

“NOW YOU ARE AWARE OF ME!”: THE SPATIAL AUTHORITY OF WILLIAM
FAULKNER’S WOMEN

by

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(Under the Direction of Hugh Ruppersburg)

ABSTRACT

This thesis explores the significance of femininity, especially daughterhood, in the representational space of William Faulkner’s South. Using the spatial theory of Henri Lefebvre and others, it reads various female characters in Faulkner’s body of work as advocates for an altered space in which feminine identity and desire can shape the future of a post-Civil War South. From Drusilla Hawk, who departs her home to fight in the Confederate Army, to Charlotte Rittenmeyer, who dies from a failed abortion, to Clytemnestra Sutpen, who burns down the home of her father and former master Thomas Sutpen, Faulkner’s women make incremental attempts to reveal their trauma and recreate southern space. As the inheritors and survivors of an aggressively paternalistic space, these women will dictate the way in which Faulkner’s South moves toward a feminine representational space, or a future in which the feminine voice joins the masculine voice in constructing narratives of being.

INDEX WORDS: William Faulkner, female characters, spatial theory, feminist theory,
southern women, religion, sexuality, Civil War, misogyny, third space

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DEDICATION

This thesis, along with every word I will ever write, is dedicated to Jordan.

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“NOW YOU ARE AWARE OF ME!”: THE SPATIAL AUTHORITY OF WILLIAM
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Introduction: Faulkner, Spatiality, and the Women of Yoknapatawpha

William Faulkner’s mythical South and the women born inside of it present an interesting quandary for scholars of space and gender. Faulkner’s South is constructed within a space that relies upon myths of white masculinity and the Lost Cause. As the daughters who inherit the burdens of that mythos, the women of William Faulkner’s novels play a different role on the southern stage than their fathers and brothers. While male characters in novels such as *The Unvanquished* and *The Sound and the Fury* often attempt to reconstruct their identities in light of the physical and psychological defeat of the Civil War, the daughters of the South become the foundation upon which the old mythologies must be reinscribed—their identities and sexualities are negated for the sake of narrative cohesion within the society. Attempts on behalf of both men and women to suppress the full expression of female desire in the name of male sexual, religious, or spatial authority often lead to accusations of misogyny within Faulkner’s texts. The spatial reading I provide, which takes into account the dialectical construction of Faulkner’s South and the many forms of resistance women use to speak against that space and create their own, may ease some of the tension experienced by the feminist reader in Yoknapatawpha County. This essay will consider the spatial and dialectical construction of Faulkner’s South in regards to gender, specifically the ways in which Faulkner’s female characters attempt to subvert the power structures which negate their narratological, sexual, and religious impulses. The dialectic to which I refer in this essay is a conflict, negotiation, or conversation taking place within the

representational space between the feminine force that acknowledges female desire and authority and the masculine forces that attempt to maintain the patriarchal structure of the conceived space. From Drusilla Hawk, who departs her ancestral home to “hurt Yankees” (*U* 191), to Charlotte Rittenmeyer, who dies claiming unapologetically that she is a whore, to Clytemnestra Sutpen, who burns down the home of her father and master Thomas Sutpen, Faulkner’s women make incremental attempts to reveal their trauma and recreate southern space. As the inheritors and survivors of an aggressively paternalistic space, these women will dictate the way in which Faulkner’s South moves toward a feminine representational space, or a future in which the feminine voice joins the masculine voice in constructing narratives of being.

Southern birth and nurturing introduce all of Faulkner’s female characters, even those who may be fatherless, to a seemingly inescapable patriarchy. There are, of course, stark differences among the experiences of white, black, wealthy, and impoverished daughters of the South, but the constructed narrative of an antebellum southern lady assumes that she will be wealthy and white. Diane Roberts describes such a lady as “the designated work of art of the white plantation South, [and] as many scholars have noted, top of a chain of being that proceeds down through social ranks and races, white to black, plantation owner to slave” (2). In the South before and after the Civil War, women were the bearers not only of children, but of male identity. Southern gentlemen did not exist without the free and enslaved women who tended their homes, southern fathers did not exist without wives to submit to them and bear their children, and southern brothers did not exist without mothers or sisters to protect. For example, we might think of Thomas Sutpen and his desire to discard his mixed-race wife for a white woman, Ellen Coldfield, who might give him male heirs and increased respectability. We might also think of Jason Compson’s tyranny over Caddy and her daughter Quentin or the male Quentin Compson’s

misguided and romantic obsession with the family's honor. Female characters engage both intellectually and emotionally with the expectations of southern ladyhood, expressing their individual genders on a spectrum that ranges from complete acceptance to complete denial. However, most of Faulkner's women remain involved with one or more aspects of the patriarchy while they attempt to set themselves apart from it. For example, Rosa Coldfield appoints herself the poet laureate of Yoknapatawpha and remains enamored with the poetic Lost Cause, and Drusilla Hawk attempts to go to war to defend the very South which oppresses her. Southern women who live after the war have a similar choice—they can continue the social and cultural patterns of the Old South's patriarchy and paternalism, or they can identify themselves not as daughters but as progenitors of a New South.

A successful reading of women such as Drusilla Hawk, Rosa Coldfield, Addie Bundren, Charlotte Rittenmeyer, and Clytie Sutpen requires a consideration not only of gender but also of the space and time in which that gender is expressed. The careful construction of Faulkner's South often subjugates historical time to an imagined and perpetually present sense of the South's political defeat and racial guilt. Faulkner's unique sense of time captures the psychological trauma of the Civil War and extends it into the present. This extension of time is accomplished mainly through an obsession with white masculinity, initiated by the chivalrous cultural tastes of the South and cemented by the Civil War. Masculine patterns of thought, which construct what is often referred to as objective reality (Butler 36, 49, 61), construct Faulkner's South as well in its contempt for the frivolity and inconsistency of feminine behavior in comparison to masculine decisiveness and, often, violence. I believe that this aspect of southern culture abides in and dominates the perception of time and space in Faulkner's South. What Doreen Massey calls the simultaneous and "ceaseless emergence" of time and space certainly

occurs in Faulkner's South, and it is perhaps driven by these masculinist ideals. In *The Production of Space*, Henri Lefebvre articulates a "perceived-conceived-lived triad" (40), or "in spatial terms: spatial practice, representations of space, representational spaces" (40). Perceived space is the physical and geographic location of a space. Conceived space is the idea of that space—maps, architectural design, and the structures invented by those in power. Lived space, or representational space, is the most chaotic of the three, the one in which the actuality of the human experience and psyche comes into contact with literal and idealized spaces. According to Lefebvre, "representational spaces . . . need obey no rules of consistency or cohesiveness. Redolent with imaginary elements, they have their source in history—in the history of a people as well as in the history of each individual belonging to that people" (41). And, indeed, Susan Donaldson and Anne Goodwin Jones explain in *Haunted Bodies: Gender and Southern Texts* that "practices and narratives of southern masculinity and femininity have in fact been plural, unstable, and subject to bewildering shifts ever since the eighteenth century" (6). The most powerful constructions of the South in Faulkner's novels, the ones designed by white men to secure their own power, are pierced by the plural and multivocal presences of the Other.

It is no significant cognitive leap to view the Old South as a representational space in which women are oppressed—after all, Lefebvre asks, "What is an ideology without a space to which it refers, a space which it describes, whose vocabulary and links it makes use of, and whose code it embodies?" (44). This description and Lefebvre's terms are useful for my discussion of Faulkner's South and its obsession with time, trauma, and the regulation of female sexuality. Alexandre Vaschenko states that "while analyzing the colonial era, or the Civil War, or modern times, an inner logic requires Faulkner to solve the mysteries and paradoxes of human existence not merely through the investigation of economic, historical, or social conflicts, but

through the investigation of the fragile harmony between man and woman” (218). This harmony, when disrupted, shifts the landscape of Faulkner’s space. Characters within Faulkner’s texts make choices and traverse space based on ideas about that space they have inherited from those in power. Lena Grove walks from Alabama to Mississippi because “a family ought to all be together when a chap comes” (*LA* 21), Drusilla joins a military unit and moves from place to place dressed as a man, and Charlotte Rittenmeyer and Harry Wilbourne move from place to place in order to avoid the social structure of matrimony. The ability of these social outliers to make themselves known against the single sanctioned reading of the constructed space confirms Lefebvre’s assertion that the nature of these historically constructed representational spaces is dialectical. They are constantly in flux, re-negotiated, and re-established. Based on these readings of time, space, and gender, I argue that the female body, situated at a particular point in time, is the site through which the representational space of the South is renegotiated and re-affirmed in Faulkner’s novels.

When speaking of the representational space of the South, which is by its definition constantly shifting, one must first attempt to outline the physical and conceived spaces which bring forward the representational space. The physical South can be defined in multiple ways, perhaps most easily as those American states located below the Mason-Dixon Line drawn in 1767. The American South is perhaps most productively defined as those areas of the United States whose economies remained largely agricultural well into the nineteenth century and were heavily dependent on enslaved peoples for labor. These are also the areas whose leaders and citizens fought most ardently for the individual right of states to maintain slavery so that their preferred economic system could be upheld. We could perhaps add to this definition of the South areas such as Haiti and the Caribbean, whose resources were harvested to maintain the feudal

system which kept white men in power. Lefebvre writes that abstract space, or conceived space, works to erase the differences that threaten a coherent narrative: “the dominant form of space, that of the centres of wealth and power, endeavours to mould the spaces it dominates (i.e. peripheral spaces), and it seeks, often by violent means, to reduce the obstacles and resistance it encounters there” (49). The South constructed its myths of grandeur and white supremacy to justify the economic practices that upheld a lifestyle that rested on slavery and patriarchy (Roberts 5). For example, the cultural narrative that touted black people as evolutionarily inferior and in need of protection by whites was created after the permanent and unequivocal enslavement of African-Americans became so necessary for the perpetuation of war capitalism.¹ In colonial America, many types of “slavery” existed, including enslavement of people of all races for limited periods of time. When the permanent enslavement of Africans became the most economically convenient, slaveholders turned to the Bible and popular science to create a narrative that could successfully masquerade as absolute truth. Narratives of women as naturally and Biblically designed for submission within the home were patently false as well—southern women of all classes were heavily involved in both domestic leadership and other types of work (Wolfe 51, 99). This became especially true during the Civil War, when women and children took on duties that were normally assumed by the absent soldiers (Roberts 13). In short, the conceived space of the South as a place where white men reigned supreme erases the existence of the women and black men upon whose labor the South rested. Daughters, as inheritors of the

¹ A type of capitalism discussed by Sven Beckert in his book *Empire of Cotton: A Global History*: “War Capitalism flourished not in the factory but in the field; it was not mechanized but land- and labor-intensive, resting on the violent expropriation of land and labor in Africa and the Americas” (xv). This type of capitalism is fundamentally exploitive, and relies upon the subjugation of laborers in order to bring wealth to a select few. Reading the southern economy in this way also contributes to my argument that power is equally, if not more important, than literal wealth in the South. Anse Bundren, who is not wealthy but who is a member of the race and gender who could be wealthy and so does not resist the system, is an example of this.s

vacuum left by the failure of white masculinity, are used by Faulkner to renegotiate the South in its representational space and reclaim it through physical or narratological means.

Daughterhood in Faulkner's South

To identify an individual as a son or daughter of a space privileges physical location as a factor of identity formation. This is a quintessential question for scholars of the South, which is uniquely haunted by its past of racial injustice, Civil War, and lost wealth. After the Civil War and well into Faulkner's lifetime, the South represented for its white inhabitants a space that was both American and not American, triumphant and defeated, sovereign and occupied. This contradictory American South is also a deeply and uniquely religious space, and the convergence of chivalric codes of honor and Judeo-Christian teachings produce daughters with unique limitations. These daughters of the South were forced to balance virtue and romantic and sexual desirability—they must be chaste and faithful to their husbands before and after marriage, but must also remain desirable enough to deserve their white husband's protection from such evils as poverty or the lustful gaze of black men. This Biblical and archetypal understanding of women leaves no room for negotiation between Mary and Eve—a woman can be faultless or fallen, worthy of wifedom or deserving of nothing more than exploitation and rape. To cement their own identities as lords of the Old South, white men of all classes in the South needed the women they married or fathered to retain the values that were exposed as fraudulent by the Civil War. To be a son of the South, three points of identification are necessary: a gender, a location of origin, and groups against whom one can define oneself. When women begin to claim spatial authority in Faulkner's South, these simple referents begin to dissolve.

The northern United States' victory in the Civil War and destruction of the physical land and illusory narratives of the South triggered an identity crisis in the men and women of the

South. This struggle for identity within the physical space of the South made land ownership as crucial to male identity as it was increasingly rare, and the future of the feudal system on which masculine identity rested was endangered by the emancipation of slaves. In *Faulkner's Imperialism*, Taylor Hagood finds "imperial spaces" in Faulkner's South, which he defines as "spaces 'created' by imperially conditioned 'ingrained habits of the mind' and perpetuated by their respective strategies of performance" (10). Hagood emphasizes the importance of narrative, which "can dictate the material administration of power" (11). Likewise, in *Shakespeare and Masculinity in Southern Fiction*, Joseph B. Keener proposes a relationship between a masculine obsession with one's personal narrative and Quentin Compson's "crippling self-awareness of the falsity, the theatricality, of these men's existence" (150). Faulkner writes from and about the aftermath of the crisis of male identity, evident through the desperate behavior of wealthy, or formerly wealthy, southern men such as the Compsons and Varners. The anxiety of male landowners and former landowners increases the pressure on women, especially poor women, to value and uphold the rapidly declining authority of the men. This anxiety may explain the protective and controlling behaviors exercised by fathers and brothers over characters such as Eula Varner and Caddy Compson. While southern sons like Bayard Sartoris and Quentin Compson are potential champions of the Old South, southern daughters are represented as the literal space in which the South will or will not succeed. Much like Edward Soja's open and constantly shifting third space, the bodies of women are the site at which powerful cultural narratives and ideals will collide with physicality and lived experience. Women's minds, bodies, and speech hold the future of the South. In this way, women become associated with the physical land of the South.

The daughters of Faulkner's South are, quite like the literal land of the South, subject to both heavy regulation and devastating neglect. Regulation occurs based on their perceived worth as transmitters of property, family name, or wealth. Neglect occurs when women have, by religious or societal standards, forfeited their worth by transgressing boundaries and disgracing the family name. In short, women are encouraged and allowed to thrive in circumstances that benefit their fathers and brothers, and neglected when they attempt other, more arguably natural directions. Vashenko points out that "in Faulkner it is always men who are responsible for the violation of the land" (217). The same can perhaps be said for the violation of women. Addie Bundren espouses this spatial reading of the female body when she attempts to describe "the shape of my body where I used to be a virgin" (173) and cannot come up with an answer other than empty space. Virginal women in Faulkner's novels are represented as lands to be conquered by the superior, white, masculine power, and those women who do not invite the correct type of masculine invasion, marriage and wifehood, become sexually ruined. Eve figures, the fallen and ruined women in Faulkner, range from simply archetypal mothers to more complicated seductresses and victims (Fowler 141). Lena Grove and the pregnant woman in *The Wild Palms* are both figures connected with nature, chaos, and procreativity. In *The Feminine and Faulkner*, Minrose Gwin describes the subversive flooding of Faulknerian women, both into Faulkner's voice and into the world around them:

Faulkner's narrative art seems to distinguish itself from what it may have set out to be and becomes most beautiful and mysterious and compelling *not* when it is most ordered and focused and controlled but rather when it somehow slips out of its own self-constructed levees and "becomes one with the water." When it privileges *its own* "oceanic feeling," its own dangerous and exhilarating desire for

the escape of fluidity; that is, for an experiential excess which dissolves ego boundaries and allows movement between itself as text and the otherness of the reader. When it floods. (123)

Indeed, Faulkner's women bleed and overtake the spaces that attempt to confine them. The odor of Addie Bundren's corpse escapes the coffin built for her by her son. The woman in *The Wild Palms* gives birth in the flooded Mississippi. Rosa Coldfield's mad narrative invades the thoughts of Quentin and his father. Charlotte Rittenmeyer's blood escapes her body after her botched abortion. While Gwin's reading captures the metaphorical significance of the phenomenon of flooding, her reading has unexplored consequences for the conception of space in Faulkner's novels. In *As I Lay Dying*, Addie Bundren understands the importance of interrupting the physical space in such a way that her own identity floods over it: in her loneliness as a schoolteacher, she whips the children: "When the switch fell I could feel it upon my flesh; when it welted and ridged it was my blood that ran, and I would think with each blow of the switch: Now you are aware of me! Now I am something in your secret and selfish life, who have marked your blood with my own for ever and ever" (*AILD* 170). These floods of the female body do not all represent the same meaning any more than all women in Faulkner's body of work have the same experience; however, it is interesting to consider biology as a factor manipulated by men to justify oppression and by women to gain power.

My argument regarding gender here is not essentialist: what gendered experiences Faulknerian women do have, especially religious, epistemological, or sexual experiences, come not from their female biology but from the organized societal positions to which they are relegated based on perceived biological fact. Judith Butler cautions that "the return to biology as the ground of a specific feminine sexuality or meaning seems to defeat the feminist premise that

biology is not destiny” (*Gender Trouble* 41). We should heed her caution when exploring ways to recreate the identity of women without regard to their former oppressions. However, it remains that biology, readings of that biology, and speech about that biology in Faulkner’s texts contribute to the oppressive representational space. Lefebvre writes that the construction of new, differential spaces will “distinguish what abstract space tends to identify—for example, social reproduction and genitality, gratification and biological fertility, social relationships, and family relationships” (52). In Faulkner’s southern space, women are made human synecdoches via their birth canals—when a nearby doctor rushes to Charlotte Rittenmeyer’s aid and asks the source of her hemorrhage, her lover replies, “Where do women bleed?” (*JER* 17), as if he does not know that Charlotte possesses other body parts. This reduction of the female to one body part, the vagina, echoes descriptions of the female body in earlier Faulkner novels such as “mammalian meat” or “male-furrowed meat” (*AA* 117). What I will identify as feminine in this essay is not only those bodies which create and perpetuate life, menstruate, or are otherwise labeled female. Although these biological markers are important for a study of Faulkner’s work, I will engage with Julia Kristeva’s stated difficulty in identifying anyone as a woman:

On a deeper level, however, a woman cannot ‘be’; it is something which does not even belong in the order of *being*. It follows that a feminist practice can only be negative, at odds with what already exists so that we may say ‘that’s not it’ and ‘that’s still not it.’ In ‘woman’ I see something that cannot be represented, something that is not said, something above and beyond nomenclatures and ideologies. (137)

For purposes of intellectual inquiry, however, such a vague definition must be augmented. In this essay, the “women” with whom I am concerned are individuals who harbor the force of feminine

desire and wield it against oppression. This feminine force is *not* the masculine: it is not that which oppresses or controls, and it is not that which restricts the development of spatial, sexual, or religious authority.

The feminine force in Faulkner's novels has the potential to create new dialectical representations of the South, but this essay makes a deliberate choice to focus on daughterhood rather than motherhood despite my preoccupying concern with the female ability both to create and procreate. In Faulkner's novels, daughterhood is the necessary prerequisite for motherhood—to give birth, one must have been given birth to. This acknowledgement of origin is an attempt to take into account Doreen Massey's idea that space and time are defined by the entities that inhabit them, and not vice versa (Massey 262). Just as space and time are “born together,” a woman's birth into the space which oppresses her during its emergence may give her special insight on how to re-direct that emergence. I believe that the female characters upon whom the future of Faulkner's South rests must have been created by the South to create a new one. Thus, their inherited ideologies are key elements in the new ones they attempt to create. As Lefebvre writes, “a new space cannot be born (produced) unless it accentuates differences” (50). It is necessary, then, to study the differences erased by both the literal, biological parents and the figurative, paternalistic fathers of Faulkner's women and the ways in which their ideologies impede the development of their daughters.

How do perpetually defeated women in a perpetually defeated space create their own alternative voices and lands? Occasionally, they do not. The failure of both novel and individual is undeniable in Faulkner's work, and Faulkner himself accepted and even preferred those novels which failed to produce satisfying endings for their characters (Gwin 154-155). Successes for these women must be defined differently, in terms of their capacity for the renewal and

disruption of southern narratives. Therefore, Faulkner's successful women are those who, however briefly, tell their own stories and engage in their own methods of cultivating the southern space. Their navigation of the imperial space of Faulkner's South does not succeed in immediately changing that South into, for example, a land of complete racial and sexual acceptance. This is not an accurate indicator of success for a feminist reading, since the South, in its global and heterogeneous iterations, is not a monolith to be shifted toward another monolithic reading. The influence of these women in Faulkner's work does produce more feminine men and powerful women who will alter the course of the South, but my interest is not in the successful creation of a southern future which has not yet arrived, but rather the various ways its gestation is affected by female desire and identity.

Faulknerian Women and Southern Representational Space

I shall begin by mentioning some literal fathers in Faulkner's text who represent the pervasive paternalism created by the South and revealed in Faulkner's novels such as *Absalom, Absalom!*, in which Quentin Compson hears and repeats the story of Rosa Coldfield, an old woman who witnessed the war and the rise and fall of Thomas Sutpen. Critics often seize upon Thomas Sutpen as the figurehead for Lost Cause ideology in Yoknapatawpha. Sutpen, born poor and white, desires the status of the southern patriarch and attains that status for himself by acquiring both land and respectable women. Sutpen's failure to produce any viable or productive white offspring is certainly a failure of ideal southern fatherhood, but his rise to prominence reveals much about the culture at that point in Yoknapatawpha. While so many myths of the South in Yoknapatawpha rest on a manufactured sense of gentility, Sutpen manipulates his way into the southern elite through less than honorable means, revealing and then preying upon the vices of the men around him, whose nobility is also farcical. Sutpen reveals the real basis of the

facade of southern paternalism: power. Power for the white male supersedes all other desires in Faulkner's South. Sutpen does not succeed in veiling his quest for power in paternalism—he brutalizes his slaves, his wife, and his children equally without engaging in the misleading discourse that typically masks such brutality. He is juxtaposed with the effete and pacifist Mr. Coldfield, whose great failure is not in refusing to protect his daughters but in failing to provide them with epistemological freedom through which they can create their own identity. Goodhue Coldfield chooses to avoid the feminine space inhabited by his daughters—he sells Ellen into marriage with Sutpen and forces Rosa to be her own home's house servant. By forcing them early into roles of submission, he provides them no avenue through which to interact with the rest of the world. Although he is a pacifist, Goodhue Coldfield succumbs to the powers of Sutpen and the South, gambling away one daughter and treating the other like property.² Because of Mr. Coldfield's failure to speak back to the representational space of the South, Ellen and Rosa are delayed in acknowledging and accessing their own desires.

Anse Bundren, the father of four of Addie Bundren's five children, represents the irony of southern men who exploit women while claiming to cherish and protect them. Anse brings his grieving sons and his secretly pregnant daughter on a journey to bury their mother in Jefferson instead of his own family land. Although he is bound by his dead wife's last request to be buried with her family, Anse ignores the spirit of his wife's desires, taking every opportunity to exploit his children and control the representational space that reinforces his status as head of the family. As he scolds Jewel, Addie's favorite child, for riding his horse to his mother's funeral, he invokes southern narratives of acceptable behavior:

² I do not mean to say that sexism does not exist in the North and therefore must be a southern influence on Goodhue. I simply mean that the proprietary attitude Goodhue takes toward his daughters is at odds with his opinions of slavery and may be adopted from or at least more acceptable within southern culture.

I says I got some regard for what folks says about my flesh and blood even if you haven't, even if I have raised such a durn passel of boys, and when you fixes it so folks can say such about you, it's a reflection on your ma, I says, not me: I am a man and I can stand it; it's on your womenfolks, your ma and sister that you should care for (*AILD* 106)

Anse upholds the narrative of “womenfolks” who serve their male relatives and whose identities rest largely upon what is spoken about them. Much like Sutpen, Anse uses the southern space that reinforces patriarchal family systems to mask his intention to exploit his family. He sells Jewel's horse and steals the money Dewey Dell needs to secure an abortion. In a sense, he is capitalizing on the sexual transgressions he condemns by appropriating the fruit of his wife and children's failure to comply with cultural behavioral standards. Anse promotes paternalist narratives only to reify his power over his children. His wife gains power over him only by subverting those narratives—insisting upon being buried away from her husband's family, refusing the legitimacy of Anse's language, and having children with another man. As a father figure, Anse represents men who profit from a representational space that they had little part in creating. Anse is certainly not powerful, wealthy, or even intelligent. He is treated with very little respect by his peers, but he still rests on the privilege of his status as white man and father. Because he has a name to bestow on his children and on another wife, his legacy survives, although it is clearly less productive for the future of Yoknapatawpha than the subversive linguistic legacy of his wife, Addie.

Jason Compson, Sr., the father of Quentin Compson and his siblings, is incisive and verbal in his summations of the South's representational space. He brings awareness to Henry Sutpen's “simple and erstwhile untroubled code in which females were ladies or whores or

slaves” (AA 91). Compson’s awareness of cultural narratives that necessitate patriarchal behavior makes his home a space in which his children grow up with southern narratives in conflict with the declining wealth and glory of their family. Compson’s sons Quentin and Jason represent two sides of the crisis of masculinity: Quentin becomes unhealthily obsessed with chivalry and honor, and Jason becomes obsessed with power. Jason does not enter the dialectic around the representational South—he ignores and belittles those who threaten his narrative of absolute entitlement and power. Quentin enters the dialectic through his queerness—because he is at odds with traditional masculinity, he can access the sense of difference which must be acknowledged to create a new space. His turn toward what is feminine after white southern masculinity fails him is perhaps best characterized by his suicide. Doreen Fowler reads Quentin’s suicide as part of his refusal of “cyclical renewal” and repudiation of “the immanence which his sister embodies” (151). However, his choice to die in water, an element Faulkner consistently represents as feminine, suggests that by choosing his “little sister Death” (*SF* 76) and drowning himself, Quentin exits the world of his father and enters a space of chaos which reflects the desires of his sister and in which patriarchal forces have no control.

The men of Faulkner’s South who have no children are also originators, perpetuators, and victims of southern paternalism, a concept defined for the purposes of this essay as a pervasive cultural belief in the empowerment of white men, figured as fathers, to secure the well-being of other members of society. This sense of paternalism extends to male siblings, who are expected in many cases to act in place of the absent, aged, or dead father. In the case of Yoknapatawpha, these other members are generally black men, black women, and white women.³ Brothers, such

³ Native Americans occasionally appear in Faulkner’s work as well, and are often incorporated into the myth of the biracial Southern family. However, their relationship with the land often garners them respect from white men and a separate mythology from black people and women. See, for example, the treatment of Sam Fathers, a multi-racial

as Quentin and Jason Compson, play an important role in extending the power of the father over his daughters. Faulkner's texts typically navigate this space with awareness, and his attempt to create a third space hinges upon the emergence of feminine values of inclusion and continuation as opposed to masculinist exclusion and violence. Faulknerian women recreate religious iconography and belief, sexual identity, and systems of knowledge in ways that fulfill their own desires. A responsible feminist reading of Faulkner cannot conclude that the success of all women should be judged by the same standard, but it may trace the various ways in which the feminine voice emerges in response to paternalism. Because of the complicated timeline of Faulkner's southern space, linear time is of little importance in the South's "ceaseless emergence" (Massey 273) and therefore not a useful factor for categorizing Faulkner's women. Instead, these women can be grouped based on the extent to which they defy certain aspects of patriarchy: the overflow of their desires over the boundaries of the representational space, the sexual transgressions they commit as a result of those desires, and the defiance they show when their desires lead them to death.

An Overflow of Desire: Faulkner's Defiant Women and Spatial Negotiation

Drusilla Hawk's existence in *The Unvanquished* overflows the boundaries set for her by narratives of southern womanhood. Drusilla, the daughter of Dennison Hawk I, is referred to by her cousin Bayard as "one young girl who happened to try to look and act like a man after her sweetheart was killed" (*U* 189). Drusilla does ride alongside her cousin John Sartoris after the death of her fiancé, but her desires are more complicated than simply revenge for the death of her beloved. Drusilla is a woman of complicated desires, but she focuses her desires clearly on the

descendant of Chief Ikkemotubbe whose hunting skills inspire awe in the white men around him, in "The Bear" (*Go Down Moses*, 1942).

glory of the South. When her mother attempts to make her marry John to erase the shame of their shared tent during the war, Drusilla replies: “Cant you understand that I am tired of burying husbands in this war? that I am riding in Cousin John’s troop not to find a man but to hurt Yankees?” (*U* 191). Since the death of her fiancé, her interest is not in sex; it is in war. She does not love any particular southern men in the way that she loves the South and its ideals. Drusilla clearly has the desires of a southern son and feels trapped in the body of a southern daughter. Ironically, she fulfills the role of a son more effectively than the men in her life fulfill their own roles—Bayard and his father, by traditional southern standards, fail as warriors when they finally reject masculine fetishization of violence and honor. Bayard is a successful woman in his refusal of violence and his preference for the home, and Drusilla is a successful southern man in her love for and desire to protect her homeland. In the eyes of the men and women who have planted her firmly inside their own constructed gender ideology, Drusilla is not capable of becoming a father or a son: she is a daughter, and she is, metaphorically, the homeland itself. Although John Sartoris accepts her as a soldier, it is not acceptable for the embodied homeland, the symbol created by such speech, to assert new claims about herself. Drusilla’s attempts to make herself understood and to defend her military service are unheard above the roar of fourteen women from Jefferson who descend upon Drusilla to force her to comply with their gender norms and, ostensibly, protect the legacy of her father.

The most effective agent of Drusilla’s defeat is not a patriarch, but women who, like Drusilla, internalize southern rhetoric. However, Drusilla’s mother, Louisa Hawkhurst, adheres to the dicta of representational space through her obsession with preserving what is ultra-feminine about the southern lady. Louisa harnesses the power of southern narratives, and perhaps what Charles Reagan Wilson calls “Southern civil religion” (33), to bring Drusilla into

compliance with southern political and religious myths by harassing John and Drusilla with the weight of public opinion until they are forced to marry. Louisa is excessively grieved by her daughter's military service, specifically because it brings her into close proximity with male bodies. When she goes to the Sartoris home (along with many of her friends, all equally outraged) to confront John and Drusilla, she wears mourning for her husband, although Bayard points out that he had not seen her in mourning "at Hawkhurst two years ago though Uncle Dennison was just as dead then as he was now" (*U* 200). She wears mourning as a memorial of the father and to enhance the paternalistic rhetoric she will use to try and force Drusilla's marriage. Louisa's actions are certainly feminine in the sense that they are actions performed by a woman; however, they are not part of the feminine, disruptive force identified in Faulkner's body of work by Minrose Gwin and other critics. They are, however, indicative of the power of the white male as colonizer in the southern space. When Louisa confronts John, she says: "Colonel Sartoris . . . I am a woman; I must request what the husband whom I have lost and the man son which I have not would demand, perhaps at the point of a pistol—Will you marry my daughter?" (*U* 203). Bayard, perhaps purposefully, describes Drusilla's situation after this "proposal" in terms of power structures: "Then Drusilla broke; they beat her. Because she was strong; she wasn't much older than I was, but she had let Aunt Louisa and Mrs Habersham choose the game and she had beat them both until that night when Aunt Louisa went behind her back and chose a game she couldn't beat" (*U* 202). Even without direct pressure to do so, Drusilla's mother performs femininity in an ingrained, socially reinforced pattern. Although she attempts to take on a masculine role in her speech to John, she does not believe that her own power is sustainable beyond temporary necessity: she only uses it to restore a society in which she is not required to assert herself. Drusilla and her mother both desire to re-inscribe the Old

South as it was before its upheaval during the Civil War. Their lived space has shifted drastically, and they resort to narratives of southern women's delicacy and southern men's strength to re-establish boundaries.

After she is forced back into her dress, Drusilla's sense of defeat alters her once exuberant defiance of gender norms. When John is killed, she tries to re-enter the conversation around southern masculinity by any means available to her—since she cannot avenge John herself, she believes that Bayard must. Her movements toward this goal are a tragic re-creation of her mother's manipulations. Drusilla is forced to deny herself by becoming an image of a goddess of war rather than a warrior. She attempts to sexualize violence to manipulate Bayard: "She faced me, she was quite near; again the scent of the verbena in her hair seemed to have increased a hundred times as she stood holding out to me, one in either hand, the two duelling pistols. 'Take them, Bayard,' she said, in the same tone in which she had said 'Kiss me' last summer, already pressing them into my hands, watching me with that passionate and voracious exaltation, speaking in a voice fainting and passionate with promise" (*U* 237). Drusilla's attraction to violence and her attempts to live vicariously as a warrior through Bayard are attempts to reinscribe southern narratives. However, they also indicate Drusilla's desire to be masculine and attack the boundary between male and female. Drusilla's madness occurs not when she acts on her desire to be masculine, but when she is only allowed to do so within the confines of her femininity. When she is forced to remain in the narrow space allotted to a female, her energy is drained, and the carefully worded and brave narratives she created for herself are silenced. However, Drusilla's chosen scent, the chosen symbol of her struggle, remains as the odor of verbena outlasts the sound of her voice. By permeating the space around Bayard, that

odor assists in the call for a southern space that acknowledges the experiential reality of a female body whose capabilities overflow her expectations.

The overflow of feminine desire in Faulkner's female characters takes many forms, all of which have one design: to penetrate the masculine representational space and re-direct it toward a feminine future. In *Absalom, Absalom!*, Rosa Coldfield leverages her position as one of the South's "ghosts" to tell Quentin a story of the Civil War, Thomas Sutpen, and of her own desires. Rosa Coldfield's voice, which dominates a narrative framed by Quentin Compson and his father, achieves such a redirection before ending once again in madness. Rosa's voice invades a physical space which once belonged to her father. She begins by bringing Quentin into the space which belonged to her father, which "she still called the office because her father had called it that" (AA 3). The beginnings of Rosa's narrative exist firmly within the patriarchal, representational space of the South. She is heard only because of the remnant of chivalry articulated by Jason Compson, Sr. He tells Quentin that the only reason he is obligated to hear Rosa's story is that she is a physical embodiment of the Lost Cause—"Years ago we in the South made our women into ladies. Then the War came and made the ladies into ghosts. So what else can we do, being gentlemen, but listen to them being ghosts?" (AA 117). Rosa is aware of her situation within a representational space that tries to erase her story as she tells it. She rests on mechanisms of knowledge and recapitulation to counteract the parameters of the space in which she is lodged. She tells Quentin that she already knows both what he has been told and what he will believe. However, she moves beyond what he must already know and tells him a story with graphic sexual detail, a story that tells truths about her own body and desires that no one could articulate but herself. She also employs repetition and recapitulation of her story, which tires Quentin and Mr. Compson. However, through the constant retelling of her story, one of those

stories of abuse which Donaldson and Jones claim are well known but rarely told (*Haunted Bodies* 466), Rosa effectively impregnates Quentin with her story. Its simultaneous truth and lack of coherence with dominant southern narratives shake Quentin. The uncertainty she plants in his mind, the reminder she gives him of feminine chaos, follows him to his death.

Rosa's story subjugates the domineering power of Sutpen in Faulkner's southern space by reframing the literal space in terms of her own body and her own desires. As Doreen Massey says, a proper conception of time and space sees them as defined by their inhabitants and leading toward an open future (Massey 174). Rosa's narrative, although by no means perfect and still decidedly racist, recreates Sutpen's story around her own desire. Because of her age and gender, she is relegated to spaces on the periphery of power and knowledge. She is forced to serve her father, and she must learn from listening behind doorways or watching from windows. However, Rosa finds significant sources of knowledge in her own body. She frames her desire to both love and destroy Sutpen through the summer she was fourteen, a summer she calls "the summer of wistaria" (AA 115). This summer is the awakening of her adolescent sense of desire, but it is also the awakening of her confidence in her own presence in the representational space of the South. Rosa's insistence on framing narratives through her own experience is interpreted as madness by her peers. However, like Drusilla, Rosa is not mad until she loses control of her ability to construct identity through narrative.

Although it is an empowering destruction of the father's house for Clytemnestra, Rosa has a more problematic reaction to the burning of the Sutpen home. Rosa's speech is an attempt to redirect the narratives surrounding Thomas Sutpen, but her desire remains to be a woman honored by the system Sutpen represents. Most importantly, the destruction of the home represents the destruction of Rosa's final opportunity to take part in Sutpen's undoing. The three

months of silence Rosa spends deciding what to do with the knowledge that Henry Sutpen has returned to the Sutpen home are, perhaps, her deliberation on the future of the South. She can choose death for the Sutpen line, or she can choose to revive Sutpen's heir. In subjecting Henry to medical treatment, Rosa would prolong the Sutpen name and her association with it. The life of Henry Sutpen also represents Rosa's ability to control the narrative, revive it, and cultivate it in a way that suits her. When Henry is killed, Rosa's opportunity to participate in the spatial dialectic of the South dies as well. We then see her again through Quentin's eyes, not her own: "fighting like a doll in a nightmare, making no sound, foaming a little at the mouth" (AA 301). The burning house represents an open future, one in which narrators like Rosa must continue speaking under a new set of rules. This future intimidates Rosa, but the instability of the gender binary, the growing power of women in these narratives, creates more space for feminine desire.

"I Like Bitching, and Making Things with My Hands:" Loose Women and Spatial Interruption

The transgressive sexual behavior of women interrupts the creation of a southern space in Faulkner's work by interfering with the structure of the nuclear family headed by a white male subject. The dominant narrative for most male characters in Faulkner's fiction, both early and late, is that the land is a source of capital, rightfully owned by white men and cultivated by others. However, the land occasionally speaks back to what Homi K. Bhabha calls "the grim prose of power" (*Nation and Narration* 1) through the feminine voice. Women, so often placed in the contradictory role of both exploited resource and beloved metaphor for the land, also speak back by flooding over their boundaries. Gwin asks:

For is it not woman who experiences flooding, the "secret irreparable seeping of blood," from the position of subject? Whether from natural or unnatural causes,

woman has special expertise Such female flooding seems an untidy subject for critical discourse. Yet its very untidiness, its fluidity, may be a way of getting at the *something more* in Faulkner's art which is itself profoundly untidy as it seeps between the conscious and the unconscious, between language and what it can say, between the subject and the otherness of the world. (126)

Flooding as a primitive and powerful force that overflows its constructed boundaries has both feminine and religious significance. It references the Old Testament accounts of creation and the great flood. Flooding can also be related to the blood of Christ or the blood of women as they menstruate and bear children. Women's bleeding and flooding along with the land becomes a religious symbol that subverts patriarchal Methodism and Presbyterianism in Yoknapatawpha. Through the lens of paternalism, women's sexual behavior is protected and regulated by their fathers and brothers in the place of the almighty Father, God. In defying their male relatives, Faulkner's female characters defy a phallogentric southern conception of a patriarchal God as well. This defiance gives them the opportunity to remove themselves from the largely Catholic and Presbyterian religious context of Faulkner's South, which Wilson claims is more concerned with a violent Jehovah than a sacrificial and loving Christ (41), and design their own religious iconography.

The most obvious, perhaps stereotypical, representation of women's flooding in Faulkner's work is the pregnant woman in *If I Forget thee Jerusalem, or The Wild Palms*, who prompts the iconic last sentence of that novel: "Women, shit" (*JER* 287). The novel juxtaposes the story of the pregnant woman and the convict with the story of Charlotte and Harry, and the pregnant woman occupies the half of the novel titled "Old Man" along with the convict, who accidentally escapes prison when he is sent out on a raft to assist flood victims. The pregnant

woman appears to the accidentally-escaped convict as both a burden and a miracle—the embodiment of both Eve’s curse and Mary’s miraculous pregnancy. The woman found in the flood embodies creation, subverting the narrative of a masculine God who creates the Earth—she is both of the Earth and the cause of it. Fowler explains Faulkner’s repeated use of the Demeter/Persephone myth in characters such as Caddy Compson, Addie Bundren, Eula Varner, and Lena Grove: “Lena Grove, the reproductive mother, a Demeter-figure, represents one side of nature’s inescapable equation; and Joanna Burden, who is plunged into an abyss where she is ravished and dies, is Persephone, the dark side of natural law” (153). Perhaps the woman found in the flood, who bears life with her but is in such imminent danger, represents both of these mythical women. She appears to the convict as a woman who “was very probably somebody’s sister and quite certainly (or certainly should have been) somebody’s wife” (*JER* 125). The convict, shielded as he is from life by imprisonment, knows the narratives about women that saturate his culture and knows that the woman he discovers does not fit them. In mocking his pulp-novel consumption, Faulkner also mocks cultural representations of women:

Who to say what Helen, what living Garbo, he had not dreamed of rescuing from what craggy pinnacle or dragooned keep when he and his companion embarked on the skiff. He watched her, he made no further effort to help her beyond holding the skiff savagely steady while she lowered herself from the limb—the entire body, its deformed swell of belly bulging the calico, suspended by its arms, thinking *And this is what I get. This, out of all the female meat that walks, is what I have to be caught in a runaway boat with.* (*JER* 126)

Once again the myth of a South that defends and cherishes its women is deflated: men, even those whose societal standing might lead them to expect mates of equal status, have only

chivalric interest in certain white women who meet their behavioral standards. The pregnant woman, along with the flood, thwarts the convict's expectations and intrudes upon a space that the convict assumed he would occupy alone. It is the pregnant woman who decides the perceived geography of this newly flooded space. She directs the convict in driving the boat, and her presence affects the decisions he can make about traversing the space revealed after the flood. Since the woman is symbolically attached to the physical space, her voice gains the power to alter the representational space. The act of traversing forbidden space, space that women in her condition are not allowed to cross, is subversive in itself.

The woman in the flood traverses space because natural phenomena dictate that she must. Because of the similar force of sexual narratives she has learned to believe are natural and true, Lena Grove of *Light in August* feels she must traverse the road from Alabama to Mississippi to find the man who impregnated her. Lena, an orphan who leaves her brother's home when he discovers her pregnancy, is also figured as an Earth goddess, albeit one of the ground as the pregnant woman is one of the water. Lena's relationship with the representational space of the South as it prescribes her identity is complicated. It can be said that, like Drusilla Hawkhurst's mother, she has internalized the demands of the patriarchy enough to go in search of a man she must know has no desire to marry her. The theme of internalized patriarchy is prevalent in *Light in August*, and several male characters are bewildered by the increased hostility of other women toward Lena. The spaces Lena crosses are spaces which have already successfully inscribed the nuclear family and reinforced patriarchy in their representational space. Women who are rewarded for their compliance with such a society are threatened by Lena's presence. Men, however, view her with more pity and ambivalence, perhaps because they realize that she will soon have her illegitimate child and become invisible to their society and

erased from the religio-political space. Because she conceives a child out of wedlock, she is no longer seen as a part of the conventional religious community. However, Lena's travels through the physical space of the South can be viewed as a transformation not only of her personal religious views, but also of the views held by those around her. Much like Christ, Lena is a traveler who relies on the charity of the towns through which she passes. She also acquires a disciple in Byron Bunch, who sacrifices his job and the respect of his peers by choosing to love and pursue Lena. At the end of the novel, Lena has enlisted Byron as an escort on her continued travels. She is ostensibly still searching for the father of her child, but she is also traversing the South, forcing others to bear witness to her transgression. She keeps Byron in thrall, and her child remains both well cared for and fatherless.

Charlotte Rittenmeyer reclaims the power of a deity by engaging in acts of creation outside of the role of motherhood sanctioned by her Catholic upbringing. Charlotte leaves her Catholic husband and daughters to pursue an affair with Harry Wilbourne, and the couple's desperate attempts to maintain love outside of matrimony and parenthood take them from New Orleans, to northern mining towns, to the Gulf Coast. "The Wild Palms," Charlotte and Harry's half of the novel, colors the female body with the divine by connecting it to creation. Charlotte sees herself as a creator, telling Harry, "Listen. I lied to you. I don't paint. I work with clay, and some in brass, and once with a piece of stone," adding that she prefers to make "something you can touch, pick up, something with weight in your hand that you can look at the behind side of, that displaces air and displaces water and when you drop it, it's your foot that breaks and not the shape" (*JER* 35). In contrast, Charlotte detests the role of motherhood, claiming that children "hurt too bad" (*JER* 134). Charlotte rejects the experience of creating a child, the experience that Erica Lazure believes Rosa Coldfield desires so much that she replaces it with narration (480),

because she rejects the cultural expectation that she ought to submit to pain. She refuses to participate in Eve's curse and suffer in childbirth for the men she loves. Instead, she offers an alternative credo to Harry, insisting that they will be allowed to keep their transgressive relationship "as long as we are worthy of keeping it. Good enough. Strong enough. Worthy to be allowed to keep it. To get what you want as decently as you can, then keep it. Keep it That's what I'm going to do. Try to do. I like bitching, and making things with my hands. I don't think that's too much to be permitted to like, to want to have and keep" (*JER* 75). Charlotte creates a narrative for herself and those she loves that does not bend to societal pressure. By travelling with Harry from place to place, she intrudes upon a southern space that forbids the free exercise of her sexuality. Charlotte unites her body with the land wherever she goes, and her intrusion upon southern space redirects the narratives around Charlotte's desire. Charlotte is unapologetic about her fondness for "bitching" and her prioritization of her art. Her husband, Rat, and her lover, Harry, are forced to reorganize their lives around her unapologetic expression of desire. Rat becomes both a father and a mother to his daughters, and continues loving Charlotte despite her betrayal. Although his desire to see Charlotte taken care of by either himself or Harry is still inherently paternalistic, Rat comes to understand that Charlotte's worth is not contingent upon her compliance with religious prescriptions of female sexuality. Charlotte's insistent existence outside of social structures forces those around her to reckon with her desires and to take responsibility for the pain inflicted upon her by hostile narratives of female existence.

Caddy Compson's choice to live a life led by her desires also shakes the constructed narratives of the men in her life. Although she is not given her own chapter to narrate, Caddy is the force which propels masculine speech in *The Sound and the Fury*, the novel in which her three brothers tell the tale of their family's destruction and their sister's sexual ruin. She is both

desirous and desirable, and her brothers respond violently to her beauty and sexuality. Benjy is affected deeply by his sister's love and kindness. Quentin loves his sister, but cannot reconcile her existence with his existing intellectual store of narratives about women. Because he has been indoctrinated with the importance of his family's name and the uncleanness of female sexuality since his youth, Quentin cannot accept his sister's sexuality. Jason becomes increasingly cruel and subjects Caddy's daughter to even harsher control to prevent another embarrassment for the family. Caddy's desire disrupts her family's narratives of their own gentility, creating chaos for those who, like Quentin and Caroline Compson, rely on those narratives to make sense of the world. Caddy boldly acts upon her desires, often taking lovers on her father's land. However, Caddy refuses to bring her suitors home and subject them to the regulation of her family. When Quentin questions her on her love for Dalton Ames, she answers in terms of the power of her desire: "Im bad anyway you cant help it" (*SF* 158). After becoming pregnant, Caddy subverts patriarchy by naming her daughter after her brother, suggesting a feminine line of inheritance that subverts the South's system of male superiority and primogeniture. The idea of inheritance is summarily destroyed by Faulkner in *The Sound and the Fury*: Quentin, the firstborn, first rejects southern masculinity and then rejects his own life. Caddy's daughter Quentin, named for the firstborn and rightful male heir of what little is left of the Compson fortune, steals the Compson future and redirects it. Quentin escapes the house in which she is locked by her uncle and steals several thousand dollars from him—some of that money is hers, sent to her by her mother, and some is Jason's and presumably money that would have belonged to Quentin had he lived. With much of the Compson fortune and the future of the Compson name, Quentin escapes the house of her male ancestors into the open, undefined, and rebellious world of her mother.

“She Began to Laugh”: The Success of a Feminine Representational Space in Faulkner

In Faulkner's work, women often take part in the spatial dialectic of the South by speaking in sexual terms or by acting out their sexual desires. Death is often the result of a female character's attempt to take part in the spatial dialectic. Keener concludes that some of Faulkner's "masculine men" do earn violent, masculine deaths (111), but it is rarer to see a daughter of Faulkner's South die for a cause as Drusilla Hawk was willing to do. What death symbolizes for the South's sons—eternal fame or eternal ignominy—it does not symbolize for the daughter of the South. Because she is at once fundamental and invisible to the myth-making process of the South, the Southern daughter's death is automatic and unremarkable in a way that the father's is not. The father's name abides, survives, and becomes synonymous with the South's eternal past and civil religion. When the mother or daughter dies, her wasted potential simply prepares the land for another, similarly nameless, individual to take her place. Take for example Anse Bundren's final words after the burial of his wife in *As I Lay Dying*: "Meet Mrs. Bundren" (261). He replaces one wife with another immediately, reducing the status of a wife to merely a feminine body that takes on the male name and reinforces his identity. Thus, the representational space which includes the nuclear family and the white man's right to white female servitude is perpetuated. When men die in Faulkner's novels, they participate in the dialectic around the Old South by being grafted into its mythology as martyrs, heroes, or even villains. When women die, their deaths often halt attempts to participate in such myth-making. However, the deaths of some Faulknerian women communicate a value system that is strong enough to permeate the masculine consciousness and help prepare the land for the future.

In death, Addie Bundren renegotiates and complicates the social space of Faulkner's South. Her dying wish is to be relocated to her people in Jefferson—in short, she wishes to be

represented differently, as part of her parents' family and not of Anse Bundren's. Addie even negotiates herself and her ability to bear children in terms of space and possession. She gives some of her children to Anse and to the ideologies she detests, and she keeps some of her children for herself. Of her relationship with Anse and the children she bears him, she says:

I gave Anse the children. I did not ask for them. I did not even ask him for what he could have given me: not-Anse. That was my duty to him, to not ask that, and that duty I fulfilled. I would be I; I would let him be the shape and echo of his word. That was more than he asked, because he could not have asked for that and been Anse, using himself so with a word. (*AILD* 174)

Addie maintains that she will occupy her own space, and believes that to keep her husband out, she must give him some semblance of control over the household. Later, she claims, "I gave Anse Dewey Dell to negative Jewel. Then I gave him Vardaman to replace the child I had robbed him of. And now he has three children that are his and not mine. And then I could get ready to die" (*AILD* 176). Addie resists the space in which she lives, the space haunted and controlled by her husband, Anse, who does nothing to cultivate it but maintains control. She subverts his ownership of the land by populating it with a child who was not fathered by him and by separating the other children from him. When she thinks of her children after her affair, she says: "I even held Anse refraining still, not that I was holding him recessional, but as though nothing else had ever been. My children were of me alone, of the wild blood boiling along the earth, of me and of all that lived; of none and of all" (*AILD* 175). Through acting upon her desires and having an affair, Addie gains an altered conception of space, one that enables female generation without a dominant father figure. With her dying wish, she forces a relocation of her body. Her request is subversive: she forces her husband to travel to place her body in a space that he does

not control. Anse, then, is no longer the possessor of Addie's body. Although her husband uses the travel as an opportunity to further victimize their children and to replace her with a new wife, Addie's children inherit a sense that their father's authority is neither natural nor desirable.

Charlotte Rittenmeyer of *The Wild Palms* has perhaps the most transgressive death for a female in Faulkner's body of work. Perhaps a product of her higher level of education and an early-twentieth century artistic sensibility, Charlotte articulates the system against which she fights with more freedom than Drusilla, Rosa, or any of Faulkner's antebellum women. By choosing an abortion when she falls pregnant, Charlotte refuses the pipeline of daughterhood, motherhood, and death. She forces Harry to perform the procedure by reminding him of both economic necessity and the primacy of their love, or her own desire: "I told you once how I believe it isn't love that dies, it's the man and the woman, something in the man and the woman that dies, doesn't deserve the chance to love anymore. And look at us now. We have the child, only we both know we cant have it, cant afford to have it" (*JER* 184). Harry's sense of honor prevents his abandoning the child once it is born, and so he attempts to find steady enough work to deny Charlotte's demand for an abortion. However, potential employers are troubled by Harry's position on the margins of moral and religious society, and he does not find suitable work. At the latest possible date, Charlotte holds him to his promise to perform the abortion. "We've done this lots of ways but not with knives, have we?" (*JER* 186), she asks Harry as begins to perform her abortion with an unsuitable tool. Charlotte knows that the abortion is necessary to the continuation of her desire, and that as soon as she has another child she will be forced back into a space which regulates mothers and wives. However, Charlotte also knows that her future-mindedness may lead her to death. Harry imagines that she will tell her husband not to take action against him if she dies of her abortion "*for the sake of all the men and women who*

ever lived and blundered but meant the best and all that ever will live and blunder but mean the best" (*JER* 189). Charlotte is aware that as long as her desire to create a space in which women make their own future with their own hands is not widely accepted, women and men will continue to die when they are excluded from the representational space.

Charlotte envisions a future in which she can thrive in her refusal of Eve's curse, but her partner's fear of refusing paternity and breaking with chivalric standards causes his hands to shake during the procedure, and so she develops sepsis. Charlotte's death comes not through her rejection of motherhood, but through Harry's inability to respect her decision to live outside of the cultural space of the South. Even at the point of Charlotte's death, Harry does not understand that she is not and has never been his property. He imagines death as "cuckolding him; nothing to see, yet it was there, he not permitted to watch his own cuckolding but only to look down on the invisible pregnancy of his horning" (*JER* 239). When Harry is asked why this abortion fails even though he has performed one successfully before, he thinks, "*I loved her*" (*JER* 250). Harry's love has not yet overcome the desire to own Charlotte and to participate in a patriarchal and heteronormative relationship with her. Had he been free from narratives of patriarchy and chivalry, Harry would have feared perceived violence against Charlotte and a childless future less. However, he is correct to fear complete exclusion from the southern space.

The doctor's wife, Miss Martha, attempts to expel Charlotte and Harry from the property owned by her husband based on their failure to comply with her moral code. "Cant you understand that this woman is dying?" (*JER* 243), her husband asks, implying that compassion in the moment of suffering overrides cultural narratives of the Christian South. Martha affirms that control overrides compassion in all cases, replying "Let her die. Let them both die. But not in this house. Not in this town. Get them out of here and let them cut on one another and die as

much as they please” (*JER* 243). There is not room for them in the structures that perpetuate the religious and political reality of the South. Charlotte ends her life by attempting to defy the narratives of the conceived space. When she is confined to her bed and told she must not move around, she tries to break out, crying “Why cant I? Why bloody cant I? (*JER* 17). Charlotte desires her own space as well as her own narrative. During her death, she tries to confuse the doctors’ knowledge about her relationship with Harry, her pregnancy, and her sexuality: “nobody ever knows just where the truth is about a whore to convict anybody” (*JER* 18). In the delirium of pain, Charlotte realizes that within the religious narratives of the South, she will always be labeled a whore. She also realizes that the only possibility for her words and ideals to survive is to subvert those constructs. In death, she is forced to accept Eve’s curse, but she also harnesses Eve’s power as one of the mothers of a future that does not kill women who accept their bodily autonomy.

Another powerful woman dies in *Absalom, Absalom!* when Clytemnestra “Clytie” Sutpen chooses to die to prevent Rosa from discovering Henry Sutpen and Jim Bond. Clytie’s status as daughter is as oppressive as it is unacknowledged. She is the unacknowledged daughter of Thomas Sutpen and by birth more of a Sutpen than Rosa Coldfield ever becomes. Clytie defies the paternalistic nature of the Sutpen house by exercising authority within the Sutpen home. Together, Clytie and Rosa cause the destruction of the Sutpen home. Rosa’s obsession with Sutpen’s story and insistence on visiting the house prompts Clytie to burn the house down. Clytie, who has the least to gain from loyalty to Sutpen, sacrifices her life to protect Sutpen’s son and grandson. Clytie’s identity formation in *Absalom, Absalom!* is challenged by her blackness and her femininity—she shares a bed with her half-sister Judith and forms one third of Rosa’s triumvirate, but she seems to seek unity with her male relatives. She is a daughter of the white

master, in a liminal space between slave and sibling. Clytie's blackness especially equips her to begin the creation of a new, non-patriarchal South. Black women, in both Faulkner's South and the historical South, bear the majority of the weight of white male supremacy—they were tools to cultivate the land, the bodies upon which men sated their sexual needs before (and after) marrying white women, the mothers of children born from that violence, and the caretakers of white children. When the baby girl Quentin disrupts the domestic life of the Compsons, Dilsey, their black housemaid, objects, ““And whar else do she belong?’ Dilsey says. ‘Who else gwine raise her cep me? Aint I raised ev’y one of y’all?’” (*SF* 198). Clytie bears a similar sense of conflicting contempt and responsibility for her white family. Her choice to die to protect her half-brother represents a tragic empathy with a system that rejects her existence. Regardless of their races and the history of their father, Clytie unites the children of Thomas Sutpen through their suffering: “Whatever he done,” she tells Quentin, “me and Judith and him have paid it out” (*AA* 196). However, her choice to die also signifies a very literal destruction of the father's house by the hand of the daughter. Clytie destroys Sutpen's home and denies Rosa an answer by opening up the Sutpen narrative into an endless unanswered question. By choosing death over disclosure, Clytie forces the Sutpen narrative to unfold on her own terms, razing the narratives constructed by white fathers and replacing them with a ground prepared for new growth.

Clytie's destruction of the Sutpen home torments Rosa, who desires a different method of erasing Sutpen's place in the mythos of Yoknapatawpha. However, the fire set by Clytie can be seen as a necessary destruction to create room for a new South where all races and genders labor together for an open future, unfixed in time by racist or sexist narratives. This reading is perhaps too optimistic for a Faulkner novel, but the potential of the feminine space Faulkner creates by Clytie's razing of the father's house cannot be underestimated. By destroying the space

constructed by Thomas Sutpen, Clytie alters the dialectic around his existence. When Quentin and Rosa enter the space that has been in Clytie's de facto possession for so long, she intends to maintain her power over it by any means possible. The space that never acknowledged her place in the Sutpen bloodline is now a place that depends upon her leadership. There, she cares for Jim Bond, the severely disabled son of Charles Bon, Sutpen's son by his Haitian wife. When her half-brother Henry returns, she cares for him as well. Clytie is in control of the space, although she is willing to engage in the language of submission with Quentin. She first turns to Quentin to control Rosa, returning to the speech she learned as a slave: "Dont let her go up there, young marster" (AA 295). Then, "maybe she looked at him and knew that would do no good either, because she turned and overtook Miss Coldfield and caught her arm and said, 'Dont you go up there, Rosie'" (AA 295). Her speech here implies even more control over Rosa than she exercises at the death of Charles Bon. In that scene, Rosa is offended by Clytie's use of her first name, Rosa. Now Clytie calls her by a nickname, Rosie, infantilizing Rosa and cementing her sense of power over her. Clytie touches Rosa's arm after the death of Charles as well. Rosa calls Clytie's touch "the touch of flesh and flesh which abrogates, cuts sharp and straight across the devious intricate channels of decorous ordering" (AA 111-2), saying "let flesh touch with flesh, and watch the fall of all the eggshell shibboleth of caste and color too" (AA 112). Rosa senses Clytie's destructive ability to penetrate and move within spaces that even Rosa, with all her intuitive knowledge and powerful speech, does not understand. Like Addie's whip, the touch of Clytie's hand forces her marginal narrative into Rosa's vision, making it possible for Rosa to expand her conception of the South's future.

Clytie's control of her father's space is completed by her destruction of it. The burning of the home marks the end of her suffering for the sins of her father. Instead of being removed from

and ignored in spaces controlled by white men, Clytie destroys the space that holds the history of her oppression. This action reflects the most effective approach to re-designing the southern space. Although Rosa perhaps desired to keep Henry alive for the purpose of altering history, Clytie chooses to end both Henry's life and her own in the process of destroying Sutpen's legacy. Taken literally, this approach is obviously not desirable or feasible for re-creating the physical space of the South. However, complete removal of ideological structures that uphold southern racism and patriarchy are ideal for a recreation of the South. Clytie accomplishes this as well, and she leaves Jim Bond as a living reminder of the failure of the structures upon which her father relied. Those structures, which need the continued suffering and debasement of Clytie and people like her to survive, are now under Clytie's control. Once removed, the Sutpen home leaves a hole in both the physical and conceived space of the South. This hole must be filled by the type of space Clytie attempted to create during her years of suffering in the Sutpen home. She acknowledges her own competency and autonomy, but she does not denounce her love for her brother. Although the new space of the South must begin in femininity and acknowledge female spatial and narrative authority, it creates room for re-imagining of masculine roles as well. When rebuilt, the southern space must acknowledge the experience and freedom of all who live in it. This requires women like Clytie Sutpen, Rosa Coldfield, and Charlotte Rittenmeyer to access their own voices and desires. It also requires men, like Quentin Compson and Byron Bunch, to enter the feminine space and begin experiencing both masculine and feminine forms of knowledge.

Conclusion

The women of Faulkner's novels defy the cycles into which they are forced by masculine-dominated conceived space. In the lived space of the South, Faulkner's women defy

the confines of marriage, motherhood, and death by acting on their sexual and intellectual desires. This newly created space, one that is predominantly feminine in its imaginativeness, openness, and ability to nurture life, can and will not exclude black and white men. Femininity in Faulkner's work represents a space both of historical oppression and future possibility. After the identity crisis ignited by the Civil War and its seminal nationalist rhetoric, Faulkner's women were given the unique task of creating the space of the New South. The feminine voice that speaks back to the national narratives of the Old South is crucial for creating new spaces because feminine desire in Faulkner's novels envelops all forms of political, religious, and sexual expression. Through the desires of Faulkner's female characters, we can read prescriptions for the future of a South that inhabits a feminine space. Through Addie Bundren and Rosa Coldfield, Faulkner explores possibilities for a language and method of speech not rooted in phallocentrism. Through the woman in the flood and Lena Grove, we see acceptance of a woman's ability to dictate her own religious practice and expression. Through Charlotte Rittenmeyer and Caddie Compson, Faulkner shows the tragedy of a space which rejects women who assert their sexuality. Through Clytemnestra Sutpen, we see the vision of a future that razes patriarchal structures and begins anew.

Through their transgressive speech and sexual behavior, Faulkner's female characters enter a space in his text that allows them to speak against narratives constructed to exclude their stories. These women are daughters born to the South and its unique paternalism, and they have inherited and felt the effects of the ideals that created the representational space which oppresses them. Because of this inheritance and their continued resistance to it, feminine desire remains the force that Faulkner uses best to disrupt the religio-political space created to reinforce white patriarchy. Because they have experienced the multiplied oppressions of racism and sexism, they

will join with black and white men in giving birth to a New South, one which acknowledges and nurtures difference.

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