and carried away, and you don't have to worry about the negroes because they tramp the roads all night waiting for a chance to drown in

homemade Jordan, and you don't have to worry about getting children on your body to bathe and feed and change because the young men can ride away and get killed in the fine battles and you don't even have to sleep alone, you don't even have to sleep at all and so all you have to do is show the stick to the dog now and say thank you God for nothing. You see?" (101)

With this tirade, Drusilla expresses very eloquently her frustrations and the clear boundaries that the South imposed on its ladies. She delivers a stinging condemnation of the old southern way of life, as predictable and secure to the point of being deadening. Her attack on the antebellum system, in which a woman married an "acceptable young man" and died alongside him, casts doubt on the suggestion that her character was shaped by the death of her fiancé Gavin Breckbridge at the battle of Shiloh. The portrait of Drusilla that is etched in "Raid" illuminates the conflict of being a strong, opinionated and yet vulnerable young woman in a society as oppressive as the pre-Civil War South. Drusilla's heartfelt criticism of the pressures that women felt to marry implies that the end of her engagement might have come not just as a blow but as a relief, an escape from the constraints of femininity and respectability represented by Aunt Louisa. In "Raid" Drusilla begins to fill her role as a priestess of violence, an icon of Southern fatalism and pride. She identifies herself with the refusal to surrender, even against impossible odds, that Bayard will later tell us is characteristic of all Southern women. This is how Faulkner is illuminating how the Union Army's intervention in the South did bring, along with chaos and destruction, a much needed wind of change, a reversal of traditional values intended to further humankind to a more equal society. In *The Unvanquished*, this resonates for women as much as for blacks. With such a portrayal as that of Drusilla during the Civil War, it is difficult to imagine that Faulkner did not have a sense of the intensely oppressing universe Southern women evolved in. His characterization of Drusilla shows the extent to which Faulkner was indeed

aware of the enormous amount of frustration as well as the lack of agency regarding their own destinies that women had. It is very telling that he would portray someone like Drusilla in a novel about the Civil War, showing how far women's frustrations really went and paving the way for the outrageous and opinionated characters that populate the more famous novels such as *The Sound and The Fury* and *As I Lay Dying.*

In the novels that are set around the turn of the century and later, his female characters are also juggling with a sense of Southern etiquette and a strong desire to be the masters of their destinies. This type of characterization shows that Faulkner was acutely aware, not only of the situation of women in his time, but also of how the cultural environment of the South shaped a particular and oppressive model for women, and to which tradition carried over long after the war was over, keeping women, like blacks, in an inferior position. However, one must not be too quick to consider Faulkner the defender of the oppressed, because an episode like "Skirmish at Sartoris" which is presented as heroic "is read against some events of Southern politics during the time Faulkner was producing the text, it fits ominously into a racist discourse denying blacks equal rights, a discourse that, like the struggle over women's roles, Faulkner at times affirmed, and at times attacked." (Roberts, 21)

Drusilla appears as the book's most tragic figure, confined by a narrow Southern womanhood that almost breaks her spirit. In "Skirmish at Sartoris" we get better acquainted with her character. The war is now over and Drusilla is living in a shared cabin with her uncle John Sartoris and Bayard. They are clearing some space to build a new house. But her situation is viewed as absolutely unacceptable by her mother and the other well-to-do Jefferson ladies. In the opening lines of the chapter, Bayard describes a universe inhabited by women and children:

“we lived in a world of burned towns and houses and ruined plantations and fields inhabited only by women.” (188) Yet, Drusilla is absent from this world, as she has joined the territory of the men, transformed into a soldier. We hear of her through two letters sent by her mother Louisa, in which she appears horrified by Drusilla’s lifestyle and the fact that she showed up on her own mother’s doorstep: “in the garments not alone of a man but of a common soldier.” (191) As shocking as this may be to Louisa, Bayard has a different view of Drusilla’s situation. He does not understand the scandal that it is creating but he certainly gets that women’s lives are influenced by men’s rash decisions: “maybe times are never strange to women: that it is just one continuous monotonous thing full of the repeated follies of their menfolks.” (194) This line shows how really astutely aware Faulkner was of the men/women divide and unjust position of the latter in society.

Drusilla’s supposed pregnancy is evoked in a very Faulknerian way, that is, it is never named but implied: “Do you really suppose… and then Mrs. Habersham forgot to whisper good: “What else? what other reason can you name why she should choose to confine herself down there in the woods all day long, lifting heavy weights like logs and…” (195) In fact, as Roberts points out, citing Howard: “Drusilla has become a masterless woman, and this threatened overthrow of hierarchy was discursively read as the eruption of uncontrolled sexuality.” (Roberts, 20) And this supposed pregnancy, considered inevitable by the ladies of Jefferson, will be the mean of Drusilla’s defeat, with the ensuing forced marriage that is sure to follow. The pathos of Drusilla's situation is rendered with heartbreaking clarity in these scenes which appear like a meditation on the narrow constraints on women in traditional Southern society. In “Skirmish at Sartoris” Drusilla is linked by Bayard to masculine virtues as he

describes her dirty overalls and saw-dust covered cropped hair. She appears as devoted to the Confederate cause and is intent on fulfilling that devotion by taking the fight directly to the Yankees rather than just staying back, lamenting and disintegrating in useless hatred. Drusilla is straight forward and naïve as she claims that: "We went to the war to hurt Yankees, not hunting women!" (197) Highlighting to which extent she considers herself as part of the male group. Meanwhile, women who are considered "respectable" look for proof of improper behavior on her part.

Like Granny and Colonel Sartoris, Drusilla is sincere and straightforward, while the polite, proper representers of what a Southern lady should behave like: Mrs. Habersham, Compson and Aunt Louisa, use insincere scheming to disguise their gossipy interest in Drusilla's life. They need to recall her to her rank by bringing her dresses and convincing her to marry John Sartoris. But in doing so they are only interested in protecting Drusilla's and her family's reputation, not in her well being. Their vapid actions do nothing to advance the cause of the South or help to mend the tragic destruction that pervades the land. While Drusilla is actively working alongside the men to reconstruct a home, all the Jefferson ladies are worried about is the impending wedding, proving to what useless and petty goals their existences are devoted. The confrontation between Drusilla and the ladies represents a lot more than a simple comic interlude in *The Unvanquished*, it is a struggle between two value systems and Drusilla is defeated. Just when Ringo suddenly realizes and can finally claim: "I done been abolished!" (199) Drusilla has to bow down to etiquette and enter the prison that Southern womanhood represents. Drusilla ends up beaten, in fact, the term appears five times between pages 201 and 203, as it becomes clear that she has lost her battle for freedom. Her prison is represented by the dress that she is

forced to wear: " She was beaten, like as soon as she let them put the dress on her she was whipped; like in the dress she could neither fight back nor run away." (201) Moreover, her situation is clearly reminiscent of that of the negroes as they are consistently put back in their place, whipped and humiliated, strengthening the idea put forward by De Beauvoir that Western women and American negroes share a lot of similar aspects in their struggle for equal treatment: "Drusilla trying to eat, with her face strained and thin and her eyes like somebody's that had been whipped a long time now and is going just on nerve." (202) Yet, Drusilla fails to notice the resemblance her situation bears with the fate of the newly freed slaves. In the Old South, patriarchy and the supreme authority of the white male is the reigning power and women and blacks have no choice but to cower under it, oblivious of their rights as human beings. The way Sartoris and Drusilla ignore the concept of racial equality by chasing away the carpetbaggers and refraining the negro population from voting is similar to the way the Jefferson ladies recall Drusilla to her proper position as a woman. Change is there, but it is strongly resisted by *The Unvanquished*'s main protagonists, highlighting to which extent the South and perhaps even America as a nation were not ready in 1865 to let go of their prejudices against blacks and women.

"An Odor of Verbena" is written in a different style than the rest of the collected stories, a style that is closer to the kind of writing Faulkner is famous for, featuring a more complex vocabulary as well as Faulkner's sophisticated, elaborated, poetic and playful prose. "An Odor of Verbena" stands in contrast to the other chapters of the book that are written in a much more mundane, chronological style. While still serving as a conclusion to the collected stories, it introduces new themes and symbols, and Drusilla herself appears as more of a symbol

than a person: “The Greek amphora priestess of a succint and female violence” (219) A far stretch from the stubborn tomboy who appears in Bayard’s earlier thoughts and descriptions. While the more sophisticated style might also correspond to the characters’ more advanced stage of maturity (eight years have passed) it is ultimately Drusilla’s thirst for reparation and vengeance that leads to her hysterical crisis, and eventually to her departure from the premises. Drusilla suffers an attack of hysteria that is reminiscent of Ophelia’s in Hamlet. This attack comes as no surprise as Faulkner has been preparing us for it, showing the alienation with which Drusilla has to live. Faulkner, in his narrative, gives readers all the ingredients that boil up to Drusilla’s hysterical behavior at the end of the book. Unlike Freud who defines hysteria as an event that is a natural part of a woman’s unexplainable psyche, Faulkner sets up the stage to show how, exactly, the circumstances of her oppressive universe, culture and Southern etiquette bring her to the brink of madness. The fact that Drusilla, now a married woman, has the nerve to take the initiative to kiss Bayard proves that her spirit is not completely broken and that some form of fierceness and hope remain as she still follows her impulses. Her masculine quality has survived marriage as she hands the dueling pistols to Bayard in order for him to seek revenge for his father, but when she kisses his hand, she breaks out in hysterical laughter, spilling out of her like “vomit.” (239)

In *The Unvanquished*, Faulkner brings out the tragedy and destruction that the Civil War has represented for the South. With Drusilla, he offers a strong character whose intelligence is deeply ethical. In this way, albeit defeated, Drusilla is able to compete intellectually with any of the male characters in all of Faulkner’s work. With Drusilla, Faulkner presents a solid and stark female figure, and, in subdued ways, he hints at the astonishing change that the War would bring

for society, for blacks and for women, by depicting those from the point of view of a white Southern child, he is able to illuminate a lot of the roots of the problems; racial and gender based that still pollute the American psyche today.

Intruder in the Dust

Intruder in the Dust was written in 1948 as Faulkner's response as a Southern writer to the racial problems facing the South and in his Selected Letters, Faulkner wrote: "the premise being that the white people in the South, before the North or the Govt. or anybody else owe and must pay a responsibility to the negro." The novel invites the reader to reflect on how race and social status affect relationships through the plight of Lucas Beauchamp struggling to prove his innocence as the color of his skin automatically asserts him as an inevitable culprit. This book is crucial in trying to assess Faulkner's positions on racism, shedding doubts that he could possibly have harbored white supremacist thought, yet again, Faulkner was able to portray extremely racist and misogynist characters just as he portrays some pro-Civil Rights people with the same intensity of thought and feeling and neither technique allows to assert with exactitude what his own positions on these issues actually were. The novel focuses on Lucas Beauchamp, a black farmer accused of murdering a white man. He is exonerated through the efforts of Chick, Gavin, Aleck and a spinster from a long-established Southern family: Miss Habersham. It is both interesting and revealing to discover that Faulkner will use a very similar trio than the one featured in *The Unvanquished* to experience the adventures and the show of resilience and defiance offered in *Intruder*; I am, of course, referring to the able little group formed by Granny Millard, Bayard and

Ringo in *The Unvanquished* that returns again in *Intruder* with Chick Mallison, Aleck Sander and Miss Habersham (a most likely descendant of Mrs. Habersham from *The Unvanquished*) The fearless grand old lady and the two young boys that were so efficient in *The Unvanquished*, re-appear almost magically in *Intruder*!

Aleck Sander is a young black boy, around the same age as Chick, who works for the Mallison family. His actions throughout the story prove him to be a valuable asset to Miss Habersham and Chick during their quest to prove the innocence of Lucas. While the events unfolding in *Intruder* happen nearly ninety years after the events recounted in *The Unvanquished*, Aleck and Chick's friendship is very similar to the relationship between Bayard and Ringo. They are born in the same month and both spend a lot of time together growing up as they are basically being raised by Paralee, Aleck's mother and thus, Chick "Had spent a good part of that (his) life in Paralee's, Aleck Sander's mother's cabin in their backyard where he and Aleck Sander played in the bad weather when they were little and Paralee would cook whole meals for them halfway between two meals at the house and he and Aleck Sander would eat them together, the food tasting the same to each." (11-12) Like Ringo, Aleck is portrayed as taller, stronger and "larger than he, although they were the same age" (4) and especially more agile than Chick, as the latter falls in the creek while trying to keep up with Aleck's ease on the walking log.

What clearly comes through in *Intruder* as much as in *The Unvanquished* is the theme of friendship and honor. Chick's and Aleck's friendship is a true friendship, forged in childhood and borne out of much time spent together as equals, even though Aleck retains a subtle demeanor of respect and inferiority revealed by some of his utterances, that are clearly willed on

his part as sounding more naïve and ignorant than he actually is: ”Never nobody made me, Aleck Sander said (as he is being asked by the sheriff why he dug up a white man's grave) I didn't even know I was going. I had done already told Chick I didn't aim to. Only when we got back to the truck everybody seemed to just take it for granted that I wasn't going to do nothing else but go and before I knowed it I wasn't." (111) Thus keeping his "place" as a black boy.

It is interesting that Faulkner would bring this trio back from *The Unvanquished,* as it allows readers to truly experience the changes, or lack there of, that have happened since the Reconstruction. It is also alarming to realize, thanks to this brilliant trio, how little has actually changed in the whites' perception and acceptance of blacks as equals in 1949. As Ringo, was able to help Granny Millard with her mule business, Aleck is featured as similarly familiar with the animals. He is the first one to hear the mule coming when Miss Habersham, Chick and him are on their way to dig out Vinson Gowrie's body: "Hush.' They stopped, immobile in the long constant invisible flow of the pine. 'Mule coming down the hill,' Aleck Sander said." (96). It is never said whether or not the person accompanying the mule was there to keep watch on the cemetery, but it is assumed the person would have harmed the three on their journey to dig up the body of Vinson.

Again, by presenting a similar trio to the one evolving in *The Unvanquished*, Faulkner succeeds in highlighting how present the racial divide still is in the 1950's South. Blacks might not be enslaved anymore, but they are shown as still serving the whites, obeying their orders and not possessing the same rights. Moreover, they are the prime and undiscussed culprits when order is disturbed, a situation that is unfortunately still relevant today as is visible with the mass incarceration of black men in the United States (to just state an obvious example!) Faulkner was

a visionary when it came to the development of racial relations and *Intruder* certainly highlights the extremely slow pace with which things are changing. But Faulkner is also able to address white guilt as a possible reason for the development of relationships within *Intruder* as the white characters in the book; Chick Mallison, Gavin Stevens and Miss Habersham show feelings of remorse for racist acts.

Faulkner succeeds at showing how little the situation has changed for blacks, yet Miss Habersham is shown as having greater agency than Granny Millard, in the sense that her status as older white lady actually provides her with the authority to prevent a mob from lynching Lucas. Miss Habersham's authority is undiscussed by the angry racist men of the town as she simply sits there, mending and barring them from entering the prison. She uses her femininity, dignity, aristocracy, respectability and, yes, whiteness, to oppose the sickening Southern tradition of lynching blacks, and in that, she succeeds, while Granny Millard lost her life trusting these same features. Is Faulkner trying to show that while the situation with blacks is stalling, the authority and agency of women is slowly evolving? In any sense, with the idea of featuring a similar group of people with similar relations throughout time, he is certainly successful at highlighting the evolution of these racial relationships as well as showing a woman, Miss Habersham who is fearless, just and unfailing in the face of danger. This situation definitely shows an evolution of women's agency and power as it is in the early 1950's. Portraying Miss Habersham In *Intruder*, Faulkner finally gives Granny Millard from *The Unvanquished* the true redemption that she deserves.

CHAPTER 2

THE WOMEN

Mother as Matter, The Bundren Women

The distinction between the ladies and the women in Faulkner's world does not only have to do with skin color. It is strongly related to the material and consequently to matter. As has been mentioned many times in this work, the definition of the Southern lady has a lot to do with virtue, but this virtue seems to only be accessible by the wealthy. Despite all the similarities that Caddy Comspon and Dewey Dell Bundren show, Caddy undeniably belongs to the team of the ladies, while Dewey belongs to the team of the women. Like Caddy, Dewey Dell is attractive and irremediably attracted to sex. And like Caddy she becomes pregnant, vaguely tries to terminate her pregnancy but ends up accepting it for the fatality that it is. Like Caddy she is a little mother to her brother Vardaman, showing more concern for him than for her growing fetus. But, unlike Caddy, Dewey Dell is not a lady, in fact, her everyday existence as a poor white represents the closest thing to a black person's life in the South at the time that a white woman can attain and this is obviously due to her social status. The Bundrens are laughed at by the town's people when they embark on their fantastic journey to bury their mother, Addie, in a way that black people's lack of education was often ridiculed, illustrating to which point social class and race can be conditions leading to discrimination. With the Bundrens in particular, but also with white characters like Millie Walsh in *Absalom, Absalom!* Faulkner reminds his reader that

whiteness does not make the lady, material wealth and/or virtue is what the lady is made of, whereas the woman is molded out of matter and hard work.

Faulkner's women are often metaphorically tied to the elements, the material, or nature, evoking the symbol of woman as ever changing in contrast with the fixed masculine element. In *As I Lay Dying*, Dewey Dell is a very good example of that assimilation. In fact, out of all of Faulkner's female characters, Dewey Dell is perhaps the one who best embodies nature. This is reflected in the last line of her chapter, as she considers her pregnant body, with a metaphor representing one of the most poetic moments of the novel and perhaps of all of Faulkner's writing: "I don't know whether I have tried or not, whether I can or not, I don't know whether I can cry or not. I don't know whether I have tried or not. I feel like a wet seed wild in the hot blind earth." (38) With this reflexion, Dewey Dell perceives herself as a seed, she has become a "wet seed in the hot blind earth" a seed that cannot help the fact that she is already germinating, she has been fertilized because of her wetness and of the power of the hot blind earth. The earth representing here the concept of the feminine that endures and prevails.

Of course, the representation of the feminine as earth or land is not new and Faulkner certainly exploits that while depicting this family of farmers, people that are close to the land. In the text, Addie Bundren is often referred to by others as matter. Dr Peabody sees in her: "no more than a bundle of rotten sticks beneath the quilt" (26) and Cora Tull talks about her eyes seeming: "like two candles when you watch them gutter down into the sockets of iron candle-sticks." (6) Even Addie, in her own words, perceives herself as matter, when she says: "I would hate my father for ever having planted me."(98) She is also referring to herself as seed and indirectly to her mother as land in a very similar way than Dewey Dell.

Addie Bundren, despite the fact that her voice is only heard in one chapter, is in fact the main protagonist of *As I Lay Dying*. After having fulfilled her duty to her husband, giving birth and raising five children to near-maturity, Addie is tired, done, she has been a vessel of life for the whole of her (married) existence, carrying fetuses in her womb and bringing them forth into the world. With her dying, and the promise she has extricated from Anse to be buried with her kin in Jefferson, Addie reverses the order of things, she becomes the burden, the load, the decaying matter to be carried and transported by her whole family, she makes Anse and her children into the vessel, but they are not carrying life, they are transporting death, so that Addie can become one with the land again. Perhaps this situation is best symbolized by Addie's position in the coffin, which is reversed. Yet, Addie does not wish to be assimilated to just any land, and that is precisely where her revenge lies, she wants to be buried where she was conceived, where her father "planted her". Thus coming full circle with what could be seen as a metaphor for the cycle of life represented by the mother figure.

Addie sees her condition as a mother as an irrevocable burden for which she has no choice and that is so concrete that it cannot possibly be expressed by such an abstract term as "motherhood": " I knew that motherhood was invented by someone who had to have a word for it because the ones that had the children didn't care whether there was a word for it or not." (99) With these words, denouncing the burden of motherhood, Addie Bundren might be voicing the most feminist line of all of Faulkner's fiction. Dewey Dell's perception of motherhood is different, perhaps reflecting the changing situation for women in the 1930's. In fact, Dewey Dell, like Addie who sets her family up for the revengeful trial of literally dragging her remains to where she came from, tries to reverse the order of things by at least trying to get rid of her

fetus in a desperate attempt to escape her feminine condition, which of course, she views as a misfortune, a condition exemplified by her mother's existence. Dewey Dell does not merely accept her situation as an irrevocable one, at least not right away and she definitely views it as an unfortunate condition: "But I know it is there because God gave women a sign when something has happened bad." (35) Yet, despite Moseley's indiction that she must marry Lafe, and fall into what is expected by society of a young pregnant woman, and even though she comes to the realization that she will have no choice but to keep the baby, nothing in the text mentions that she is planning on regularizing her situation, in other words, marriage to Lafe is out of the question. Rather, it seems more likely that the new Mrs. Bundren will take over Addie's position in the family as a mother, and as a wife to Anse, returning Dewey Dell to the position of daughter.

In fact, Dewey Dell is so preoccupied with her pregnancy, that her concern takes over even the grief she could possibly feel about her mother's death: "I heard that my mother is dead. I wish I had time to let her die. I wish I had time to wish I had. It is because in the wild and outraged earth too soon too soon too soon. It is not I wouldn't and will not it's that is is too soon too soon too soon." (69) With that quote it is obvious that Dewey Dell is not ready to embrace the sacrifice that motherhood represents, her whole self rebels against it, yet part of her accepts it as a woman's fate. Deep down, Dewey Dell knows she will not be able to get rid of the fetus, and one can only imagine her resigned tone when she utters the line "It aint going to work." (145) after having given in sexually to Moseley in the cellar in order to obtain a fake abortion drug. In fact, Dewey Dell's perception of her body and of body in general is just that, body is matter, the inside is just guts "He is his guts and I am my guts. And I am Lafe's guts. That's it." (36) Dewey Dell never mentions soul or feelings, and in that way she is similar to

Addie, the abstract does not exist for Dewy Dell either, only the concreteness of matter, a matter that enslaves her along with all women and with the feminine in general. This identification with matter starts in fact with her very name, dell: " small valley, usually among trees…" (Oxford Online) and that dell is dewey… moist with dew, her name itself is matter, land and the fertile principle, even her breasts, according to Darl are: "Ludicrosities that are the valleys of the earth."

Both women, the mother and the daughter are faced with the responsibilities of motherhood in *As I Lay Dying*, but Faulkner, like in *The Sound and the Fury,* gives the daughter a different outlook on the order of things. In the same way that Caddy embraces her sexuality in a fashion that is completely oblivious to the rules of the Old South and that absolutely outrages her mother, Dewey Dell, after having given in to desire and therefore taken responsibility for her pleasure, even if she claims that: "she cannot help it" resigns herself to her state. By feeling in no way obligated to regularize her situation with Lafe, she shows a very different attitude than Addie who gets married to the first man who shows interest in her. And even though the narrative does not tell us about Anse's eventual reaction to Dewey Dell's pregnancy, one can only assume that he will not necessarily mind. But Faulkner, by omitting to let readers know about Dewey Dell's fate and Anse's reaction, leaves us to fill in the blank. If the situation of women in the South is changing at the time he writes *As I Lay Dying*, then perhaps, Faulkner is just leaving this blank for history to resolve the question.

In her essay, "Matricide and the Mother's Revenge", Doreen Fowler explores how the feminine voices in *As I Lay Dying* challenge the patriarchal structure of meaning (317). She makes the claim that: "The attempt to assert the primacy of the father and to dematerialize the world with the mother is the central project of patriarchal culture in *As I Lay Dying*" (319). By

carefully analyzing each character's relationship to Addie, Fowler concludes that Addies' death is a form of personal revenge perpetrated by herself upon the patriarchal order represented by her duties to her husband and children, or, as she describes in the preface to her book: *Faulkner, the Return of the Repressed*: "I propose that the Bundren's family journey to bury Addie in Jefferson represents the passage from the imaginary to the symbolic plane."

Addie dies having done her duty on this earth, but by insisting thats she wants to be buried near her folks in Jefferson, she sets her whole family on a journey fraught with symbolism, where obstacles illustrating the constant struggle between the natural, feminine order of things and the forceful patriarchal system keep emerging, creating situations so absurd that the narrative borders on the comical. Fowler highlights representations of the feminine in *As I lay Dying* in that it is associated with matter and, notably, the land. She subsequently notices that nature, in its everlasting strength and power of renewal continually annihilates the order that is tentatively constructed by the paternal element. The concept of the feminine as matter in Faulkner's text that Fowler proposes is particularly interesting because, aside for being responsible for some of the most poetic and evocative moments in the novel, it allows the exploration of the narrative with a new perspective: the depiction of the feminine condition by Faulkner as resigned, oppressed and yet powerful. The question of power and agency is crucial to women in literature and has been examined by a lot of feminist critics, it will be an interesting thing to explore with the character of Dilsey Gibson.

Dilsey, the ultimate "Mammy"

Much has been said about Faulkner's treatment of black characters and of his very realistic evocations of the vernacular language. This is especially apparent in *The Sound and The Fury*, which portrays the saga of two families: The Compsons and the Gibsons and where the black and the white character's everyday lives are shown as interdependent on one another. *The Sound and The Fury* depicts a changing generation; the old aristocracy of the South is crumbling underneath the new economical pressures and changing attitudes regarding blacks and women. The women in *The Sound and The Fury,* reflect that change, with an older generation at a loss as to the ways of dealing with their daughters and the recent freedom allotted to women and blacks, generating strong resistance from the conservative Southern society. In fact, as Judith Sensibar remarks in her book *Faulkner and Love*, citing Williamson: "William Faulkner spent the formative years of his life in the very midst of this radical racist hysteria." she adds the following details: "In 1908, when he was eleven years old, he was part of a crowd of two thousand who watched as Oxford's white elders mobbed and lynched Nelse Patton, a black bootlegger accused of raping and killing a white woman." (Sensibar, 54) Sensibar notes how Faulkner, as a boy, also had to come to terms with the sexual relationships between blacks and whites in his own family, as reports assess that both his maternal and paternal grandfathers entertained relations with black mistresses. (Sensibar, 54) Nonetheless, it is obvious that he must have had a very close relationship with the woman who raised him and his brothers, their "Mammy" Caroline Barr, who is undeniably the inspiration for Dilsey Gibson. Her presence in *The Sound and The Fury*

enables Faulkner to recreate a typical Southern aristocratic family where the Mammy was the quintessential surrogate mother and the pillar of the children's moral education. Writer and activist Lilian Smith, highlights to which point this situation was paradoxical for the white Southern child "whose education into race marks its violent passage from child to adult. Central to his education is the tissue of lies about what a black person is, lies that center necessarily on the person whom the child most loves, the black woman who has cared for him or her since before memory began." (Sensibar, 56) This dramatic situation is exposed in *S&F* where one can clearly see the relations between the Compson children and Dilsey evolving as the children cross the threshold into adulthood and the dynamic of authority is reversed.

It has already been established that Faulkner's portrayal of mothers, when it does not relate to the stages of early gestation, is usually of older, incompetent women who are disconnected from their children. Consequently, the fact that Faulkner himself was raised by a black Mammy comes to mind and it is clear that he favors the latter as a representation of the nurturing mother. Dilsey represents the ultimate surrogate mother, raising her own children and grandchildren alongside the little Compsons, teaching them the manners and the ways they will have to behave in Southern society. This reflects the actual fact, that in southern society, it was necessary for Mammies to take over the children's upbringing in order for their mothers to be able to embody an acceptable version of the southern lady, which did not leave them much time and energy to defer to the basic and primeval activity of child rearing or, to use Roberts terms, the Mammy took over "all activities the Southern social order absolved its white ladies of just as it absolved them of sexuality." (Roberts, 42) But the fact is that the children grew attached and loved their Mammies, sometimes more than their own mothers.

There is no evidence that that was the case for Faulkner himself, who seems to have had tremendous respect and admiration for his natural mother, yet it is clear from the inscription on Callie Barr's gravestone that the affection he felt for his Mammy was at least equivalent to the feelings he entertained for his blood mother. This fact reflects a very steady trend in Southern culture, where, according to Judith Sensibar: "The inscription Faulkner had carved on Barr's grave - "MAMMY/Her white children/ bless her" - Was used by white masters and, later, employers on the gravestones of thousands of black women throughout the South." Thus claiming ownership, even in death, and erasing the black kinship ties of their servants by appropriating their bodies, revealing "the dehumanization that ownership of other human beings necessitates." (Sensibar, 100) Catering to the Compson's as well as to her own children and grandchildren, Dilsey is the ultimate caregiver, where others fail or cannot care properly for their offspring, she appears as the only person in the novel who is genuinely concerned about the different children's welfare and she treats them all with fairness and equality.

Dilsey's character carries a double curse, that of being both female and black. Whereas this should summarize misery because it means cumulating two demeaning aspects of being human, or in other words to be a part of the lowest caste, Dilsey, despite the fact that she embodies these two forms of oppression, actually seems to possess a certain amount of power and agency. Far from being at the mercy of her misery or of her master's for that matter, Dilsey appears as the ruler of the Compson household. But the question of hierarchy remains a tricky one. While it is clear that the white male is above all the others in an unquestionable position of authority and should be followed immediately by the white female, things get a little blurry when characters like Dilsey appear because Caroline Compson, for example, is clearly helpless without

Dilsey and completely depends on her, giving Dilsey the power to treat her like an inferior being. Mrs. Compson, in revanche has yielded her ancient power as mother and lady of the house to her son Jason after the death of Mr. Compson and therefore, in a typically patriarchal order of things, Jason has become master of the house, completely altering the former order of things which had Caroline Compson at the top with Dilsey under her orders and Jason the child under Dilsey's orders. But with the death of Mr. Compson and the coming of age of Jason, the order now goes as follow, with Jason as top decision maker and superior to his mother while Dilsey is relegated to last position, undeniably bringing chaos in the household as she is, in a way, demoted of her function as undiscussed leader. This dynamic is clearly visible with the way both Jason and Miss Quentin treat the aging but still dignified Dilsey in the kitchen scene:

"Then the belt came out and I flung her (Dilsey) away. She stumbled into the table. She was so old she couldn't move hardly. But that's all right, we need someone in the kitchen to eat up the grub the young ones cant tote off… "Hit me den," she says, "ef nothing else but hitting somebody won't do you. Hit me," she says. "You think I won't?" I says. "I don't put no devilment beyond you," she says." (122)

Moreover, Miss Quentin seems to be catching on to it as she also insults Dilsey, despite the fact that the latter is always there to protect and shield her from Jason's wrath, in the same kitchen scene: "She (Dilsey) put her hand on Quentin, she knocked it down. "You damn old nigger," She says." (122)

This shocking dialogue shows the extent to which the fear and respect Jason showed for Dilsey as a child has turned into a hateful despising attitude, expressing the reversal of hierarchy that has operated itself at the point of male adulthood. On Jason's part this lack of respect does not stop at Dilsey, as it has already been established to which extent he despises and distrusts women, but his attitude of male superiority also extends towards his own mother to whom he lies

and from whom he steals. Jason perceives blacks and women as “others” that evolve on the same plane, as “niggers and bitches” to use his own terms. Yet, what Jason is most likely feeling deep down towards the two castes represented by blacks and women is undeniably fear, which would explain why he is trying so hard to control them.

Regarding his mother, Mrs. Compson and much to her sorrow, Jason seems to have more contempt than respect for her, since having taken over the position of man of the house. Dilsey is the only character who stands up to him and challenges his authority full on, especially when he attacks Miss Quentin: “Now, now. He ain’t gwine so much as lay his hand on you while Ise here.” (122) Dilsey ultimately represents a reversal of the Southern order. As a black female servant, a position representing the lowest social echelon in Southern society, she becomes the only torchbearer left for the name of this prestigious white family, fiercely taking her place in this intense dynamic.

In Roberts’ opinion, Faulkner’s fiction is “chiefly concerned with how the Mammy, the black mother, lived and served, the spaces where she might voice a self unseen by whites are not explored.” thus making his representations of the Mammy “necessarily partial for all his authoritative tone.” (Roberts, 43) Whereas this statement certainly verifies itself in *S&F,* it must be nuanced because Faulkner does give Dilsey’s perceptions some space in the novel. No, she does not obtain a narrative voice, but some of her considerations regarding the white people she serves sometimes do appear at the surface of the text. Her personal feelings towards the adults and especially towards Mrs. Compson, are clear: “Dilsey raised her face as if her eyes could and did penetrate the walls and ceiling and saw the old woman in her quilted dressing gown at the head of the stairs, calling her name with machine like regularity.” (176) Dilsey does not even

stop at feeling her feelings towards her masters, she is in a powerful enough position to express them out loud as well, as when she adresses Mrs. Compson: “I can’t do but one thing at a time. You git on back to bed, fo I has you on my hands this mawnin too.” (177) And Jason is no exception, as she doesn’t hesitate to berate him as well, especially when it comes to protecting Miss Quentin: “You leave her alone now, Jason. She gits up fer breakfast ev’y week mawnin, an Miss Cahline lets her stay in bed ev’y sunday. You knows dat.” (181) Meanwhile, she entertains a tender and motherly relationship with Miss Quentin, oblivious to the hierarchy that Jason tries to preserve in the house: “Quentin, get up honey. Dey waiting breakfast on you.” (182) Dilsey is not afraid. Secure in her position as functioning head of household, she shows no remorse for chastising both Jason and Mrs. Compson alike, strong in her faith and the belief in a higher power, but also with the certitude of her worth, as the Compson house cannot function on a day to day basis without her. Dilsey thus exists in the special situation of being both under orders but somewhat powerful.

Dilsey appears as the only source of stability within the Compson household. She embodies and teaches the Compson children the very values that have shaped the Compson dynasty; values of personal honor, faith and family and she will retain them, even as the Compson family disintegrates and loses them all. Uncorrupted, she teaches the Compson Children respect and morality, as if she was desperately trying to preserve the Southern codes of conduct that have always been the norm in the family, that is, before Mr. Compson fell into alcoholism and his wife into incapacitating illness, thus representing the decay of aristocratic Southern society. Dilsey witnesses the family’s saga from beginning to end, as she says herself: “I seed de beginnin’ and I sees de endin’.” Her only concern appears to be for the Compson

children and she treats them with love and fairness, inculcating her strong Christian values into them.

As the quintessential Mammy, Dilsey assuredly brings to thought classical renditions such as that of Hattie Mc Daniels in *Gone With The Wind* whose interpretation evokes the shiny, acceptable face of black servitude and whose uncomplicated fidelity and passive Christianity, allow her to recreate a social order that insists she remains subordinate and that she enjoy it. The Mammy is also necessary in that social order for the purpose of defining the white lady's difference from the white man and from the black woman. (Roberts, 41) In *Faulkner and Southern Womanhood*, Diane Roberts depicts Dilsey as evolving within the sphere of the conventional Mammy, noting things like the fact that the kitchen is her special domain, that she puts the children to bed, is the judge of proper behavior, heals and protects the weak and represents the way to religion. (Roberts, 57) Yet, Faulkner arguably seems to want to give her a characterization that avoids the stereotype, first by basing her on a known and real person and second by defining her physical aspect as the opposite of the fat, plentiful Mammy usually portrayed in minstrelsy. In Diane Roberts observations she comes through as "The ruins of the Mammy for New South, a kind of memento mori for the Compsons: she looks as though her skeleton is on the outside of her flesh… Dilsey's bony outside, her appearance as an impressive architectural ruin, signifies the Compson house: reduced, once grand, undernourished and dying." (Roberts, 61) But Faulkner's relationship with his own Mammy is so common and recognizable as an aspect of Southern life that he has difficulty avoiding the cliché. In Roberts' words: "Faulkner attempts to indict white Southern society for its hypocrisy by showing the black mother as the "authentic mother" of the black and white Southern family, but in doing so,

he colludes in the stereotype even while he attempts to subvert it." (Roberts, 42) Still, with Dilsey comes through the immense admiration and affection he obviously had for Callie Barr and his portrayal of Dilsey and the evolution of her relations with the Compsons, he certainly highlights the hybrid position that women like Dilsey found themselves in.

Fear of the Other and Family Dynamics in *Absalom, Absalom!*

"and the rank smell of female old flesh long embattled in virginity…" (4)

It is often argued that *Absalom, Absalom*! is one of Faulkner's novels in which his message is the most apparent. This statement, however, leaves room to ponder what it is exactly that Faulkner wants to tell his readers. First published in 1936, *Absalom, Absalom!* is a modernist masterpiece, featuring a rich and adjective-filled narrative style, embedded in a stream-of-consciousness retelling of events by the different characters that inhabit the story. The novel plays on memory and how the same events are recollected by the different protagonists, with the additional tint by the colors of the past. The events recorded take place in the 19th century, before, during and after the Civil War and they are teeming not only with racism and incest but also with the then-considered "abomination" of miscegenation. The taboo of miscegenation reveals one of the deep concerns of humanity: The threat of the "other", the resistance to change, and the fear of mixing with the different and unknown. However, the real drawing force of *A,A* remains what makes it a family drama that readers the world over can relate to.

In *A,A* the subject of hierarchy expands beyond race to include social classism and a look at the poor whites and the humiliation they go through as they are socially perceived as no higher than blacks. In the narrative, race appears to be an issue specifically for Thomas Sutpen, who, while he may have been sheltered from the different racial and social hierarchies while growing up, quickly discovers what being perceived as inferior feels like and adopts a particularly racist position as well as a profoundly misogynist one. The success of "Sutpen's design" therefore depends on his using the people issued from these inferior categories to his advantage. In this way Sutpen's character is similar to that of Jason Compson who shares the same distrust, disgust and disrespect for both women and blacks. The novel features race in all its shades between black and white, unavoidably bringing the topic of miscegenation to the surface. Yet, here again, Faulkner shies away from taking on the voice of the black American, giving a perspective of the Civil War and its numerous conflicts through a uniquely white lens. The voices heard include narrators of different genders, ages, class and political appurtenance, but the black perspective on the Civil War tragedy is never featured. This can be perceived as proof that Faulkner is a writer and an intellectual who chooses not to appropriate himself the issues that do not belong to his own group. Yet, while Faulkner has been hailed by critics the world over as a strong antifascist voice, his stream-of-consciousness writing, where narrators are interchangeable, offers the possibility of different interpretations.

Faulkner's message is widely considered to be anti-racist by today's readers, yet, as suggested consistently in this research, Faulkner's writing must always be experienced within its own context, and one cannot assume that only one interpretation is going to be sufficient or satisfactory. It is therefore notable that the first ever foreign translation of *A,A* happened in 1938

in Nazi Germany! This translation shows the writer in a very different light and intellectuals of the nazi ideology embraced it as a work of white supremacism, identifying with Thomas Sutpen as though his character's voice was the reflection of Faulkner's actual beliefs. At the time that *Absalom, Absalom!* was published, Europe was undergoing the effects of the rise of the Nazi movement, and, in fact, the Nazis loved the regional patriotism that Faulkner's writing conveys. Consider *Absalom, Absalom!* in the historical context in which it was published: The year 1936 marks the 12th year of the Great Depression in America and, in Europe, it is characterized in particular by the rise of the Fascist regime led by Mussolini in Italy, which involves the colonization of African lands, and by the Nazi ideology in Germany, a doctrine that designs the Jewish people as a race to be exterminated, and that also regards people of African descent as well as the Gypsy and Romani as inferior ethnic groups. The problem of racism is not only prevalent in the Southern states of America, in 1936, it is a major Western world issue and one that readers across borders can relate to.

In an essay entitled "Totalitarian Faulkner, The Nazi interpretation of *Light in August* and *Absalom, Absalom!*" Daniel Spoth explores the concept of these two novels viewed through the lens of fascism and argues that: "the circulation of these works in a National Socialist context provides a counter narrative to the accepted interpretation of Faulkner as an unrecognized, apolitical international modernist." (Spoth) Spoth suggests that there exist thematic elements in Faulkner's fiction that prove adaptable to a Fascist context, particularly aspects that dealt with regional themes and that could be linked to the "blood and soil" ideology of the Nazi doctrine. He quotes Juergin C. Walter, writing that "Nazi officials misinterpreted Faulkner's regionalism as akin to Nazi blood and soil ideology", mistakingly viewing Faulkner as "a conservative

Agrarian whose *Absalom, Absalom!* argued in favor of racial purity and against miscegenation." (Spoth) This shows how obscure Faulkner's writing remains at the time it is published and how its message is only accessible to a rare, forward thinking group of intellectuals who are able to grasp the quality of his early works as the masterpieces of high modernism that they represent. (Spoth) And that if *Absalom, Absalom!* "explicitly condemns Fascism, it implicitly provides a play of its methods." (Spoth) Herman Stresau, the translator of *Absalom, Absalom!* in German, remarks, alongside the fact that it is the hardest book that he has ever had to translate, that: "the effect of the book, is completely disproportionate to its significance and that it is only decades later that it occurs to some literary critics that such books see things as they are and contain warnings to which no one listened to at the time." With this in mind, let's explore what our writer does while exposing the different main characters' life paths and how these differ according to gender and ethnicity.

Rosa Coldfield represents the quintessential old maid, complete with broken dreams and "the rank smell of female old flesh long embattled in virginity…" (4) with "that air of impotent static rage." (3) These lines accurately describe the character of Rosa Coldfield, a woman whose frustrations and lack of opportunity are responsible for her bitter demeanor. Rosa Coldfield is a disillusioned and angry spinster and the whole story of *Absalom, Absalom!* will explain exactly why. A narrator as unreliable as all the others in the novel, her version of the story is replete with anger and disgust at Sutpen as well as expressing a strong sense of unfairness for which the social class that she is issued from seems to be responsible. Of course, her female sex does nothing to ameliorate her situation leaving her with the unique option of marriage to attain a decent quality of life. Rosa seldom comments on her situation being due to her gender, Faulkner

does that by highlighting her life path, leaving it up to the reader to come to their own conclusions. Barren in every sense of the word, Rosa Coldfield has been wearing black for the past forty three years and dwells in a stuffy house "with the blinds all closed and fastened for forty three years." (3) As she simmers over "The long-dead object of her impotent yet indomitable frustration" (3) Her vision of Sutpen is that of a villainous and tyrannical ogre and her description of him arriving in town with "his band of wild niggers like beasts half tamed to walk upright like men." (4) is so dramatic it actually borders on the comical and pushes readers to wonder how accurate this portrait really is. But the really striking feature that Rosa's character bears is her life story, which readers discover as the novel and the different versions of its narrators unfold.

Chronologically, Rosa Coldfield's life unfolds thus: She is born in 1845 and her mother does not survive the brutal experience of birth giving. Her father starves himself to death and in 1859 she falls in love with Charles Bon by looking at a photograph of him, obviously ignoring that he has black blood. In 1864, she moves to Sutpen's Hundred and, in 1865 he asks her to marry him, on the condition that she will bear a male heir first, prompting her to refuse his proposal and return to Jefferson to steal vegetables from her neighbor's garden for sustenance and become the spinster that Quentin meets in 1909, returning to Sutpen's Hundred with an ambulance only to see Clytie set the mansion on fire. In 1910, Rosa Codlfield dies.

In comparison, the novel also recounts Sutpen's timeline in a very fragmented way, his life plan or "design", his dramatic rise, and his violent fall: Born one of seven children in 1807. Sutpen delivers a message to the front door of the "big house" on Pettibone's plantation in 1823, only to be spurned by the black butler, and told to use the back door, making him realize that the

class that he is issued from is not perceived as any more deserving of respect than the black race. This represents a pivotal moment for Sutpen as the insult teaches him a lesson about race and class in the South and becomes the catalyst for his life's design. By acquiring money, slaves, land, and a wife, Sutpen sets out to prove that he is better than the man who barred him from entry, better even than his owner. With this realization, Sutpen initiates his “design.” In 1827, Thomas Sutpen quells a slave uprising in Haiti and marries Eulalia Bon, the plantation owner's daughter. In 1831, Eulalia gives him a son, Charles Bon, but after having the child, Sutpen discovers that his wife has black blood and subsequently abandons her. In 1833 Sutpen arrives in Jefferson and lays claim to a hundred square miles of land acquired through a shady deal with a Chickasaw Indian chief. In 1838, Sutpen gets engaged to Ellen Coldfield, at about the same time, he is arrested for shady dealings. He then proceeds to marry Ellen Coldfield. In 1839, their daughter Judith is born and in 1841, their son Henry. By 1858, Sutpen becomes the "biggest single landowner and cotton-planter in the county.” In 1859, Henry brings Charles Bon home to Sutpen's Hundred for Christmas and in 1860, Sutpen travels to New Orleans to investigate Charles Bon, he then joins the war as second in command to General Sartoris and soon becomes a colonel. In 1865, he finally tells Henry about Charles Bon's parental and racial heritage. In January 1866, Sutpen returns home from the Civil War and starts to rebuild his life. This is also the year that he proposes to Rosa, and then outrages her with his contingency plan for their eventual marriage. Finally, on August 12, 1869, Sutpen angers Wash Jones by spurning his granddaughter, Milly, for bearing him a daughter and not a son; Wash takes him down with a scythe and the infamous Sutpen dies.

While both Thomas Sutpen and Rosa Coldfield are issued from working class families, the two characters' options differ vastly based on their gender. Sutpen has blacks, Native Americans and women at his disposal to achieve his design which depends directly on the oppression he lawfully exerts on them, as he himself states: "I had a design. To accomplish it I should require money, a house, a plantation, slaves, a family – incidentally of course, a wife." (212) The simple fact that Sutpen is male allows him to simply help himself to other human beings' labor force as they are readily available and naturally obedient to his desires. In other words they exist just to help Sutpen carry out his design by creating a respectable (and white) genealogy and history. As a result of this convenient state of affairs, Sutpen approaches just about everything with a ruthless and domineering attitude. There is nothing he can't subdue. In that sense, everything in Sutpen's path is like a submissive woman waiting to be controlled, even his house and land: "He was the biggest single landowner and cotton-planter in the county now, which state he had attained by the same tactics with which he had built his house – the same singleminded unflagging effort and utter disregard of how his actions which the town could see might look and how the indicated ones which the town could not see must appear to it." (56)

For Rosa, a woman, things are different as her only option to climb the social ladder is through marriage. In her eyes, Sutpen is a depraved, sexually aggressive man and he doesn't do much to squelch those opinions, especially when he utters words like these: "I found that she was not and never could be, through no fault of her own, adjunctive or incremental to the design which I had in mind, so I provided for her and put her aside." (194) Marriage to her deceased sister's husband appears to be the only way for Rosa to tend to her needs and to attain an

acceptable quality of life, yet marriage, in *A,A,* is described as a cruel, dark and incapacitating institution over which no woman has any control. Readers were already able to witness the preparations for Ellen's wedding, which looked more like the preparation for one's lifelong imprisonment: "Ellen seems to have entered the church that night out of weeping as though out of rain, gone through the ceremony and then walked back out of the church and into the weeping again, the tears again, the same tears even, the same rain." (37) This poetic metaphor of rain as tears enhances the drama of forced marriage and generalizes Ellen's experience to all women victims of arranged marriages.   Ellen, however, will take her situation in stride and become a frivolous woman who's ideals of morality seem to have altogether vanished once she becomes herself mother to a girl.

In Rosa's case, the situation is different and she has seen enough unhappiness to be able to refuse the arrangement once it is put so crudely to her by Sutpen: "that they try it first and if it was a boy and lived, they would be married" (228) At least, Rosa has the agency to refuse, even if the other option left for her is to age in poverty and spinsterhood, having no choice but to steal vegetables from her neighbors' garden as she proudly refuses offers of charity. And if this is not enough to show how Sutpen merely uses women as a commodity, exactly like he does with his slaves, he then goes on to impregnate fifteen year old Milly, and after finding out from the black midwife that the child is a girl, "Well? damn your black hide: horse or mare?" (229) he lets her know that he doesn't view her as being of more deference than a mare herself: "Well, Milly; too bad you're not a mare too. Then I could give you a decent stall in the stable." (229) For all the talk about A*bsalom, Absalom!* being about race, it is easy to see that the book features a depiction of the situation of poor whites and women at the same time which is equally

humiliating and oppressive as that of “negroes”. Yet, while Thomas Sutpen ultimately dies from too much greed, assassinated by Wash Jones, Rosa gets to keep her integrity, she has made no concessions to her pride as a woman and even if she is thoroughly embittered by her life experience, one can argue that she ultimately enjoys a peaceful ending. No, it is not good to be black or female in the Civil War and reconstruction South, as Charles Bon’s destiny also shows, as he basically gets killed by his own brother for the only reason that he has black blood. Ironically, for one character in *Absalom*, being both black and female offers a better deal than being a black male or a white female, as Clytie’s destiny accurately shows.

In her book *Faulkner and Southern Womanhood,* Diane Roberts explores how Faulkner’s heroines correspond, or not, to the usual female archetypes found in Southern literature and culture. By positing six different female archetypes; The Confederate Woman, the Mammy, the Tragic Mulatta, the new belle, the spinster and the mother. She shows how Faulkner re - actualized and re-imagined them. It is to be noted that two of these representations: The Mammy and the Tragic Mulatta originate directly from blackface minstrelsy’s stock of characters reinforcing the connection between women and blacks in Faulkner’s work. Roberts observes that while the Mammy represents no threat to the symbolic order, the black “kept” woman, while often passing for white, became part of the sexual economy of the South (Roberts, 69) She reminds that “Boys on and around the plantation inevitably used her, and having acquired that habit, often continued into manhood and even after marriage.” (70) And she notes the “natural” aspect lent to black women’s sexuality and the fact that it “invites passion” in a way that was deemed impossible to white women because their sexual expression was inhibited by “puritanical training” (70) By associating black women with an animal sexuality, Faulkner

inevitably links darkness and femaleness in a dangerous universe that men fear to enter, as with female sexuality in general, which is why, as shown earlier, Quentin Compson can only link Caddy' sexuality with that of a black woman. Roberts' book, admirable in the way it brings a remarkably feminist analysis to Faulkner's work also embarks on the dangerous exercise of categorizing Faulkner's heroines, yet, Roberts' aim is to show that most of them do not fit properly into any pre-recognized stereotype, least of all Clytie who, except for her origin does not correspond in any way to the recognized definition of the Tragic Mulatta, as she appears in minstrelsy and traditional Southern literature and film (see *Birth of a Nation*).

Minstrelsy's stock characters have helped to disseminate racist images, attitudes and perceptions. These characters, originating in the minstrel shows between 1830 and 1890, convey the idea that blacks are racially and socially inferior. These racist black stereotypes include the "Jim Crow", a dangly, jig-dancing character; the "Zip Coon", a caricature of the free black man, replete with high style garb and the uttering of malapropisms that negate his dignity; the "Mammy", usually a source of matriarchal wisdom, an able and independent character; the "Uncle Tom", good, sober, religious, obedient and white abiding, the "Buck", big and threatening to white women; the "wench" or "Jezebel", a temptress, typically played by a male in female garb in traditional minstrelsy; the "tragic mulatto", a mixed blood male or female usually intentionally or unintentionally "passing" for white until the truth of negro blood is discovered and the "pickaninny", a caricatural representation of the black child, with unkempt hair and wide mouth, best represented by the character of Topsy in Harriet Beecher Stowe's *Uncle Tom's Cabin*. All these characters populate the minstrel shows which are basically the earliest representation of African Americans in American theater. Minstrelsy also tended to portray

slaves as happy with their lot in life, even if they were sometimes shown as victims, suffering the tragic consequences of cruel masters' actions. It is important to consider the fact that despite its fakery, blackface representation was considered an authentic way to portray black people.

Dion Boucicault's *The Octoroon*, published in 1859, is a play written in the purest melodramatic style. In this quintessential Victorian sub-genre, the villain usually dies, leaving the hero/heroine alive in a universe of good versus evil. The style lends itself perfectly to the portrayal of the dramatic fate of Zoe, the quintessential representation of the "Tragic Mulatta." When Zoe, the female protagonist of *The Octoroon*, enters, she appears to possess all of the fixings of a well brought up southern belle. Yet, the disparaging comments made towards her by the overseer Mc Closky, shock George, a gentleman who has just arrived from Europe and doesn't understand Mc Closky's attitude towards Zoe, whose blackness is invisible to the naked eye. But Zoe has black blood and is a "natural" child, characteristics that she feels personally responsible for and is ashamed of. Her speech, although "white" contains the same amount of self-hatred than observed in the black characters of the play:

> **ZOE.** That is the ineffaceable curse of Cain. Of the blood that feeds my heart, one drop in eight is black—bright red as the rest may be, that one drop poisons all the flood; those seven bright drops give me love like yours—hope like yours —ambition like yours—life hung with passions like dew drops on the morning flowers; but the one black drop gives me despair, for I'm an unclean thing—forbidden by the laws—I'm an Octoroon!" (226)

Because she does not appear black, the unfairness and drama of her situation is largely enhanced in the play, much more than if she was a darker complexioned character.

Clytie's narrative differs widely from that of Zoe and, as Roberts justly points: "By insisting on the Mulatta's place in the family, Faulkner questions the hierarchy of whites over

blacks. (71) In a South "hysterically obsessed with defining the limits of race" (Roberts, 71) Clytie, who bears the double curse of being both black *and* female, holds a specific position in this functioning, segregated, family group. Brought up alongside Judith, like a sister (which in fact she is!) Clytie seems to possess a certain amount of agency and she appears to be recognized as a partial family member by her brother and sister, but certainly not by Rosa Coldfield who is completely oblivious to her position within the family and who is utterly shocked when Clytie dares to oppose her, by trying to physically stop her from going up the stairs: "Don't you go up there Rosa. That was how she said it: that quiet, that still, and again it was as though it had not been she who spoke but the house itself that said the words." (111) With this sentence, exposing a recurring action, as Clytie will again, later on, try to keep Rosa from going up the stairs a second time, it is suggested that Clytie and the house are inseparable entities, both in possession of the power to maintain or destroy it. Clytie is black, and therefore a servant, but she is also family and especially, part of Sutpen's Hundred. She might be Sutpen's daughter but, according to miscegenation laws she cannot be recognized as such, yet, until abolition occurs, she is owned by Sutpen. As Henry and Judith Sutpen's half sister, she grows up with them, sleeping in the same room, and often in the same bed as Judith: "She and Judith even slept together, in the same room but with Judith in the bed and she on a pallet on the floor ostensibly." (112) and, like Dilsey with Mrs. Compson, she endures, and takes care of her dying brother Henry as well as of the Sutpen domain. Whether she personally feels entitled to anything is unclear but she definitely permits herself authority. In fact, she possesses enough authority to dismiss the hierarchy that is prevalent at the time, within which the white male is the ultimate authority over the white female and black people, as she allows herself to shun Wash Jones, a "poor" white,

from entering the house, thus repeating the humiliation endured by Sutpen himself, decades earlier. That not only a woman but a black one permits herself to exert authority over a white man is simply intolerable to Wash Jones, yet it shows how classism is as strong an evil as racism and misogyny in the Civil War South. In the end, Clytie will take down the Sutpen domain, making it impossible for whoever to inherit it, leaving a sole survivor, Jim Bond, a black descendant of the Sutpen lineage. This gives sense to Faulkner's famous ending sentence in the appendix to *The Sound and the Fury*: "They endured." As it shows the black branch of the family surviving while the whites have taken their own selves to their tragic destiny. Clytie, therefore hardly fits into the mold of the Tragic Mulatta, like most of Faulkner's female heroines, she pains to correspond to any stereotype, she remains a unique character, with her own, unique story.

Before this tragic ending however, the three women: Rosa, Judith and Clytie in a show of female solidarity which temporarily leaves out racist concerns, take possession of the Sutpen domain, while Thomas is at war, and create a functioning communal micro-society ran by themselves as equals: "So we waited for him. We led the busy eventless lives of three nuns in a barren and poverty-stricken convent: the walls we had were safe, impervious enough, even if it did not matter to the walls if we ate or not. And amicably, not as two white women and a negress, not as three negroes or three whites, not even as three women, but merely as three creatures who still possessed the need to eat but took no pleasure in it." (125) Hence, despite their prejudices against one another, Faulkner shows three women rising above their ingrained beliefs and letting pragmatism take over as they organize themselves to survive the later years of the War. This analysis is corroborated by Roberts in her book: "While the brothers go off to war,

the sisters become not the belle and her darky maid waiting to become wives but heroic and unvanquishable illustrations of endurance, appropriating "masculine" power… (They) hold the estate together, with Miss Rosa, creating a little society in which men are superfluous." (96) But Sutpen will be back, and will try to rebuild his domain, and his life, deciding to take Rosa as his wife, in order for her to produce a new male heir. This is when Sutpen's truly racist and misogynistic nature appears in full light.

Faulkner certainly tells things from his standpoint, he is a Southerner, that is his universe and he tells readers about his people and their dramas, but he cannot only be considered a regional writer, first and most blatantly because the scope of his recognition is far greater than the depiction of his Southern universe, and that there is obviously more about his writing than the specific society that it depicts. As Stephen M. Stowe states: "What had seemed to be the eccentric position of the South in the nation was revealed, ironically, as America's eccentric place in the history of nations." (*Power and Intimacy in The Old South*, Introduction) Rather, it is the way he revolutionizes writing with non-chronological development and stream of consciousness interior monologues that makes him so interestingly successful. The themes he develops are profoundly human, and the issues on which they reflect encompass a world wider than the region he writes from. What happens to the text when it propagates beyond it's Southern context to global readers is the embracing of its modernist innovation as well as the narrative of a progressive political situation and powerful moral validation. Or, as Ralph Ellison quotes: "For all his concern with the South, Faulkner was actually seeking out the nature of man."

In Faulkner's novels blacks and women appear as a force that is rooting for change, no matter how passive their battle is, it is the nature of blacks and women to strive for life. Women by voluntarily or involuntarily giving birth and constantly creating new life and blacks by the nature of their oppression which, especially through miscegenation, is bound to change and evolve in this society where they were forcefully brought. It is a situation that cannot stay fixed, therefore challenging the principles of patriarchy which wants things to be immobile and stay the way they are. Women and the uprooted African Americans simply cannot abide by this law because it is not in the nature of their beings to stay fixed and immobile, women's bodies are ever changing and creating and likewise, the situation of African Americans is in constant motion because it simply cannot stay forever under the white man's oppression, as David Williams states in his book *Faulkner's Women*, talking about Quentin's hatred and fear of Caddy's sexual being: "This hatred is typical of the male spiritual principle; it is an anti-vital fanaticism directed against life itself. Whatever creates, sustains, and increases life - and the feminine is its archetype - is regarded negatively because male consciousness desires permanence not change; it wants eternity and not transformation, law and not creative spontaneity." *(Faulkner's Women*, 82)

Perhaps this is where the parallel between incest and miscegenation can be drawn. As in times of war, rape becomes a weapon to subdue the enemy by getting into its women's bellies to sow their power all the way into the body of the enemy conquering it by basically planting their seed into their women in the same way they would conquer territory. Incest and miscegenation, so often coupled in Faulkner's novels could be seen as this desire to tame this vital force represented by the terrifying "other" the one responsible for change, such a scary thing for the white, patriarchal, male dominated system. But the problem is that these actions generate results,

as in children, beings, that will themselves become the agents of that change. As a result, the big (and most unlikely) winners in Faulkner's body of work appear to be black women, they are the ones who start out at the bottom of the ladder with the least chances of succeeding, accumulating the handicap of being both female and black and yet, they are the ones enduring the most and keeping things going in the right direction, much like black women today are striving to educate themselves and raise their children whereas their male counterparts are targeted for crime and represent the biggest victims of unemployment. In a way, Faulkner's work is reflective of a society that has not changed much since the time he was writing his novels. Hortense Spillers articulates precisely how the myth of the matriarchal structure of the black family persists nowadays and has its roots within the very system that is so well depicted in Faulkner's novels.

Hortense J. Spillers' famous essay "Mama's Baby, Papa's Maybe (1987) touches on a range of subjects, including race and psychoanalysis, slavery, family structure and the intersectionality of ethnicity and gender in the U.S. She argues that the "symbolic integrity" of male and female are two subjects that lose power, meaning and differentiation in a regime of captivity. Spillers' claim is that ethnicity "de-genders" individuals by trapping them in the midst of a timeless way of thinking, by portraying them in terms of their ethnic background, regardless of their personal identity and gender. Spillers states that: "the negro community has been forced into a matriarchal structure which, because it is so far out of line with the rest of American Society, seriously retards the progress of the group as a whole, and imposes a great burden on the negro male and, in consequence, on a great many negro women as well." (65) Spillers breaks down the myth of African American matriarchy by reminding her readers that: "Under conditions of captivity, the offspring of the female slave does not *belong* to the mother, nor is s/he *related* to

the *owner*, though the latter possesses it, and, in the African American instance, often fathered it, without whatever benefit of patrimony." (74) Therefore, the offspring of the enslaved, "being unrelated both to their begetters and to their owners... find themselves in the situation of being orphans." (74) It is a great paradox to realize that, while being robbed of their matriarchal rights, black female slaves and former slaves, have found themselves in the position of feeding, clothing and rearing a great number of black and biracial citizens, while their offspring and themselves were denied basic inheritance rights. What Spillers describes regarding the issue of black inheritance that comes up in *Absalom,* is exactly what is being posited in *Go Down Moses* regarding the functionality of families, especially when it comes to the concept of hierarchy in the succession order.

Going Down with Moses

It is perhaps with this multifaceted and highly complex examination of different interrelated themes, that Faulkner gives his readers the clearest view of the intricate workings of the Reconstruction-era South. Or, in Roberts words: "*Go Down Moses* is Faulkner's most comprehensive attempt to solve the historical, religious, and social problems of race in his fictive South." (Roberts, 57) By looking at the workings of the McCaslin family through the themes of the relationship of man to nature, the exploration of the concept of property and ownership and the nature of family, particularly regarding questions of inheritance and patrimony, Faulkner renders a poignant picture of the South as it handles the brutal racially and gendered conflict at its heart.

Like in a lot of his other novels, Faulkner here uses the technique of presenting stories whose full significance in the overall history of the characters are not apparent until later on in the narrative. The collection of stories, which Faulkner insisted be read as a novel, or in other words, one single story, explores the history of the McCaslin family, which is descended from Carothers McCaslin and occupies the plantation he founded. Faulkner incorporates into the McCaslin family many of the characteristics he viewed as essential to an understanding of the South as a whole, including the painful racial divide between whites and blacks that defined Southern history in the decades before and after the Civil War. He does this by splitting the McCaslin family tree into two branches, one white and the other black. The white branch, obviously, descends from Carothers McCaslin and his wife; the black branch descends from Carothers McCaslin and the slave-girl Tomey, with whom McCaslin had a sexual affair. But, even more than the racial divide, what is relevant in *Go Down Moses* for the purpose of defining Faulkner's possible rhetoric of feminism, is really how well exposed the situation of hierarchy appears in this particular novel, as Isaac McCaslin clearly questions the concept of patrimony that is tinted with miscegenation versus legal inheritance based on the female branch of the family. The great question of hierarchy is posed again as blacks, mulattos and whites debate whether a woman is worth more or less than a black man and whether she is more deserving of direct inheritance than the male, but racially mixed, branch of the family.

More than the different observations on race and racial tensions in America, it is most likely the intense familial dramatic tension present in this saga that makes *Go Down* so internationally famous. Because it is a family drama, more than anything else, that Faulkner presents with *Go Down* a family where men, women, blacks, whites, rich and poor all have a

specific place to hold and a specific role to play. By illustrating the McCaslin saga, Faulkner brings forth what a typical plantation owning family is composed of, complete with arranged marriages and lighter shaded blacks that also happen to be the natural children of the plantation owner. Natural children yes, but the simple fact that drops in the blood circulating in their veins is from African descent, will refrain them from either carrying the name, owning or even inheriting the tiniest fraction of their father's property. This situation, including the oppression that black women, enslaved or free, were victims of, persists today under the myth of the black matriarchy as coined by Hortense Spillers.

CONCLUDING THOUGHTS

To conclude, I will say that it appears as though Faulkner's vision and rendition of female existence in his novels, certainly shows an accurate appraisal of the situation of women at the time he writes. While the older and often frustrated women he depicts seem to have chosen to embrace the patriarchal system to the detriment of their freedom, happiness and often health, quite a few of the younger women that populate his novels, show some level of rebelliousness against that system, even if it is somewhat passive. The most striking aspect of this is the fact that they often end up having very different destinies than that of their mothers.

Faulkner's black characters endure, they revolt sometimes, like Joe Christmas, but on the whole they keep a certain level of lucidity and/or irony about heir situation. It might seem as though the big (and most unlikely) winners in Faulkner's body of work are black women, because they are the ones who start out at the bottom of the ladder with the least chances of succeeding, accumulating the handicap of being both female and black and yet, they are the ones enduring the most and keeping things going in the right direction.

However, one must not forget that black female hood is a very dangerous position to be in, devoid of rights and deemed accessible as a tool to satisfy the white man's sexual needs as well as his penchant for violence and abuse, while being used both as server and vessel of life. While Faulkner shows whites and blacks as being interdependent on one another, this by no means implies that this interdependence is in any way based on equality, but it shows the oppressor as needing the oppressed and vice versa. This relationship of interdependence does not come through so much between the different white men and women portrayed in Faulkner's novels. In

fact, white women are often portrayed as necessary for reproduction, yet burdensome when they voice their needs and desires, as those have no place in the functioning of Southern society.

Sexually, Faulkner's white ladies can only express themselves through conflict, as is obvious with Temple Drake's rape and with Caddy Compson's rebelliousness. Whereas sexuality merely exerts itself on black women who are often forced and abused. Whereas Simone de Beauvoir makes an astute statement that women's struggles towards emancipation resembles blacks' aim for the same goal, it is important to engage into the dialogue of intersectionality that Crenshaw proposes, as it highlights the doubly oppressive state that black women find themselves in, while fully participating, as subalterns, in white women's fight for liberation.

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