

**THE BIG HOUSE:
MARRIAGE AND MASCULINITY IN FAULKNER'S YOKNAPATAWPHA**

BY

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*For Jeff
who walked with me to that first door*

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Abbreviations Used

<i>AA</i>	<i>Absalom, Absalom!</i>
<i>AILD</i>	<i>As I Lay Dying</i>
<i>CS</i>	<i>Collected Stories</i>
<i>GDM</i>	<i>Go Down, Moses</i>
<i>H</i>	<i>The Hamlet</i>
<i>ID</i>	<i>Intruder in the Dust</i>
<i>LA</i>	<i>Light in August</i>
<i>SF</i>	<i>The Sound and the Fury</i>
<i>UCS</i>	<i>Uncollected Stories</i>
<i>U</i>	<i>The Unvanquished</i>

It was not love—worship, prostration—as he knew it, as passion had manifested heretofore in an experience limited to be sure, yet not completely innocent. He would have accepted that, taken it as his due, calling himself submitting to it as he called himself submitting when he was really using that same quality which he called proffered slavery in all the other women—his mother and his mistress—so far in his life. What he did not comprehend was that until now he had not known what true slavery was—that single constant despotic undeviating will of the enslaved not only for possession, complete assimilation, but to coerce and reshape the enslaver into the seamliness of his victimization.

~ *The Hamlet*

Introduction

Entering the schoolhouse where he meets Lucy Pate, the woman he eventually marries, Jack Houston juxtaposes love—and eventual marriage—with slavery. This tension between marriage and slavery, as highlighted by Houston's words, reveals a conflicted understanding of race, gender, and, ultimately, mastery. Inherent in Houston's words is a fear of womanhood that will trap him in the domestic space of the home and castrate his masculinity. Houston's fear is not unique. In William Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha masculinity is often at issue and is usually defined by men's activities in the outdoor world. But this study reveals that young white men like Jack Houston often contemplate their masculinity in relation to marriage and domesticity. I argue that young white men, stripped of mastery over slaves and the outdoor world of the plantation in the changing and precarious social community of the reconstructed South, refocus their attention on the household—and marriage—as a place and a space in the post-war South that may reestablish their mastery and thus their manhood.

Because masculinity has traditionally been linked to the outdoor world, many of Faulkner's novels foreground male adventure rituals such as hunting and war crucial to male characters' development and eventual integration into the larger Yoknapatawpha community. Development for young white men in Yoknapatawpha, however, is colored by the concepts of gender and race, ideologies on which the larger community relies. Faulkner's novels offer the complexity of young men's development and integration into the community as a result of rituals, adventures, journeys or quests. This development can be thus be interpreted through the literary genre of the *Bildungsroman*, or novel of formation and development. In conformance with nineteenth-century understandings of the genre, critics have previously emphasized a protagonist's integration or lack of integration into the social values of his community as he also develops a sense of self through adventures or quests. By examining fictional representations of male development, I integrate gender with genre and demonstrate how white men in Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha attempt to establish their masculinity in relationship to the domestic space of marriage and the home. By studying these novels as *Bildungsromane*, I argue that the failure of the traditional understanding of the male-gendered genre is complicated by the protagonists' inward struggle to understand the domestic space. This causes the protagonists to turn inward, searching for understandings of their masculinity in their narratives of marriage. For my purposes, I will call this the narrators' search for an understanding of "domestic masculinity": masculinity established through a man's relationship to marriage and the home.

This dissertation therefore proposes to fill an existing critical gap in scholarship concerning marriage in Faulkner's fiction by examining the male quest for identity in relation to it. This examination bridges an important gap between the domestic sphere and what has previously been considered by critics to be the patriarchal world of Faulkner's fiction. By focusing on the male quest for identity in relation to marriage, I demonstrate that marriage, the institution designed to civilize citizens and organize them into recognizable family units, mirrors slavery, the institution designed to dehumanize people into chattel. The relationship between marriage and slavery in literature has been examined before but it seems to be a topic reserved for the realm of women writers. For example, the parallel relationship between marriage and slavery certainly exists in Zora Neale Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God*. On one hand, Jody Starks empedestals Janie due to her privileged position as Mrs. Mayor: "Here he was just pouring honor all over her; building a high chair for her to sit in and overlook the world and here she was pouting over it!" (62). On the other hand, "He wanted her submission and he'd keep on fighting until he felt he had it" (71). In Harriet Jacobs's *Incidents in the Life of a Slave Girl*, Linda Brent makes the relationship explicit when she ends her narrative by juxtaposing marriage and freedom as binary oppositions: "Reader, my story ends with freedom; not in the usual way with marriage" (201). No one has returned to Faulkner, however, as a predominant white Southern male writer and questioned how men position themselves in relation to marriage. The common perception that Faulkner is a white Southern male writer who fails to address the domestic sphere

may account for this inattention. For example, feminist critic Patricia Yaeger has recently argued that “the field of southern literary studies has been dominated by a huge Faulkner industry that both overshadows and tames the terms we use for reading southern women’s fiction. What is missing from Faulkner’s epic fiction but present in writers such as Alice Walker or Eudora Welty is a sense of the ways race functions in the nonepic everyday” (*Dirt* xv). My dissertation refutes Yaeger’s argument and that of other critics who argue that Faulkner’s fiction focuses solely on the outdoor world of men. Faulkner’s fiction—distinctly from a male perspective—does focus on race in the “nonepic everyday” of the domestic sphere of marriage. My examination reveals, however, the failure of marriage and domesticity to alleviate male anxieties about gender and whiteness.

CRITICAL BACKGROUND

The few existing notable articles on marriage are extremely limited in focus and take very different approaches to the topic of marriage. David L. Vanderwerken, for example, in his short article “From Getting Married to Getting Buried: The Agenda of Women in Faulkner’s *Go Down, Moses*” (1990) argues that women’s “practical wisdom” in the home (specifically within marriage) takes “precedence over the campfire in the woods, the marriage bed in the home over the cot in the tent, and the traditional family over the fraternity of hunters” (51). His approach, while attempting to recenter the novel within the home rather than the outdoors, focuses on the recovery of the women who are pushed into the periphery of the text rather than examining why the male narration pushes them to the margins as I seek to do.

Taking a different approach to marriage altogether, John N. Duvall in *Faulkner's Marginal Couple: Invisible, Outlaw, and Unspeakable Communities* and Terrell Tebbetts in his article "Sanctuary, Marriage, and the Status of Women in 1920s America" (2003) both demonstrate Faulkner's examination of "alternatives" to traditional understandings of marriage. Duvall looks at the formation of "marginal couples" in Faulkner's fiction, those couples who "violate community standards" (3) and whose stories often end with violence and destruction. These couples' existence, Duvall argues, "undermines the sexual politics of the textual and interpretative communities, [and] often fall prey to obvious racism and classism" (4). As Duvall notes, "What is striking in Faulkner's fiction in the 1930s is the way it confronts racism and misogyny. And although Faulkner's texts operate in a horizon of misogyny, the alternative communities created by marginal couples in those texts provide alternative narratives for rethinking hegemonic myths of love and bourgeois marriage" (17). Similarly, Tebbetts demonstrates that one notable "absence" in *Sanctuary* is marriage:

Marriage hardly exists in the novel. The one that does is falling apart: the once divorced and now abandoned Belle Benbow has returned to Kentucky until the end of the novel, while her husband flees alone to his boyhood home. The widowed Narcissa Sartoris turns down a marriage proposal. Ruby Lamar is a common-law wife who becomes a common-law widow and single mother. Miss Reba has lost her common-law husband as well, and she presides not over a home but

over a house of assignment. Popeye's mother was abandoned to single motherhood. In addition, three men are widowers—Judge Drake, Goodwin's Pap, and the prisoner in the Jefferson jail, who has murdered his wife—and two are frustrated in marriage—Gowan Stevens and Horace Benbow. (*Sanctuary* 48)

By considering the cultural thinking of the 1920s concerning “self-ownership of women” (*Sanctuary* 48), Tebbetts demonstrates that *Sanctuary* sets forth the option of “companionate marriages,” marriages that “model a kind of self-ownership that breeds mutual subjectivity” (*Sanctuary* 58): “*Sanctuary* makes the egalitarian marriage and family promoted by 1920s thinkers the foundation of a world that makes such space such sanctuaries, available to young women like Temple” (*Sanctuary* 59). Tebbetts argues, similar to Duvall before him, that while the novel promotes such alternative understanding of marriage, other forces at work in the novel—particularly patriarchal impulses—undermine such alternative models of marriage: “It suggests that the freely entered, egalitarian marriage, which patriarchy was subverting even as advanced thinkers were promoting it, must resist such subversion and assert itself as a new kind of model not only for self-ownership but also for the nurture of subject status for all members of the family and of society based on it. That kind of model is *Sanctuary*'s absent presence” (59). While Duvall's analysis of alternative couples does give fodder to understanding “hegemonic myths of love and bourgeois marriage,” his study does not look at why or how what Tebbetts defines as the “patriarchal impulses” continue to be relied upon by

the male narrators. Neither does Tebbetts consider why the patriarchy subverts alternative models of marriage.

My argument goes beyond Duvall's and Tebbett's arguments searching for the underling reason that male narrator's reject the "self-ownership" inherent in "companionate marriages" and alternative communities. Ownership itself, as I will demonstrate, is both relied upon and feared by the Southern patriarchy in Faulkner's fiction. White male identity is created by understandings of ownership, mastery, and domination: slavery and marriage thus bolster white male identity. Without ownership and mastery, white male identity falters. White men in Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha locate their identity in what Nancy Bercaw defines as the "plantation household." The plantation household, although couched in terms of family, is built through ownership and mastery. The household, Bercaw explains, functions "as the foundation for domestic and political authority" (1) in the antebellum South. At the head of the household is the white landed planter, and all others who reside on the plantation are his dependents, his "family," whether white or black, kin or slave. It is from this seat of power that white men rule through the parallel institutions of slavery and marriage. "In the antebellum Delta," Bercaw explains, "the household represented the political, economic, and personal force of slavery" (2). Similarly, "Marriage, and the household more broadly, served to naturalize and legitimize inequalities" (2). Both slavery and marriage worked together and gave meaning and design to the social relationships among the people on the plantation: "The household, therefore, referred to more than a type of family structure. Instead, each

antebellum household served as a physical representation of southern power relations” (3). Whiteness and masculinity reify one another through the “ideologies of household”: “The household served to justify slavery, allocate political rights, and naturalize gender and racial hierarchies. The household acted as the point of negotiation between the citizen and the state, slaveholders and slaves, and men and women” (4). Thus, the household is the seat of white man’s power within the larger community.

The role of marriage is thus central to Faulkner’s project of creating Yoknapatawpha and the community of residents who reside in it. Marriage is a carefully used tool that Faulkner employs to create, integrate, and demonstrate relationships among community members as well as integration into the community. Faulkner creates and builds Yoknapatawpha County by interweaving individuals into a tapestry of society through marriage. The necessity of marriage links individual members and brings them outside the isolation of the individual family unit (father, mother, siblings) and into the larger community as we see with the absorption of the Snopes clan into the larger community with Eula Varner’s marriage to Flem in *The Hamlet*. Individuals thus create bonds that link families, forging a larger community bond within the society. Marriage adheres individuals to community and society, reflecting both the shared beliefs and values of the community and imposing those same beliefs and values onto the individual—a collective understanding of acceptable behavior. Additionally, the repetition and inclusion of marriages throughout

Faulkner's canon (such as the Compsons, Armstids, Tulls, Mallisons, and Beauchamps) creates a social-cultural script of marriage within Yoknapatawpha.

Faulkner's reliance on marriage to create the Yoknapatawpha County community reflects historical understandings of the institution by demonstrating the reciprocal relationship between marriage and community. As historian Nancy Cott points out, marriage as an institution only exists in relation to the community: "To be marriage, the institution requires public affirmation. It requires public knowledge—at least some publicity beyond the couple themselves" (1). Community was thus originally a more powerful regulating force of marriage than legislation in the United States:

In the early United States, however, where the population spread out thinly under little state surveillance, the state apparatus was not likely to enter the life of a couple unless they were reported to authorities by neighbors. The "informal public" made up of family, kin, and neighbors exercised practiced control of marriage formation, preservation, and termination. The local community had far greater access to the circumstances of ongoing households and relationships than law enforcement officers. [...] State law set the framework that guided and influenced local communities, but because of its proximity, the community's ability to approve or chastise its members came first. It could easily be felt as more important than any law—more affirming when it echoed an individual's or couple's desire or more coercive

when it did not. A community's shared beliefs in the morality and utility of its marriage practices forms part of its sense of its sense that it is a community. The informal public exercised the forces of approval or condemnation that shaped prospective and married couple's behavior. (29)

Faulkner, therefore, demonstrates that communities shape, control and regulate marriage through common and shared beliefs. These community and cultural mores eventually were regulated into formal legal legislation, because, as legal historians Hendrik Hartog and Peggy Pascoe point out, formal legislation solidifies and arrests the malleability of community beliefs. It is this legal framework that unifies communities such as Yoknapatawpha at the local, state and federal level.

Marriage laws, as we see demonstrated in Faulkner's *Requiem for a Nun* (1951), impose a boundary between single people and those who were married. This boundary is to separate, and thus protect and control, these two distinct groups of people from the influence of the other, argues Hartog:

Single-married, that was the fundamental legal divide. And the sharp boundary between marriage and nonmarriage was everywhere in the law. It played a particularly important and continuing role in shaping the meaning of coverture. Throughout the case law in nineteenth century America, judges worked to maintain the line between the two states of being, between marriage and nonmarriage, to impose order on men and women who often lived on the boundary between marriage

and nonmarriage, in separation, in a liminal state of marital being. That was, we might say, the basic ideological task of the law of marriage: to make sure that the married and the nonmarried were clearly divided from one another. (93-94)

The underlying need for these laws is due to the danger posed by those individuals living on the “boundary” between married and single that Duvall points out in *Faulkner’s Marginal Couple*. There are couples in Yoknapatawpha who attempt to form alternative relationships outside of marriage, but as Duvall demonstrates, there are destructive and often violent consequences for these alternative relationships: the tragedy of Joanna Burden’s “murder” at the hands of Joe Christmas in *Light in August*; Charlotte Rittenmeyer’s death as a result of Harry Wilbourne’s attempt to abort their child in *The Wild Palms*, the recurring Oedipal relationships of “Ruby-her father-Frank, Temple-Popeye-Red, Little Belle-Horace-the young men on the train, and Temple-Pap/Judge Drake-Popeye” (63) in *Sanctuary*; the ménage relationship of Roger and Laverne Shumann and Jack Holmes in *Pylon*; and the disruption of the gendered relationship of Thomas Sutpen and General Compson by the homoerotic relationship of Quentin Compson with his roommate, Shreve, in *Absalom, Absalom!* The danger, of course, is the control of or, in Hartog’s language, the imposition of “order” over sexuality. As Cott points out, marriage—specifically monogamous marriage—was a political theory for United States governance for the founding fathers. Because the “moral and political philosophy” of government was Christian (10), and because “Christian doctrine expected heterosexual desire to be satisfied

exclusively within marriage and so demanded sexual fidelity of both partners” (11). Thus marriage became a way of containing and controlling sexuality thus necessitating a strict boundary between single and married.

This attempt to contain and control sexuality through marriage is clearly seen in *Requiem for a Nun*, when Temple attempts to distinguish between “Mrs. Gowan Stevens” and “Temple Drake.” The difference, argues Noel Polk, is that the name “Mrs. Gowan Stevens” symbolizes that Temple has changed: Temple’s married name “is, then, symbolic of her change from her previous anarchic state to a more civilized, ordered, existence” (“Faulkner’s” 95). “She has,” Polk argues, “spent the past eight years of her life [since her marriage] verifying the truth of the difference” (“Faulkner’s” 94), which is why Temple insists on “Mrs. Stevens” saving Nancy. While a viable interpretation, I read Temple’s insistence much differently. The distinction between Mrs. Gowan Stevens and Temple Drake differentiates between how her sexuality is understood by the larger community. As a married woman, Temple’s sexuality is no threat because it is contained and controlled; as an unmarried woman her sexuality is a danger. Inherent in Polk’s comments and I think also with most readers is the belief that Temple’s actions while in Memphis and directly afterward—her interactions with Popeye, her emotional attachment to Red, the possibility that she “loved” her time at the brothel as her husband insinuates, her testimony against Lee Goodwin, and perhaps even her intention to leave her family for Pete—are “uncivilized.” Her rape and abduction results in chaos in the world around her: the deaths of Tommy, Red, Lee, and, ultimately, her daughter. Her

marriage, the assumption of her role as “Mrs. Gowan Stevens,” however, contains her sexuality and civilizes her—for the good of the entire community. Thus Temple’s “reformation” through marriage reinforces the community’s reliance upon the boundary between married and not married to control sexuality.

While this legal divide and boundary manages Temple’s sexuality in *Requiem*, in *Sanctuary* (1931) we also see how that boundary can be ignored or eroticized, enticing members to cross over it as Temple does thus reinforcing the need to police the boundary in the later text. This cyclical relationship between boundaries and those whom the boundaries are meant to control are exacerbated by other social factors in Yoknapatawpha such as class and race. Thus, there are also important boundaries separating those who can marry at both the community and legislative levels. Class certainly forms a boundary as we see in the case of Mr. Coldfield’s sister in *Absalom, Absalom!* who elopes with a horse trader and is thus never allowed to return home or with Miss Emily Grierson in “A Rose for Emily” who is condemned by the town for going driving on Sundays with Homer Barron because “a Grierson would not think seriously of a Northerner, a day laborer” (CS 124). While class boundaries may be policed at the local level, boundaries between black and white, what sociologist Joane Nagel defines as “ethnic boundaries” were governed at the legislative levels through marriage laws in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Like marriage, which was initiated, regulated, and policed at the community legal, so too are ethnic boundaries. As Nagel demonstrates, the relationship between ethnic boundaries and sexual boundaries is interchangeable:

Ethnic boundaries are also sexual boundaries. Ethnicity and sexuality join together to form a barrier to hold some people in and keep others out, to define who is pure and who is impure, to shape our view of ourselves and others, to fashion feelings of sexual desire and notions of sexual desirability, to provide us with seemingly “natural” sexual preferences for some partners and “intuitive” aversions to others, to leave us with a taste for some ethnic sexual encounters and a distaste for others. Ethnicity and sexuality blend together to form sexualized perimeters around ethnic, racial and national spaces. Ethnic and sexual boundaries converge to mark the edges of ethnosexual frontiers.

(1)

The largest threat to “ethnic boundaries” is intermarriage, which both condones ethnosexual contact and produces children as markers of the breakdown of these boundaries. Intermarriage thus works to “weaken ethnic boundaries, allowing individuals to pass through, over, or around these dividing walls” (45) as we see in *Absalom, Absalom!* These borders, therefore, are enforced by the reciprocity of legal and sexual boundaries:

ethnic boundaries imbedded in the law, *legal* boundaries—in formal definitions of who is and who is not a member, citizen, white, black, and as a result, who has which rights and who is subject to what kinds of treatment. [...] Finally, [...] ethnic boundaries are *sexual*—manifesting themselves in patterns of dating, childbearing, marriage,

and sexual relations, including sexual assault, rape, and sexual slavery, as well as in sexual cosmologies—theories of ethnosexual attributes, practices, preferences, and perversions. (Nagel 45-46)

But as Faulkner's fiction demonstrates, the ethnic boundaries become blurred when it is impossible to tell visually who is "black" and who is "white" as is the case of Joe Christmas in *Light in August* (1932) whose racial identity is always at issue; he looks white but his and others' declarations that he is black pose a threat to white women.

This ethnic boundary between white and black is crossed again and again by white men in Yoknapatawpha. Although slavery and marriage laws worked to reinforce the ethnic boundary, these laws failed to prevent what Nagel defines as "ethnosexual adventure and invasion" (18). LQC McCaslin's crossing, for example, reinforces his mastery and dominance: "that evil and unregenerate old man who could summon because she was his property, a human being because she was old enough and female, to his widower's house and get a child on her and then dismiss her because she was of an inferior race" (*GDM* 281). Such sexual contact was prevalent throughout the antebellum South but ignored just as it is in Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha County: "Sexual contact between slaves and their owners throughout antebellum U.S. history was both common and coerced. Despite its prevalence, slaveowners' sexual exploitations of slaves either was denied outright or ignored in 'polite society' because of the disreputability of black-white sexual intimacy" (Nagel 18). In addition to displaying mastery, the boundary was eroticized. Thus, such sexual crossings were "'wink and nod' activities associated with

masculine coming-of-age or solidarity rituals. Ethnosexual adventurers can be socially defined simply as young men ‘sowing their wild oats’ or displaying evidence of sexual bravery or *sangfroid*’ (19). Joe Christmas’s first sexual experience at age fourteen in *Light in August* is a prominent case of ethnosexual adventuring in which he, along with four other boys, arrange a sexual initiation with a young black girl. But Joe’s confrontation results in violence rather than eroticism as he is repulsed by the “womanshenegro” (*LIA* 156). Such adventuring was certainly the norm in the antebellum rural South where young white men had no access to prostitutes and white women were culturally off-limits, yet young white men had unfettered access to black slaves working in the home or in the fields as Charles Bon points out in *Absalom, Absalom!* Thus, the same laws that enforced and reinforced the ethnic boundary between whites and blacks by prohibiting intermarriage—the boundary between master and slave—ironically contradicted itself by giving complete control of the slave’s body, sexual and otherwise, to the master.

It was this contradiction that fed the abolitionist movement and reinforced the relationship between marriage and slavery. Many abolitionists focused their arguments on the ways in which slavery affected the sanctity of the marital institution:

Abolitionists, forcefully rejecting slavery for turning human beings into chattel, harped on the way it deformed marriages. They called the denial to slaves of legally recognized and binding marriage a human tragedy, and a crying affront to American pretensions to value the

purity of family life. [... T]hey were referring unmistakably to violations of Christian monogamy: the master's power to sever relationships between slave couples and families; the inability of enslaved women to prevent unwelcome white masters, overseers, and sons from using their bodies sexually; and slave men's inability to act effectively as protectors or defenders. (Cott 57-58)

The underlying accusations of polygamy were powerful rhetoric throughout the nation because it undermined the sanctity of monogamy and stability that the institution offered and promised. To counter these accusations, Southerners employed family-centered rhetoric to defend slavery and their way of life:

southern defenders 'domesticated' slavery, rather than treating it simply as a labor regime. They portrayed it as a benevolent practice in which the white master protected and spoke for 'my family black and white.' In this counterattack, proslavery spokesmen legitimated the inequalities of slavery by praising all the domestic relations of domination and subordination—master-servant, parent-child, and husband-wife—as one and by seeing the three types as indivisible. (Cott 60)

This linkage, what Bercaw defines as “the household,” is portrayed as a necessary but heavy burden on white landed men as we see in the case of Jason Compson who vehemently complains in *The Sound and the Fury* that “Every other no-count nigger in town eats in my kitchen” (*SF* 189). The linkage of slavery and marriage worked to

unite white Southerners, “making the preservation of slavery appeal to the three quarters of white men in the South who owned no slaves” (Cott 63). As this rhetoric united white men in defense of slavery, it also silenced white women in the South who may have sympathized with the abolitionist movement or who resisted their own subordinate position within the plantation household as Drusilla Hawk does in *The Unvanquished*. As a result, “Any attack on either slaveholding or the marriage relationship appeared to undermine both. Elite white women could hardly raise a complaint in public about their own positions vis-à-vis their own husbands without appearing traitorous to the South” (Cott 63). The Southern rhetoric linking marriage and slavery effectively amplified the power and position of white men and reinforced their control over both slaves and women.

The common romantic moonlight-and-magnolia notions of Southern womanhood that we see parodied in Faulkner’s fiction was created by this rhetoric. For example, in an early rendering of Judith Sutpen before the War in Faulkner’s short story “Evangeline” (1931), the narrator Don portrays Judith as a blond woman “leaning against the column [of the house] in a white dress,” holding a rose, and waiting for young men to call (*UCS* 587). This stereotyped romantic portrait obscures the inferior position of women, as many historians and critics have pointed out. For instance, Catherine Clinton states, “Contrary to popular myth of women’s higher status in plantation society, women of the planter class were treated as reproductive units, replaceable if necessary. [... T]he evidence of premature marriage, regardless of the negative effects on women, and the number of multiple

marriages for men indicate that the priorities of the plantocracy were male rather than female” (61). In addition to the necessity for women to operate as reproductive vessels, their lives become linked with those of slaves because they too were under white patriarchal authority: “Male authorities subjected everyone but themselves to a strict regimen. Women, children, and slaves followed rules laid down by white men” (Clinton 88). The role of the Southern lady that we see in the portrait of Judith Sutpen, moreover, was part of this regimen: “Planters necessarily chose for their women the role that would most flatter the image of plantation life that southern slaveowners were striving to project; hence the formulation of the mythical ideal of the southern lady” (Clinton 88). This mythical configuration notwithstanding, the relationship between the position of white women and slaves in the society becomes clear: “Both marriage and slavery were systems of domination and subordination—or more favorably, of protection and dependence—based on assumptions about inequalities between the parties involved” (Cott 63). The white patriarchal position of men obscured these power structures though by empedestaling white women and paternalizing control of slaves.

It is this rhetoric that consolidates itself in the understanding of the Southern household that grants men such as John Sartoris, Thomas Sutpen, Grandfather Compson, and Major de Spain their power in Yoknapatawpha. “The ideologies of household,” Bercaw explains “extended these domestic relations out to the public sphere, marking the free and the unfree. Southern laws denied white women, African-Americans, and hired hands full legal rights and privileges, not because of

their gender, race, or class per se, but because they lived as dependents in another man's household. As dependent people, they were considered subject to manipulation by their husbands and masters" (3). As dependents of their master's households, moreover, slaves' abilities to form their own families were restricted:

Living under the constraints of plantation slavery and the legal codes it generated, African-Americans had formed alternative visions of the rights and privileges of the household. On one level, slaves upheld the theoretical model of the plantation "family" to negotiate with slaveholders. They appealed, as "members" of the plantation household, to keep their own families together, reduce workloads, fire overseers, or win free time to work gardens, attend religious services, and care for their children. The conditions of slavery forced African-Americans to recognize the slaveholders' definition of the plantation household. [...] Yet, during slavery, African-Americans constructed their own families within the plantation household. They defined their households on their own terms within their own communities. Of course, planters encouraged slaves to marry, and most did. (4-5)

Bercaw's argument that planters encouraged slaves to marry thus demonstrates a contradiction within historical scholarship as it was illegal for slaves to marry.

Marriage between slaves may have been encouraged by planters, but slaveholders and planters only recognized such marriages when it benefited them—specifically, by encouraging slaves to make social relationships, marriage discouraged runaways and

increased masters' power over slaves through threats of separation and sale of family members or otherwise breaking up slave households over which slaves, especially black males, had no control.

We see this tension between white men's households and black men's attempts to form families in *Go Down, Moses*, with Tomey's Turl who has no authority to marry his sweetheart Tennie without his master's consent. Marriage allows participation in legal and social systems and provides an outward appearance of control over a person's own life. These liberties were not allowed to slaves. As historical facts and legal documents prove, it was illegal for slaves to marry in the antebellum South. While historians such as Bercaw and Eugene D. Genovese do discuss and describe marriages between slaves, noting that slaves were even encouraged to marry by their masters (as we also see in the case of Tomey's Turl and Tennie), these unions were not lawful and binding: "African American slaves could not marry legally, their unions received no protection from state authorities. Any master could override a slave's marital commitment" (Cott 32) as we see when plantation owner Roth Edmonds declares "Oscar and that yellow slut he fatched out here from Memphis last summer" divorced simply because he determines that "they were not married very hard" (*GDM* 116). Despite the fact that slavery inherently prohibited lawful marriage, Thadious Davis notes that as late as 1860 when abolitionist pressures were gaining momentum, new "laws controlling slaves in Mississippi included prohibitions against marriage, contact with free blacks, defense or testimony against whites, learning to read and write, and leaving a plantation

without a pass” (31). The specific inclusion of marriage in this list of legal offenses demonstrates the inherent threat that marital relationships increasingly posed to the institution of slavery and the white patriarchal structure as a whole. Just as literacy, freedom to move about, and testimony within a courtroom demonstrate inalienable civil rights, they also demonstrate the distinguishable trait of humanity: the abilities to use language to communicate orally and in written form, to reason and make choices, and to recognize and ascribe judgment to moral and ethical beliefs. As a social, legal, and cultural institution, marriage implicitly recognizes this humanity—the ability to choose a mate, document that choice and make it legal through the use of language (oral and written), and to have that choice recognized and protected by the community and government. The implementation of these laws purposely acted as reinforcement of the ethnic boundary between whites and blacks, including underlying fears of participation by blacks in social and civil institutions. By their very nature, these institutions recognized the humanity of the participants and threatened community and constitutional boundaries separating the free from the bonded, white from black. After slavery ended, of course, the “1865 codes in Mississippi did grant some rights to blacks, such as the right to sue or be sued, to testify in state courts, to marry legally, and to own personal property” (Cott 31). Thus, marriage became a way for blacks such as Lucas Beauchamp to display and show evidence of their freedom by making personal choices, having control over their own bodies, and having both acts recognized by the local, state, and even national government.

The ideologies of the household that uphold white landed men's identity and which men like Thomas Sutpen work so hard to obtain and secure are threatened by the collapse of the household as a result of emancipation. Black men like Lucas Beauchamp internalized the white men's understanding of the household and attempted to create their own households, creating a power struggle between white and black men. Thus, emancipation ruptured the household allowing black men to become "masters of their own households" (Bercaw 103). Once the sole prerogative of white men, "Freedom was intimately connected with the domestic relations of the household" (Bercaw 102) for black men as well. With the dissolution of slavery, the need to police boundaries between white and black became more vital as demonstrated by the relationship between Hubert Beauchamp and his mulatta cook and mistress. Marriage laws were thus enacted proscribing who could and could not marry specifically because of the newfound freedom of blacks—"That's why! That's why," Sophonsiba Beauchamp yells as she herds her brother's mistress from her family home (*GDM* 289). Thus, miscegenation laws became the prominent form of constructing ethnic and racial boundaries—predominantly to secure white racial purity—after slavery ended:

Miscegenation laws, in force from the 1660s through the 1960s, were among the longest lasting of American racial restrictions. They both reflected and produced significant shifts in American racial thinking. Although the first miscegenation laws had been passed in the colonial period, it was not until after the demise of slavery that they began to

function as the ultimate sanction of the American system of white supremacy. They burgeoned along with the rise of segregation and the early twentieth-century devotion to “white purity.” (Pascoe 467)

Such powerful and explicit laws prohibiting racial mixing became necessary after slavery ended because previously laws of slavery policed the ethnic boundary between white and black. As Genovese states, the “laws of Virginia and Maryland, as well as those of the colonies to the south, increasingly gave masters the widest possible power over the slaves and also, through prohibition of interracial marriage and the general restriction of slave status to nonwhites, codified and simultaneously preached white supremacy” (31). The boundary between master and slave that prohibited intermarriage thus reinforced the ethnic boundary upon which the peculiarities of slavery in the American South relied.

It is the rippling effect of the collapse of the household due to the emancipation of slaves that highlights the reliance of white men in Faulkner’s Yoknapatawpha to secure their masculinity through the ideologies of the household. As a consequence, white men can no longer assume mastery over black men and women, yeoman farmers, or even over women:

Stripped of the traditional vestiges of authority, planter men were unmasked. Started, they made the rude discovery that their identity—their standing in society and their knowledge of themselves—was not fixed but fluid, susceptible to the ignominy of defeat. Without the plantation household, all the familiar definitions of master and slave,

black and white, male and female no longer seemed to function.

Suddenly it became unclear who was dependent upon whom. (Bercaw 80)

Men who were once the epitome of power and authority in the antebellum South were therefore stripped of their mastery and thus their identity. But this struggle with identity was also inherited by younger white men. They too were “transferred outside the accepted power structures” (82). This loss leaves younger generations of white men unable to attain true manhood as it is defined by force and submission:

Boys during slavery and adolescents during the War, many young men had never been able to prove their manhood on the battlefield. They grew up only to discover that they could never follow in their father’s footsteps as heads of plantation households. In their minds, they could never mature into grown men because emancipation stripped them of mastery, the one vocation that truly marked manhood and independence. (82)

No longer able to secure their masculine identity in the outdoor world of the plantation, white men relocate their understandings of masculinity in relation to marriage and domesticity.

THE SEARCH FOR MASCULINITY WITHIN THE DOMESTIC SPHERE

For this examination, I focus on those whom I define as the young or developing white narrator and protagonist of each novel: Quentin Compson in *Absalom, Absalom!*, Bayard Sartoris in *The Unvanquished*, Isaac McCaslin in *Go*

Down, Moses, and Chick Mallison in *Intruder in the Dust*. I choose these novels because they provide a compact view of Faulkner's portrayal of marriage between 1936 and 1949. As Richard Moreland points out in *Faulkner and Modernism* (1990), Faulkner was constantly re-writing or doing "revisionary repetition" of earlier subject matter. Such repetition, argues Moreland, "repeats some structured event, in order somehow to alter that structure and its continuing power, especially by opening a critical space for what the subject might *learn* about that structure in the different context of a changing present or a more distant or different past" (4). Theresa Towner too, in *Faulkner on the Color Line: The Later Novels*, argues that the later fiction reveals "a decidedly new trend in Faulkner's artistry, an evolution of his craftsmanship that reflects his increasing interest in how racial identity is formed and maintained" (8). Faulkner's changing vision or "revisionary repetition" and evolving understanding of marriage is a crucial factor affecting my choice of novels.

I begin my examination with *Absalom, Absalom!* (1936), a novel in which marriage is central. Quentin Compson, along with his father Mr. Compson and his roommate Shreve, recounts the Sutpen family tragedy of the 1860s in 1910, the same year that Quentin commits suicide by drowning himself in *The Sound and the Fury*. Within this narrative, there are a multitude of marriages, almost marriages, and not marriages in the novel that demonstrate how marriage represents an individual's acceptance into and participation within the community. At the heart of Quentin's narrative is Thomas Sutpen's "design," which has marriage as its necessary center. But while Faulkner was writing *Absalom, Absalom!* in the 1930s, he was also writing

stories for the *Saturday Evening Post* as a money-making venture to support himself and his considerable dependents while he was writing *Absalom, Absalom!*¹ These stories were revised and collected as *The Unvanquished* (1938).² In this novel, Bayard Sartoris narrates childhood tales of adventure and revenge during the Civil War in the first six episodes of the novel and in the culminating story explains his break with old Southern traditions of violence in favor of legal order in the post-bellum South. The most obvious parallel between the two novels is found in the characters of Judith Sutpen in *Absalom, Absalom!* and Drusilla Hawk in *The Unvanquished*. While each character loses her fiancé in the Civil War, Judith adheres to her socially-defined role as “the bride-widow of a lost cause” afterward, but Drusilla does just the opposite. Drusilla sheds all notions of traditional femininity, fights as a soldier for the Confederacy, and puts more value on being named “voting commissioner” than on getting married. But I focus on how both Quentin and Bayard seek to position themselves in relation to marriage in their narratives and gain an understanding of how family and cultural values are legislated, defined, and performed. By pairing these two novels that Faulkner was writing during the same time period, I demonstrate, examine, and consider the implications of Faulkner’s “revisionary repetition” of marriage and the narrators’ relationship to the institution.

The second pair of novels I examine is *Go Down, Moses* (1942) and *Intruder in the Dust* (1948). For my purposes, I locate Ike McCaslin as the central character and narrator in *Go Down, Moses*. Ike narrates many stories, some told to him by others and some from his own perspective; other stories are told from different

perspectives but all help to demonstrate Ike's understanding of marriage from the time he is a young boy to his honorary position as the aged, widowed, and childless Uncle Ike. At the center of *Go Down, Moses* is the marriage of Lucas and Molly Beauchamp whose marriage contrasts vividly with Ike McCaslin's failed marriage. In *Intruder in the Dust*, the first book Faulkner published after a six-year break after *Go Down, Moses*, Faulkner returns to central characters Lucas and Molly Beauchamp but re-examines their marriage from the perspective of a young boy, Charles "Chick" Mallison who compares his own parents' marriage with the Beauchamp marriage.

In all four novels, the protagonists undertake journeys marking their apparent ascent into Southern masculinity and integration into cultural values of Yoknapatawpha: Quentin's journey to the Sutpen house to bear witness to its fiery collapse, Bayard's journey to track down and avenge his grandmother's murderer, Ike McCaslin's journey's into the woods to meet Old Ben without his watch and compass, and Chick's journey to dig up the Gowrie grave and prove Lucas Beauchamp's innocence. It is through these experiences that critics evaluate a protagonists' development.³ My intent, instead, is to examine how these men develop an understanding of masculinity in relationship to marriage and the domestic space of the home. Because marriage is domestic, it is traditionally defined as the women's sphere. As a result, any discussions of the *Bildungsroman* and marriage usually examine and pertain to feminine characters. For example, much work has been done in the last decade to discuss the female *Bildungsroman* (primarily in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century women's literature). Critics have argued that because the only

opportunity for growth and development for women is found within marriage, works by authors such as Jane Austen, Emily Bronte, Fanny Burney, Kate Chopin, Anne Thackeray Ritchie, and Virginia Woolf are often discussed and analyzed in terms of this genre.⁴ In the introduction to *The Voyage In: Fictions of Female Development* (1983), for example, the editors re-claim the *Bildungsroman* from its male-dominated definitions demonstrating female development within the domestic sphere. Specifically, because of social conditions in the nineteenth century stifled female expression, “Novels of female development [...] typically substituted inner concentration for active accommodation, rebellion, or withdrawal (Abel 8). Thus, whereas action—specifically the journey—defines the traditional male *Bildungsroman*, “Female fictions of development reflect the tensions between the assumptions of a genre that embodies male norms and the values of its female protagonists. The heroine’s developmental course is more conflicted, less direct: separation tugs against the longing for fusion and the heroine establishes the conviction that identity resides in intimate relations” (Abel 11). By drawing on feminist criticism, it is not my intent to read Faulkner’s novels through the lens of the female *Bildungsroman*. I reference this important scholarship to demonstrate how critics have illustrated the malleability of the *Bildungsroman* as a result of changing social conditions. In a similar move, Gregory Castle argues in *Reading the Modernist Bildungsroman* (2006) that the Modernist form of the genre fails because it does not conform to the nineteenth-century requirement that emphasizes the hero’s integration into culture. Vanderwerken, in *Faulkner’s Literary Children: Patterns of*

Development (1997), also has noted this lack of conformance specifically in Faulkner's novels, calling them "anti-*Bildungsromane*." And Tobias Boes, in his comprehensive article, "Modernist Studies and the *Bildungsroman*: A Historical Survey of Critical Trends" (2006), reveals the susceptibility of the genre to social conditions and critical movements since the nineteenth century.

Taking my cue from these scholars, I argue that with the collapse of the household and the changing social conditions of the post-bellum South through the middle of the twentieth century, Southern white men's development into masculinity was stifled. No longer could they demonstrate their mastery simply through journeys, quests, or adventures because the changing atmosphere and understanding of the community itself changed as yeoman farmers and blacks too became part of that community that was once their exclusive domain. Marriage, therefore, became a more crucial link between the individual and social development as the home becomes a contested space in the Southern hierarchy. This causes the protagonists, like nineteenth-century women, to search for alternative understandings of their masculinity in a traditionally feminine space. This search is not a substitute for the traditional rituals that mark their ascent into the community; it is an additional requirement because of how closely marriage is associated with slavery, the institution through which generations of Southern men established their mastery and thus their masculinity.

Marriage is central to these narrators' understanding of themselves in relation to Yoknapatawpha overall because marriage is a social rite as Christopher A.

LaLonde points out in *William Faulkner and the Rites of Passage* (1996). As with a *Bildungsroman*, a rite of passage is, according to LaLonde, intrinsically tied to identity: “rites of passage and identity are bound together, as they are in life, for rites of passage are fundamental social constructs with which a culture attempts to confer identity. They are essential for the transformation of a physical, corporeal being into a person. [...] It is through the rites of passage, especially, that identity is constructed and that an individual becomes a person” (5). The meaning of a “person” “focuses on a human being’s ‘roles in relationships’ rather than as a word that defines a human being by either its physical nature or some concept of self” (5). Marriage is therefore, as LaLonde points out, a social rite: “Marriage is a rite by law, by collective consent rather than natural, biological order. [...] It is not a ‘natural thing’ in the sense of a material object found in nature. Nevertheless, marriage produces identity insofar as it transforms the individual woman into the social constructs bride and, then, wife” (40). While LaLonde focuses specifically on marriage as a rite for a woman, the same is also true for a man. While a wedding or a marriage does not necessarily change the actions of the man, it affects the way that the man’s actions are viewed by the larger community. As Cott points out, American society is structured on the assumption that participation in and commitment to marriage has a stabilizing influence on citizenship and since stable citizens support a secure government, “a man’s consent to the responsibilities of formal marriage showed his manhood and gave him warrant for citizenship” (82).

Since none of the narrators that I examine goes through the rite of marriage that will initiate him into the larger community, with the exception of Ike McCaslin, who, although married, fails to take on the responsibilities conferred by his marriage, these men can arguably be defined as bachelors as defined by Katherine Snyder in *Bachelors, Manhood, and the Novel, 1850-1925* (1999). Faulkner's men who write about their relationship to domesticity fall within the categorization of Snyder's definition of the "bachelor narrator," a trope of "high-cultural and modernist fictions" (3). Snyder argues that the prevalence or "explosion" of the bachelor narrative during this period is a result of the "uneven developments that cultural ideologies and institutions of marriage and domesticity were undergoing during this era of rapid urbanization, industrialization, and modernization" (2-3). As Snyder points out about the role,

Bachelors were a necessary resource for the domestic institution of marriage, yet they were often seen by their contemporaries as disruptive to domestic life or sometimes merely extraneous to it. They were thought to be both admirable and contemptible, enviable and execrable, dangerous and defanged. The contradictions evident in and among these pairings evoke the conceptual and practical challenges that bachelorhood presented to nineteenth- and early twentieth-century conceptions of bourgeois marriage, family, and domestic life. (3)

To call Quentin Compson, Bayard Sartoris, Ike McCaslin, and Chick Mallison "bachelors" may seem like a stretch. Quentin is nineteen when he commits suicide at

Harvard in *The Sound and the Fury* (1929); Bayard is at least 24 in the final story of *The Unvanquished* but in *Flags in the Dust* (1929), although widowed, he has married and had children; Ike does marry in *Go Down, Moses*, although with unsatisfying results, and, after his wife's death, becomes the epitome of the bachelor uncle to the community; and Chick Mallison is still a young man in *Intruder in the Dust*, but even in subsequent novels Chick never marries as he grows and matures in *The Town* (1957) and *The Mansion* (1959). Instead, Chick inherits the position as town bachelor from his uncle Gavin Stevens who eventually marries in *Knight's Gambit* (1949). None of these men, moreover, seems to demonstrate the strong threats to society that Snyder points to when defining the bachelor—contemptible, dangerous, or execrable. This quality, however, is not as important to my discussion as is the function of the bachelor to demonstrate “the instability of and competition between different modes of manhood” (4) at issue in my examination. Specifically, states Snyder, the bachelor is both “different from *and* also the same as other, ‘normal’ men.” (4). The bachelor, therefore, has a unique relationship to domestic and gendered norms because he exists both inside and outside these norms: “Indeed, bachelors often served in cultural and literary discourse more generally as threshold figures who marked the permeable boundaries that separate domesticity, normative manhood, and high-cultural status, from what was defined as extrinsic to these realms” (7). Certainly each of the narrators in my examination falls into this categorization as he attempts to position himself within or outside the socializing norms of his community per the *Bildungsroman*. Because the bachelor is defined

specifically by his relationship to marriage—outside the institution—his awareness of the institution is pronounced.

As narrators, Quentin, Bayard, Ike, and Chick serve as threshold figures for mediating the relationship between the action of the story and himself: “As tellers who also appear as characters in their stories, homodiegetic narrators are located both within and beyond the fictional world of their stories, serving as intermediaries between diegetic levels within the narrative” (Snyder 7). There is, therefore, a “split or doubling” within the narrative between the “‘I’ of the narrative past and the ‘I’ of the narrative present. Saying ‘I’ as a homodiegetic narrator can thus verge on speaking in synchronic and diachronic chorus or call-and-response with oneself, occasioning a spatial and temporal multiplication of subjectivity which would seem to challenge the unitary or monolithic self” (7). This “doubling” is certainly apparent in each of the texts that I examine. With the exception of Quentin in *Absalom, Absalom!*, Bayard, Ike, and Chick serve as both characters in the dominant storyline as well as narrators who tell their stories from a distant or removed future. While Bayard and Chick focus primarily on events they experience and witness, Ike tells stories as they were told to him that took place before he was born but bear witness to his personal development and understanding of masculinity, bachelorhood, and domesticity. Similarly, Quentin attempts to come to a greater understanding of marriage and domestic relations through an examination and narration of events concerning the Sutpen family that bear witness to his own familial relationships in *The Sound and the Fury*. It is because of his narration of the Sutpen family’s tragedy

that I designate Quentin as the protagonist of *Absalom, Absalom!* rather than Henry Sutpen or Thomas Sutpen as critics have done in the past when discussing the novel as a *Bildungsroman*. As Snyder ultimately demonstrates, “In their ways of telling, bachelor narrators delineate the thresholds of bourgeois domesticity and manhood, thereby enabling themselves and their authorial creators to mark the boundaries of normativity while simultaneously going out of bounds” (17). By focusing on male narrators’ relationship to domesticity from their “outside” perspective, I argue that their social anxieties concerning whiteness and domesticity are inherent in their narratives of marriage.

As threshold figures, who are both inside and outside the domestic community, these narrators are in a unique position to demonstrate what Carter defines in *The Heart of Whiteness: Normal Sexuality and Race in America, 1880-1940* (2007) as “normality discourse,” which had tremendous power during the 1920s and 1930. This discourse defined “normality” in terms of both race and heterosexuality. To be “normal” meant being in an affectionate, reproductive, heterosexual married relationship in order to legitimize citizenship. It also meant being white. The term “normal” ignores racial otherness by perpetuating whiteness in cultural manners, specifically marriage. To continue American “civilization,” normality discourse was reliant on sexuality—controlled, of course—in order to produce legitimate heirs to inherit and continue civilization as well as maintain white political and social dominance: “Erotically and affectively charged marriage became the privileged site for the literal and metaphorical reproduction of white civilization”

(6). “Normality discourse,” Carter demonstrates, “provided a common, and deeply sexualized, vocabulary through which an increasingly diverse group of whites could articulate their common racial and political values to one another, while nonetheless avoiding direct acknowledgement of or confrontation with many hierarchies that fractured the polity” (6). As narrators of these novels, I reveal that Quentin, Bayard, Ike, and Chick rely on normality discourse to construct the *Bildungsroman*, but also expose the limits of this discourse by showing their own inability to be “normal.” While Chick is too young to be expected to fit into Carter’s definition of “normal” in *Intruder in the Dust*, Quentin, Bayard, and Ike shy away from “normal” sexual relationships. The accepted critical interpretation of the homoerotic sexual relationship of Quentin with his roommate Shreve certainly prevents him from being “normal,” Bayard rejects Drusilla Hawk’s sexual advances on the grounds that she is his father’s wife, and Ike, although married, rejects his “responsibility” to maintain a sexual and reproductive relationship that would propagate the white civilization of the McCaslin plantation. Their inability to be “normal,” while simultaneously relying on normality discourse in their discussions of marriage, reinforces the importance of marriage to each narrator’s understanding of himself in relation to the larger community.

My dissertation thus documents a progression, a re-imagining, an evolution in Faulkner’s understanding of marriage. Quentin’s narration in *Absalom, Absalom!* establishes, through his documentation of the Sutpen family saga, an understanding of how marriage creates community, how marriage as an institution is used to define

one's identity whether it be white or black or slave and planter, and how marriage and slavery work together to create the household that sustains (and threatens) masculinity. Bayard's narration in *The Unvanquished*, in contrast, demonstrates the effects of the collapse of the household on his identity because he relies upon the ideologies of the household to buttress his identity in the war-ravished South. Ike's narration in *Go Down, Moses*, documents the implications of the collapse of the household and the masculine identity created by it. Rather than relying upon the household to bolster identity as we see in *Absalom, Absalom!* and *The Unvanquished*, Ike McCaslin rejects the ideologies of the household, fearing its ability to enslave him, leaving the household to Lucas Beauchamp who uses the household to establish his masculinity as white men once did in the previous novels. Finally, in *Intruder in the Dust*, Chick McCaslin offers a younger generation's understanding of what happens to marriage as a result of white men's abandonment of the household and black men's reliance upon it for masculinity. Juxtaposing his parents' marriage with a re-evaluation of Lucas Beauchamp's marriage, Chick ultimately rejects both understandings of marriage because he recognizes that neither marriage is a unification of individuals but is instead a contested site for mastery between the individuals. While Chick may have the clearest understanding of marriage, he too chooses to stand outside of the institution. Like his predecessors, Chick fears his ability to re-invent the institution and rid it of the onus of property, bondage, and mastery that have bastardized it into a feared institution.

NOTES

¹The following stories were published in *The Saturday Evening Post*: “Ambuscade,” September 29, 1934; “Retreat,” October 13, 1934; “Raid,” November 3, 1934, “The Unvanquished,” November 13, 1936 (retitled “Riposte in Tertio” in *The Unvanquished*); and “Vendee,” December 5, 1936 (marketed to *The Saturday Evening Post* as early as 1934 but not published until 1936 after Faulkner made requested revisions). “Drusilla” was also marketed to *The Saturday Evening Post* in October 1934 but published instead as “Skirmish in Sartoris” in *Scribners* April 1935. All of these texts were later reworked and developed into *The Unvanquished* (published 1938) that includes the never-before published “An Odor of Verbena” (written in 1937).

² This history of the novel has caused critics to easily dismiss it for its lack of artistic merit and characterize *The Unvanquished* instead as a series of romantic adventure stories culminating with a new and unsatisfying final story, “An Odor of Verbena.” See, for example, Backman (1966), Millgate (1966), and Brooks (1977).

³ Vanderwerken, for example, identifies a problem with reading Faulkner’s novels in terms of the genre because Faulkner’s novels predominantly fail to conform to the genre. After an extensive examination of the critical understandings of the genre, Vanderwerken argues the traditional *Bildungsroman* “features a youth who may or not be from the provinces but who usually is outside the family context” (*Faulkner’s* 2). This youth undergoes “initiations and educational experiences,” often

in the form of a journey, “which has the effect of accelerating the rate of moral, emotional, intellectual, and spiritual maturation” (*Faulkner’s* 2). The result, of course, is that the “initiate achieves both self-definition in light of a cultural ideal of adulthood as well as a social definition, and is therefore ready to assume a role in the community” (*Faulkner’s* 2-3) But “Faulkner becomes the poet of the crippled childhood,” Vanderwerken argues: “In tracking the initiatory experiences undergone by Joe Christmas, Quentin Compson, Thomas Sutpen and Isaac McCaslin, one finds a series of failed initiations, backfiring, having mostly tragic consequences” (*Faulkner’s* 20). Because the characters fail to successfully integrate into their respective communities, Vanderwerken defines these texts as “anti-Bildungsromane” (*Faulkner’s* 20).

⁴ See, for example, Abel, Hirsch and Langland, eds (1983); Federico (1985); Felski (1995); Kohn (1995); Mourão (2000); Gemmeke (2004); and Castle (2006).

“[T]he other sex is separated into three sharp divisions, separated (two of them) by a chasm which could be crossed but one time and in but one direction—ladies, women, females—the virgins whom gentlemen someday married, the courtesans to whom they went while on sabbaticals to the cities, the slave girls and women upon whom the first caste rested and to whom in certain cases it doubtless owed the very fact of its virginity.”

~*Absalom, Absalom!*

Of Bibles and Ledgers: Accounting for Marriage in *Absalom, Absalom!*

Henry Sutpen distinguishes among women on the basis of sexuality. Marriage is reserved for chaste “ladies,” which, in the racially-charged antebellum state of Mississippi, also implies racial purity. The ceremony of gathered onlookers sanctions the marriage and blankets the inherent sexuality of the institution. This ceremony is expected for women from plantation and aristocratic families unless they, like Caddy Compson in *The Sound and the Fury*, retain control of their sexuality. As a consequence of their sexuality, of course, as “courtesans,” they fall from the pedestal. “Courtesan” is synonymous with “prostitute” and “paramour” and the description links women’s sexuality with financial gain in return for catering to men’s explicit desires. The term also implies a caste system in which the man with whom the courtesan has a liaison is from a higher class either in terms of nobility or financial wealth. While race is never mentioned in this categorization, whiteness is implied because men of the South were reluctant to admit to sexual relationships of any kind with black women, including prostitutes. “Females,”¹ a vague term that reduces women strictly to their physical gender, is reserved for black women and girls bound

by slavery into a role of service in which they are unable to protest against sexual exploitation by any white man, especially their owners.

Two distinct institutions define “ladies” and “females.” Ladies are rewarded, protected, defined, and controlled by the institution of marriage in which they are subject to the patriarchal protection and authority of their husbands. “Females” are similarly controlled by the institution of slavery, which legally and socially grants ownership and authority to white males and proscribes these girls’ and women’s control of their bodies. Marriage and slavery therefore lie in direct opposition to one another but also mirror one another in the antebellum South. “Women,” in contrast, lie outside the control of any recognized and acknowledged institution other than that of basic commerce and exchange.

Henry Sutpen’s naïve yet patriarchal views of women contrast with Charles Bon’s alternative understanding of women. Bon’s marriage to an octoroon woman in New Orleans dismantles the traditional boundaries separating these categories of women and all socially-inscribed rules that attempt to define women. This octoroon woman is wife, mother, servant, prostitute, and mistress. She is also black and white. Although Henry is aware of the sexual relationships between white planters and their slaves—his half-sister Clytie, a family slave, is the product of one such relationship—he is disturbed by Bon’s marriage which distorts traditional marriage and sexual norms. In Bon’s case, marriage and slavery are indistinguishable rather than polarized institutions. In spite of his domination of this woman, moreover, Bon’s marriage recognizes the equality of this mulatta woman to Judith Sutpen, Henry’s

sister, to whom he is also betrothed. The blurred meaning of wife, as well as the slighting of traditional inequalities between blacks and whites threatens the socio-cultural value judgments of Henry in 1860 but also threaten Quentin and his co-narrators—his father, Mr. Compson, and his roommate, Shreve—who together imagine and recount the Sutpen family tragedy in 1910.

Bon's marriage to the octoroon woman is just one of the marriages described in *Absalom, Absalom!* that challenges the very understanding of the South and its mores. Marriage can be interpreted as the central conflict of *Absalom, Absalom!* and an issue that has not gone unnoticed by critics.² While most critics focus on marriage as a metaphor in the novel, my intent is to draw attention to several marriages that prove troubling for Quentin and his co-narrators. In addition to examining the marriage of Charles Bon to the octoroon from New Orleans, I focus on two other marriages that the narrative strives to push to the margins: the interracial marriage of Thomas Sutpen to Eulalia, the daughter of a West Indian planter, and Charles Etienne ("Etienne") De Saint Valery Bon's marriage to a "coal black and ape-like woman" (166). I will demonstrate how the narration and documentation of these marriages contradicts and ultimately dismantles the very understandings of womanhood and female sexuality held by Henry Sutpen and, ultimately, Quentin Compson. This collapse reveals that all understandings of female sexuality are distilled into the language of commerce as women's relations to the community are documented in family bibles, ledgers of ownership, or in commercial or business transactions. The categorization of "ladies" commodifies female virginity and rewards it with marriage,

turning women into wives. Marriage secretes and sanctifies sexual relations by documenting and condoning it within the family structure and larger social network in family bibles and in legal documentation such as licenses, certificates, and records. “Females” are owned as property. This ownership is documented in family and plantation ledgers and legal records. The very act of ownership cancels out, obscures, and discounts sex between female slaves and white men. Thus, despite the narrators’ attempts to separate “ladies” from “females,” all women are ultimately condensed into the mediating category of “women” who are narrated and controlled through commerce.

The narrators attempt to structure the Sutpen history and marital relations into a recognizable format that explicitly separates black from white. The marriages of Thomas Sutpen and Eulalia, Charles Bon and his octoroon wife, and Etienne and his “full blood negress” undermine the narrators’ attempts because they expose miscegenation and threaten assimilation of black and white cultures into one another. As Sundquist points out, “Slavery controlled miscegenation [...] by denying that they [slaves] had any meaning, by denying, in effect, that any limits had actually been violated” (135). Likewise, Cott points out that within the United States—specifically in the Southern United States—marital laws “aimed to keep the white race unmixed—or more exactly, to keep the legitimate white race unmixed” (41). Because the women in these relationships cannot be considered either slaves or wives, men’s relationships cannot be simply dismissed as, to apply Nagel’s terminology, “ethnic adventure or invasion.” Interracial marriage is an “institutionalized form of sustained

ethnosexual contact” (15). It threatens, weakens, and ultimately erases the boundaries in place between white and black. This boundary—or in Henry’s words, the “chasm” also allows “assimilation—the incorporation or integration of an individual or group into another group or society” (Nagel 15). The disappearance of this “chasm” frightens Quentin and his other white co-narrators because the bodies of the women, participants and victims of ethnosexual adventurers and invaders, cannot fall into the fissures of the narrative as momentary sexual interruptions as Thomas Sutpen tries to sketch of his relationship with Eulalia in the West Indies. Neither can the children of such relationships. Instead, all participants are socially recognized members of the larger white community. Charles Bon and his octoroon wife are not simply confined within the highly-sexualized space that is neither white nor black. Both are instead absorbed into the larger white community, as is Bon’s son, Etienne. Etienne’s marriage to the negress, however, is his attempt to intentionally change and reshape his ethnic identity³ from the white identity that was molded for him by Judith Sutpen and Quentin’s grandfather.

Quentin and his co-narrators thus attempt to buttress and reinforce the “ethnosexual boundaries” by distinguishing between black and white, free and slave, commodity and family, and marriage and slavery. But their attempts only highlight the language of commerce that erases the differences between marriage and slavery. As Susan Donaldson has stated, “what attracts the attention of these [...] narrators is the need to place Sutpen’s story in some sort of understandable sequence” (“Subverting” 21). “Hence,” she argues, “the need to establish sequence and plot in

those old mouth-to-mouth tales becomes all the more pressing, especially in regard to the puzzling decline and fall of the Sutpen family's history" ("Subverting" 22).

While I am in agreement with Donaldson that "however different the conclusions reached by the storytellers are, their concerns and their very language remain remarkably the same" ("Subverting" 22), Donaldson looks at the "hypotactic style" of the narration: "the length and complexity of their very sentences, as one subordinate clause inevitably follows another, reflect both their determination to make connections and the storytelling antecedents uniting them" ("Subverting" 22). I assert that the narrators resort to the language of finance and accounting that was always used for slavery because the boundaries between marriage and slavery blur in the novel. This language is designed to give tangibility to the intangible, states Erik Dussere: "Metaphors of finance give structure to our language and our ways of apprehending the world at every level" (*Balancing* 10). Discourses of slavery are most often enacted, argues Dussere, through "economic" metaphors: "slavery's foundation was the attempt to transform people into monetary value" and "cultural traditions of race in America have been figured through concepts such as debt and repayment, exchange and accounting, property and the market" (*Balancing* 1). It is not a stretch to contrast Dussere's argument that the "original sin [...] of slavery is the ability to see other human beings as property to be bought and exchanged and recorded in the account-book" (*Balancing* 11) with the traditional concerns and concepts of women's position as chattel in the marriage market.⁴ His argument that the language of finance is a way of "comprehending the world" proves useful for

thinking about the language of finance used by the narrators to discuss marriage. By discussing all marriages in terms of commerce, the narrators refuse to account for the emotional prerogatives of marriage—specifically love. Despite attempts (and Shreve’s in particular) to “talk about love” (253), their discussions focus on Bon’s desire for paternal acknowledgement from Sutpen. Their ultimate deduction is that Bon uses his betrothal to Judith to leverage this acknowledgement. The narrators’ refusal to acknowledge emotional involvement in these marriages signals their unwillingness and inability to see beyond women’s commodification. This understanding of women’s commodification proves devastating for Quentin Compson.

BIBLES AND LEDGERS

The financially-centered language attempts to quantify and comprehend the marriages of the Sutpen family, substantiating an awareness of the relationship between marriage and slavery as socially-constructed institutions. Since there is no accounting for interracial marriages in either a family bible or a ledger, these marriages must continually resist complete erasure from the narrative. *Absalom, Absalom!*, therefore, anticipates the ledger section of *Go Down, Moses*, with its language of accounting. The practice of writing births, deaths, and marriages in the family bible documents “legitimate” and recognized societal relationships in the same way that Buck and Buddy keep track of the births, deaths, and marriages of their slaves. The ledger, states Dussere, dominates the fourth section of “The Bear” in *Go Down, Moses*: “Faulkner’s central figure here is the ledger, the plantation account-

book in which the material lives of the slaves are recorded alongside information about livestock, crops, and farming equipment. Although this narrative reduces the slaves to their monetary value, it also provides written historical documentation of their lives” (*Balancing* 11). In *Absalom*, the Coldfield family bible functions as the family ledger: “the big family bible in which his and his sister’s birth and his marriage and Ellen’s birth and marriage and the birth of his two grandchildren and of Miss Rosa, and his wife’s death [...] had been duly entered in his neat clerk’s hand” (64). But like Buck and Buddy’s plantation ledger, what is not recorded in this family ledger is as important as what is left out: the marriage of Coldfield’s sister who “slid down the rainpipe with a horse trader” (144). Her elopement, although a legal marriage, is not socially sanctioned and thus not worthy of record. Coldfield accounts for his sister’s birth but not her life as he would have had she been “properly” married. Instead, she remains unaccounted for by Coldfield both in life (“he refuse[d] to permit his sister to come back home to live while her horse-trader husband was in the army” [64]) and in the family ledger. By eloping with a horse trader, a term implying the man’s lower social class as well as his vocation, Coldfield’s sister drops from the category of “lady” to “woman,” no longer worthy of record in the ledger reserved for ladies. As family patriarch and accountant, Coldfield determines her categorization and narrates her life. It is not until the power of the recordkeeping passes to Coldfield’s daughter that her aunt’s marriage is recorded: “the marriage of the aunt; it was Miss Rosa who entered that, along with Ellen’s death, on the day when she entered Mr. Coldfield’s own and Charles Bon’s

and even Sutpen's" (64). For Rosa, the rules of family accounting are different from her father's: she accounts for her aunt's life simply because she is married.

Rosa's entries simplify her attempt to balance the family ledger. While we learn from Mr. Compson that Rosa has no clear understanding of accounting, Rosa is aware of the system of debits and credits:

Your grandmother told me that at that time Miss Rosa could not count money, change, that she knew the progression of the coins in theory but that apparently she had never had the actual cash to see, touch, experiment, and prove with; that on certain days of the week she would go down town with a basket and shop at certain stores which Mr Coldfield had already designated, with no coin nor sum of money changing lip or hand, and that later in the day Mr Coldfield would trace her course by the debits scratched on paper or on walls and counters and pay them. (60)

Rosa may not understand the formal structure of accounting, but she nevertheless applies it in her role as the family accountant. In this role Rosa comes to an understanding that a notation in the family bible, while just a scribble, is a way of documenting and giving meaning and memory to one's life in the same way that Cecilia Farmer etches her name in the jail window as a way of saying, "I was here." Judith, Rosa's niece, also attempts to leave her "scratch" by passing on to Grandmother Compson the letter she received from Charles.

This letter also constitutes Judith's equivalent of a line in the family bible. (Given Rosa's alternative family accounting and given that Rosa is apparently unaware that Bon is Sutpen's son, it may be fair to conclude that she records him as Judith's betrothed in the bible.) The letter, nevertheless, works to document her would-be marriage and serves as the "block of stone with scratches on it provided there was someone to remember to have the marble scratched and set up" (101). Cecila Farmer's scratch and Judith's letter serve as documentation of their lives, but Rosa has no such history for which to account, explaining her bitterness for her "engagement which did not engage, that troth which failed to plight" (8). Because Rosa has no marriage in the family bible to account for her, she instead seeks out Quentin Compson and tells him her story. "So maybe you will enter the literary profession," she suggests to Quentin, "as so many Southern gentlemen and gentlewomen too are doing now and maybe some day you will remember this and write about it. You will be married then I expect and perhaps your wife will want a new gown or a new chair for the house and you can write about this and submit it to the magazines" (5). By seeking out Quentin who will soon begin classes at Harvard, Rosa attempts to account for the lack of her own "married" line in the family bible. She, like the male narrators, uses the language of commerce and accounting in her proposition to Quentin as she offers him her story that he can someday sell in order to satisfy a financial onus of his future wife. Linking her own life to that of Quentin's and his wife, Rosa constructs an alternative legacy inscribed not simply through the family bible but through literature and the act of writing itself. She makes her

“scratch” by drawing Quentin into the Sutpen family history, which also allows her retribution against Thomas Sutpen who offered her marriage and then, with an insult, rescinded it, leaving her only with a “nohusband” (3).

In the role of family historian Rosa also applies the structure of historical accounting to her sister when she describes Ellen’s marriage: “even I used to wonder what our father or his father could have done before he married our mother that Ellen and I would have to expiate and neither of us alone be sufficient; what crime committed that would leave our family cursed to be instruments not only for that man’s destruction but for our own” (14). In other words, Rosa sees her destroyed chances of marriage offered by Sutpen and his marriage to Ellen as payment for some unknown debt of her father’s or his father’s before him.

CHARLES BON AND OCTOROON

Charles Bon erases the boundaries between slavery, prostitution, and marriage by reducing all sexual relationships to commercial exchanges when he introduces Henry to the practice of *plaçage* in New Orleans.⁵ At the octoroon ball Henry sees “a row of faces like a bazaar of flowers, the supreme apotheosis of chattelry, of human flesh bred of the two races for that sale—a corridor of doomed and tragic flower faces walled between the grim duenna row of old women and the elegant shapes of young men trim predatory and (at the moment) goatlike” (89). Rather than appreciating what Bon means for him to observe—women who are both free and slave, white and black, prostitute and bride, Henry simply sees beautiful mulatta women whose sexuality is for sale. When Henry sees Bon’s octoroon, Henry tries to reduce her to

the status of “a bought woman. A whore” (91). Bon quickly rejects this classification, warning Henry that to do so may bring on the wrath of many: “never refer to them by that name in New Orleans: otherwise you may be forced to purchase that privilege with some of your blood from probably a thousand men” (91). By warning Henry of the multitude of men who participate in the practice, Bon exposes the common practice for which men will fight honorably against the title of “whore.” (As testimony to Bon’s statement, a “swarthy man resembling a creature out of an old woodcut of the French Revolution” guards the door to the octoroon’s home and, assuming antagonism between Henry and Bon, proceeds to instruct Bon in the proper etiquette for dueling [89]). Bon does not dispute the fact that these women are bought. Stephanie Li argues that “Bon suggests that *plaçage* is an extension of the relationship between master and slave” (95). Bon implicitly but ineffectively attempts to distinguish between *plaçage* and slavery, however. He argues that the purchase of one of these women “saves” her from a life of slavery—“laborers, cooks, maybe even field hands” (91). She instead enjoys a life of “principles of honor, decorum and gentleness applied to perfectly normal human instinct” (92), the same “instinct” Henry uses as the basis of his categorizations. Bon taunts Henry with his argument that physical sexuality, what “Anglo-Saxons insist upon calling lust” (92), is “normal” rather than something that should be confined, limited, and controlled. Bon argues, moreover, that God “is not interested in the way we serve what you call lust either” (92), implicating the institutions of marriage and slavery.

By introducing Henry to his octoroon mistress, Bon blurs the boundaries between slave and prostitute and slave and placée. Henry, “who had not yet even been to Memphis” (86), the closest known access to prostitution from Jefferson and which often functions in much of Faulkner’s fiction as a euphemism for prostitution and vice, would not yet have had access to prostitution in which an actual commercial exchange takes place. Instead, young men of Henry’s ilk have access to “the housemaids neated and cleaned by white mistresses or perhaps girls with sweating bodies out of the fields themselves and the young man rides up and beckons the watching overseer and says Send me Juno or Missylena or Chlory and then rides on into the trees and dismounts and waits” (87). Recognizing the limited extent of Henry’s potential experience, Bon further attempts to distinguish between buying a slave and saving one of these women:

But we do save that one, who but for us would have been sold to any brute who had the price, not sold to him for the night like a white prostitute, but body and soul for life to him who could have used her with more impunity than he would dare to use an animal, heifer or mare, and then discarded or sold or even murdered when worn out or when her keep and her price no longer balanced. (92)

Reminding Henry subtly that any slave is available for “use” at her owner’s discretion, Bon argues that sexual abuse is but one of the indignities suffered by slaves. He also highlights the disposable nature of both prostitutes and slaves. Despite being responsible for the economic value—and by necessary extension, the

welfare—of slaves, they necessarily can be discarded through sale at any time. The reduction of this woman into an exchangeable brute, field worker, or even a cook, Bon believes, would decry her beauty.

While blurring the boundaries between prostitutes and slaves, Bon, nevertheless, relies upon stereotypical representations of white and black women's sexuality. Premising his argument on the fact that these octoroon women are "created" by white men, Bon makes visible the interracial sexual relations that produced these women. He also elevates them above white women due to their openness to sexuality:

He [the white man] planted the seed which brought her to flower [...] which her white sisters of a mushroom yesterday flee from in moral and outraged horror—a principle which, where her white sister must needs try to make an economic matter of it like someone who insists upon installing a counter or a scales or a safe in a store or business for a certain percentage of the profits, reigns, wise supine and all-powerful, from the sunless and silken bed which is her throne. No: not whores. Not even courtesans— (92-93)

Bon suggests that white women either flee from sexuality or turn it into a commodity of exchange, "an economic matter," rather than the "normal human instinct." He implies, moreover, that these women rule over their own sexuality in far greater ways than those who control their sexuality through commodification. He challenges

Henry's understanding of virginity by elevating the chastity of these women above white women:

creatures taken at childhood, culled and chosen and raised more carefully than any white girl, any nun, than any blooded mare even, by a person who gives them the unsleeping care and attention which no mother ever gives. For a price of course, but a price offered and accepted or declined through a system more formal than any that white girls are sold under since they are more valuable as commodities than white girls, raised and trained to fulfill a woman's sole end and purpose: to love, to be beautiful, to divert; never to see a man's face hardly until brought to the ball and offered to and chosen by some man who in return, not can and not will but *must*, supply her with the surroundings proper in which to love and be beautiful and divert, and who must usually risk his life or at least his blood for that privilege. No, not whores. Sometimes I believe that they are the only true chaste women, not to say virgins, in America, and they remain true and faithful to that man not merely until he dies or frees them, but until they die. And where will you find whore or lady either whom you can count on to do that? (93, emphasis in original)

By referring to these women as more "chaste" than virgins, Bon takes female virtue away from Henry's category of "ladies." While seeming to simply challenge white women's "system" of prostitution, he also suggests the commodification of white

women through the “system” of marriage. Acknowledging that octoroons are also commodities, Bon suggests, however, that they are more valuable than white women because of their inherent and exotic sexuality.

Bon also elevates the system of *plaçage* above the institution of marriage. The virtues of the system he expounds—to be protected until offered for, provided with a home in return for love and faithfulness—sound remarkably like those of traditional marriage. The one exception in Bon’s comparison is that the man “must risk his life or least his blood for the privilege.” In other words, while a traditional husband’s actions of choosing a bride and providing her with a home are encouraged and sanctioned by society, these same actions place a man at risk if the woman is not white, a risk that Bon implies makes these relationships more worthy. This system of *plaçage*, moreover, is much more structured than marriage.

Bon’s apparent respect for this formalized structure indicts the very system of courtship and betrothal that Henry has witnessed between Bon and Judith. Rather than Henry and Judith’s mother, Ellen Sutpen, standing between Judith and her prospective suitor as do the older women at the octoroon balls, Ellen blatantly encourages Bon’s courtship of her daughter. She takes Judith to Memphis to shop for a trousseau before a formal engagement or agreement of marriage has been acknowledged. Rather than chaperoning her daughter as do the “grim duenna row of old women” watching over the octoroons, Ellen herself becomes seduced by Bon’s courtship:

Ellen at the absolute halcyon of her butterfly's summer and now with the added charm of gracious and graceful voluntary surrendering of youth to her blood's and sex's successor, that concurrent attitude and behavior with the engagement's span with which mothers who want to can almost make themselves the brides of their daughter's weddings. Listening to Ellen, a stranger would have almost believed that the marriage, which subsequent events would indicate had not even been mentioned between the young people and the parents, had been actually performed. (58-59)

The octoroons are carefully raised and protected, not seeing a man's face until the octoroon ball and not even seeing the man again until she has accepted his formal proposal and he has provided her with a home, but Judith is easily surrendered to Bon without a formalized promise of marriage or the sanctity of marriage. While Bon emphasizes the "love"—assumed by Mr. Compson to be physical rather than emotional—in plaçage, "Ellen did not once mention love between Judith and Bon. She did not hint around it. Love, with reference to them, was just a finished and perfectly dead subject like the matter of virginity would be after the birth of the first grandchild" (59). Rather than a structured arrangement in which Ellen evaluates the worthiness of Bon's ability to provide Judith with financial security, a home, and affection, Ellen instead "spoke of Bon as if he were three inanimate objects in one or perhaps one inanimate object for which she and her family would find three concordant uses: a garment which Judith might wear as she would a riding habit or a

ball gown, a piece of furniture which would compliment and complete the furnishing of her house and position, and a mentor and example to correct Henry's provincial manners and speech and clothing" (59). By positing Bon as "a garment" for Judith to wear or as a "piece of furniture," Ellen turns both Bon and Judith into commodities. Not only does she appear to be unconcerned about Judith's future, she looks at Bon simply as a way of completing her design much in the same way that Sutpen uses Ellen to complete his own design.

Bon's subtle comparisons between plaçage and marriage escape Henry, however, because Henry's response—"But you married her. You married her" (93)—emphasizes Henry's continued adherence to his belief in elevating the institution of marriage. Because Henry knows of this woman's status as Bon's wife, he must defend his sister under the Southern code of honor. Bon, however, reduces the idea of "marriage" to a "ceremony":

Ah. That ceremony. I see. That's it, then. A formula, a shibboleth meaningless as a child's game, performed by someone created by the situation whose need it answered: a crone mumbling in a dungeon lighted by a handful of burning hair, something in a tongue which not even the girls themselves understand anymore, maybe not even the crone herself, rooted in nothing of economics for her or for any possible progeny since the very fact that we acquiesced, suffered the farce, was her proof and assurance of that which the ceremony itself could never enforce; vesting no new rights in anyone, denying to none

the old—a ritual as meaningless as that of college boys in secret rooms at night, even to the same archaic and forgotten symbols?—you call that a marriage when a night of a honeymoon and the casual business with a hired prostitute consists of the same suzerainty over a (temporarily) private room, the same order of removing the same clothes, the same conjunction in single bed? Why not call that a marriage too? (93-94)

By reducing marriage simply to a performance of a ceremony, a ritual, Bon continues to collapse distinctions between plaçage and marriage. His description of a ceremony, moreover, has connotations different from a traditional Anglo-Saxon white wedding. It carries a sinister aura. Instead of the blessing of a priest (in the “tongue” of Latin given Bon’s Catholic faith), this ceremony is presided over by a mumbling crone. Since many of the octoroons of New Orleans were of Spanish or French origin, Bon highlights the Latin influence of the ceremony while also blending it with an aura of the women’s African heritage. He sets it in a dungeon rather than a church where, rather than the smell of burning incense, the smell of burning hair permeates. By describing this ceremony as a satanic virgin sacrifice, Bon alienates this ceremony from the traditional wedding ceremony familiar to Henry. Bon thus negates any change that, as LaLonde argues, a ritual attempts to invoke. If the social meaning of “bride” or “wife” is the exchange of her virginity for economic and physical protection from the husband, Bon is correct that the ceremony gives neither party new

rights because this ceremony changes no understandings of the arrangement of plaçage: virginity is still exchanged for the supposed comforts of marriage.

But Bon is also wrong. As LaLonde states and I have demonstrated in the Introduction, identity is constructed around the rite of marriage. The ceremony may not change the actions that are invested within a marriage, but it changes the way that the actions are viewed by the larger community. If a slave is considered property, no personhood can be conferred upon that individual. Bon's octoroon holds the distinction of "wife" after emerging from the rite of marriage, a ritual in itself that inherently implies consent; a slave, however, is unable to grant consent because of her lack of personhood. This designation implies societal respect for not only the sexual relations between Bon and his wife but also the humanity of the wife. Thus, Bon's argument that no new rights are granted to the woman is incorrect. Bon attempts to distinguish between the "law" of marriage and the "ceremony" of marriage, synonymous functions for Henry, but not within the system of plaçage. As Elizabeth Freeman points out, "in *Absalom!* public ritual, unlike sexual contact behind closed doors, acknowledges an audience and a specific cultural context, and unlike lawful marriages, produces a racial multiplicity" (84). The "public ritual" of the ceremony, therefore, highlights the society that sanctions the sexual relations between the couple, rather than the marriage itself that allows the sexual relations to remain hidden.

Just as Bon dismantles the distinctions between a marriage and the ceremony, he dismantles Henry's provincial understanding of sex itself by rendering it a

commercial exchange. By comparing the sanctity of “the night of a honeymoon” with the “casual business with a hired prostitute” Bon proves that the only distinguishing characteristic between these acts is the ceremony that precedes the act: the “same suzerainty over a (temporarily) private room, the same order of removing the same clothes, the same conjunction in a single bed” (93). With a prostitute, the man receives fulfillment of his desires, the woman receives the money, and the responsibility between them ends. On a honeymoon night, a lady’s virginity is exchanged for economic and physical protection afforded to her and any offspring resulting from the transaction. By challenging Henry to call the act of prostitution “a marriage too” (94), Bon forces Henry to acknowledge his naiveté about sex and his labels for it. Bon’s step-by-step lesson in *plaçage* thus dismantles Henry’s more provincial arguments and erects his own sophisticated and paradoxical arguments about sex and marriage.⁶

Henry is not swayed by Bon’s argument though and constructs an argument of his own that demonstrates his continued elevation of marriage as a sacred institution. Parodying Bon’s argument, Henry reduces it to absurdity with a simple mathematical equation:

You give me two and two and you tell me it makes five and it does make five. But there is still the marriage. Suppose I assume an obligation to a man who cannot speak my language, the obligation stated to him in his own and I agree to it: am I any the less obligated

because I did not happen to know the tongue in which he accepted me in good faith? No. (94)

Within this simple bit of objective arithmetic ($2+2=5$), the equal sign implies that both sides of the equation are equal. But in order for this to be true, there must first be cultural recognition of these symbols being endowed with a fixed meaning. While agreeing with Bon that this equation does equal “five,” Henry refuses to figure both marriage and the woman’s blackness into the same equation because cultural distinctions deny such equality. For Henry marriage equates into an “obligation,” a debt of honor, for which a man is still responsible regardless of the language in which it is articulated.

While Henry acknowledges that the marriage is neither legal nor lawfully recognized, he nevertheless condemns Bon for tainting the institution of marriage with this woman’s blackness. Bon’s marriage moves this woman out of the isolation of *plaçage* and erases the boundaries controlling and containing her. This woman now becomes a recognized member of the white community, which Henry must concede when Bon topples his idealization of marriage: “Have you forgot that this woman, this child, are niggers? You, Henry Sutpen of Sutpen’s Hundred in Mississippi? You, talking of marriage, a wedding, here?” (94). Li argues that Bon’s reminder to Henry of the woman’s and child’s racial identities is a way of eradicating threats to Bon’s narrative power: “His control of racialized feminine images allows him to discard the virtuous ideal he had previously constructed” (100). I disagree. Bon’s quiet reminder collapses Henry’s categorizations. Henry has just implied that

Bon's marriage is an obligation that Bon should honor. Bon's reminder jolts Henry back to Henry's Southern mores in which the one-drop rule trumps all other definitions and obligations. "Yes. I know. I know that. But it's still there," Henry responds: "It's not right. Not even you doing it makes it right. Not even you" (94). Henry therefore condemns Bon for breaking the boundaries between black and white in a lawful and acknowledged union because, by Southern standards, all "elite white men who mixed were protected in their sins by the very fact that the South could not admit to the world that the sin existed" (Williamson 28). Bon's public acknowledgement of a mulatta wife breaks this secret code and threatens the entire Southern patriarchy that rested on the purity and piety of white femininity.

Like his father who appears to forbid the marriage of Judith to Bon because of what he "found out in New Orleans," Henry too prohibits Bon's marriage to Judith, "waiting, hoping for Bon to renounce the woman and dissolve the marriage which he (Henry) admitted was no marriage, and which he must have known as soon as he saw the woman and the child that Bon would not renounce" (94). By marrying this woman, Bon recognizes the equality of this mulatta to white women, and, in doing so, he situates her at least as Judith's equal if not her superior. Judith, as Henry's sister and a white virgin, should be regarded in status and caste as higher than any woman of mixed race. In fact, it is not just the ceremonies or the bigamy that bothers Henry: "not the two ceremonies but the two women; not the fact that Bon's intention was to commit bigamy but that it was apparently to make his (Henry's) sister a sort of junior partner in a harem" (94). Though the term "harem" implies an otherness and an

exoticism that cannot be related to his understanding of marriage, what is more disturbing to Henry is that Judith would only be a “junior partner” in it. Judith’s marriage should make her superior. Henry recognizes that Judith can never compete with this woman for Bon’s attention. Judith is, as Mr. Compson tells Quentin, “the blank shape, the empty vessel” upon which Bon and Henry can project their desires (95). This blankness makes her very different from Bon’s octoroon who is no blank shape; instead, she is the “flower face” that he saw at the octoroon ball or, in Bon’s terminology, a “sparrow” in need of rescuing. This woman, however objectified, has the shape of beauty and sexuality that Judith does not. Judith has only the shape allowed to her or projected upon her by the patriarchal society that defines her. As a potential wife, she is a vessel to be filled with Bon’s legitimate heirs. For Henry, she is the nucleus for absorbing Bon into his family; for Ellen, she is the mannequin who can be clothed by Bon; and for Bon, she is the price he charges Sutpen for not acknowledging Bon as his son. While Judith and the octoroon may be very different and hold very different understandings of sexuality, they are nevertheless both commodified into possessions of men.

THOMAS SUTPEN’S MARRIAGE TO EULALIA

Thomas Sutpen’s unwillingness to acknowledge Charles Bon as his son directly contrasts with Bon’s unwillingness to renounce his octoroon wife and child. Bon, like his mother, is a debt that Sutpen “believed he had paid off and discharged twenty-eight years” (213) before Bon enters Sutpen’s home with Henry on their Christmas break. Bon is the child of a marriage between Sutpen and the daughter of a

West Indian sugar plantation aristocrat. Sutpen believed that Bon's mother was of maternal Spanish origin when he married Eulalia, but he learns two years after Bon's birth that she contains the "taint" of African blood. While the system of *plaçage* has its origins in the West Indies,⁷ Sutpen's marriage is not sexualized as is his son's with the octoroon in New Orleans. He tells Grandfather Compson explicitly that he was a virgin at the time of his marriage, and Eulalia's sexuality is ignored. She is rendered merely as a recurring shadow "that emerged for a moment and then faded again" in the flare of muskets, one who assists but nevertheless is of little consequence during the battle: "the woman, the girl, just that shadow which could load a musket but could not have been trusted to fire one out the window that night" (200). Even in the brief and fragmented descriptions that attempt to fashion her mysterious presence, she is rendered bodiless: "the girl just emerging for a second of the telling, in a single word almost, so that Grandfather said it was like he had just seen her too for a second by the flash of one of the muskets—a bent face, a single cheek, a chin for an instant beyond a curtain of fallen hair, a white slender arm raised, a delicate hand clutching a ramrod, and that was all" (201). Unlike Charles Bon's octoroon wife who is specifically described and objectified in terms of her body and her sexuality, Sutpen's wife appears merely as a shadow from his past.⁸

Sutpen's story is rendered as a broken financial contract that smudges the boundaries between marriage and slavery. According to Grandfather Compson, "it was no tale about women, and certainly not about love" (200) as expected of a marriage; it is instead a breached contract because of "actual misrepresentation on

their part and misrepresentation of such a crass nature as to have not only voided and frustrated without his knowing it the central motivation of his entire design” (211). Sutpen’s design is legendary and one which Sutpen explains in detail to Grandfather Compson: “I had a design. To accomplish it I should require money, a house, a plantation, slaves, a family—incidentally of course, a wife” (212). His relationship with this woman appears to fulfill the design. Through his marriage, he acquired “the whole place which he alone had saved [...] at least to that portion of it which had been specifically described and deeded to him in the marriage settlement which he had entered in good faith” (211). In addition to the plantation, home, slaves, and wealth, his wife bears him a male heir. As a result of his discovery of his wife’s black blood, however, Sutpen “repudiated that first wife and that child when he discovered that they would not be adjunctive to the forwarding of the design” (211).

Not only does Sutpen repudiate the woman and child as Bon is unwilling to do, Sutpen does it in a way that depicts her as an object of trade between men. Sutpen therefore treats his wife as a *placée*. Sutpen makes a “settlement” upon her, buying his way out of the relationship.⁹ Sutpen justifies his actions by arguing “that he could have simply deserted her, could have taken his hat and walked out, but he did not” (211). Instead, he “voluntarily relinquished” the marriage settlement, “taking only the twenty niggers out of all he might have claimed and which many another man in his place would have insisted upon keeping (in which contention) would have been supported by both legal and moral sanction” (211). When even

Grandfather Compson appears appalled at Sutpen's cold calculations, Sutpen emphasizes the contractual nature of the marriage in legal and financial terminology:

I made no attempt to keep not only that which I might consider myself to have earned at the risk of my life but which had been given to me by signed testimonials, but on the contrary I declined and resigned all right and claim to this in order that I might repair whatever injustice I might be considered to have done by so providing for the two persons whom I might be considered to have deprived of anything I might later possess: and this was agreed to, mind; agreed to between the two parties. (213)

Grandfather Compson's horrified appellation mirrors Henry's belief in marriage as a privileged institution, one that has no relationship to commerce or slavery: "didn't the dread and fear of females which you must have drawn in with the primary mammalian milk teach you better? [...] what conscience to trade with which would have warranted you in the belief that you could have bought immunity from her for no other coin but justice?" (213). His shock at Sutpen's cold calculations leads him to surmise that Sutpen "would not permit the child, since it was a boy, to bear either his name or that of its maternal grandfather" (214). Grandfather Compson thus concludes that Sutpen gave the child the name "Charles Bon," French for "Charles Good." His translation invokes the nature of Sutpen's relationship with his son as a "good," a product or commodity to be bought and sold like any child of an interrelationship with a slave. Despite finding precedent for "put[ting] his first wife

aside like eleventh and twelfth century kings did” (194), Sutpen adheres to the European custom of *plaçage* by setting aside his mulatta wife, returning to Mississippi, and starting his design over with a white woman.

Sutpen’s second marriage to Ellen Coldfield is also rendered as a financial contract in which Bon trades on Ellen’s respectability and purity for a position within the Yoknapatawpha community. Because Eulalia fails to “incorporate” into his design (212) and although Sutpen posits the necessity of a wife as “incidental” in his discussion with Grandfather Compson, his choice of a new wife is crucial to his design in Yoknapatawpha. Sutpen’s need is not just for any wife but for a particular wife who will, as Freeman points out, “secure his tenuous status as a white person” (77). While the ladies of Yoknapatawpha believe that Sutpen came to Jefferson “to find a wife exactly as he would have gone to the Memphis market to buy livestock or slaves” (31), Sutpen is much more discerning than the ladies of Jefferson believe. For his wife to grant him respectability, she must meet very particular qualifications including virginity, faithfulness, and proper breeding. These latter qualifications by Southern standards (and as Henry’s fallible classifications demonstrate) implies that the woman must be of the white planter aristocracy, affording her husband wealth and connections to and within that social sphere. More important to Thomas Sutpen, however, is his wife’s racial purity which will grant him “the racial makeover” (Freeman 78) that he desires. Racial purity, Thomas Sutpen has learned, is not guaranteed by the planter aristocracy because of the free sexual access between planters and slaves. While it may be argued that Sutpen could not find a wife among

the Yoknapatawpha aristocracy because of his tenuous status within the society, I think otherwise.

Instead of choosing a wife from the Yoknapatawpha planter class, Sutpen selects the daughter of a poor white store owner and merchant. As Robert Dale Parker states, “When Goodhue and Sutpen trade whatever they supposedly trade—swapping, it appears, the merchant’s credit for the pistol-toting upstart’s bravado—they also trade Ellen Coldfield—Goodhue’s daughter” (241). While Parker highlights the fact that “the men of Jefferson [...] structure their economy through the exchange of women” (241), he fails to consider why Sutpen “trades” specifically for Ellen. While his marriage to her affords him the certainty of her virginity, it does not offer him the luxury of family wealth or even extended family connections as does his first marriage. Potential nefarious dealings aside, the only thing Coldfield does for Thomas Sutpen is help Grandfather Compson post bond for Sutpen when the town jails him after his engagement. Sutpen never socializes with Coldfield after his marriage. In fact, Rosa tells Quentin, Sutpen “never entered this house again after he and Ellen were married” (19).

It is Ellen’s racial purity that attracts Thomas Sutpen and is the qualification that makes her a fitting commodity for his “design” for the very reasons that Eulalia was not. Rosa Coldfield, Ellen’s younger sister and the spurned and embittered fiancé of Sutpen, tells Quentin that Sutpen “needed respectability, the shield of a virtuous woman, to make his position impregnable even against the men who had given him protection on that inevitable day and hour when even they must rise against

him in scorn and horror and outrage; and it was mine and Ellen's father who gave him that" (9). While Rosa is certainly correct that Sutpen trades on Ellen's respectability, the respectability is offered in a way that Rosa does not understand. Most of the town, in fact, "forgot that Mr Coldfield had a marriageable daughter. They did not consider the daughter at all" (32). It is not Ellen's virtue that Sutpen seeks to acquire. It is her father's virtue that guarantees Ellen's racial purity. The daughter of a man whose Puritanical values were that of "self-denial and fortitude" (66), Sutpen can be assured of Ellen's heritage. As an attempt to explain Sutpen's peculiarity in his choice of wife, Mr. Compson explains to Quentin that Coldfield was a "a man who obviously could do nothing under the sun for him [Sutpen] save give him credit at a little cross-roads store or cast a vote in his favor if he should ever seek ordination as a Methodist minister" (32). Coldfield's virtue is assured: "a man with a name for absolute and undeviating and even puritan uprightness in a country and time of lawless opportunity, who neither drank nor gambled nor even hunted" (32). A man unwilling to give in to temptations of drinking and gambling would not give in to sexual temptation or dalliances with his slaves. Unlike the slave-holding planter aristocracy, Coldfield only owned only "two negresses which he had freed as soon as he came into possession of them (through a debt, by the way, not purchase), writing out their papers of freedom which they could not read and putting them on a weekly wage which he held back in full against the discharge of the current market value at which he had assumed them on the debt—and in return for which they had been among the first Jefferson negroes to desert and follow the Yankee troops" (66).¹⁰

Although Coldfield's background is unclear, having arrived in Jefferson ten years earlier "in a single wagon" (32) containing his business and family, Sutpen can be assured of Coldfield's character and therefore Ellen's purity.

By re-scripting his design with a woman with pure bloodlines and having a son, Sutpen appears to complete his design in such a way that he will be accepted by and into the Yoknapatawpha community. While he understands the contractual nature of marriage, Sutpen performs in accordance with Carter's definition of "normality discourse" and romantic courtship for the benefit of that community. His courtship of his first wife—"he did not know the girl's christian name, whether he had ever heard it or not" (203)—is nonexistent: "he went out and subdued them [the rebellious slaves], and when he returned he and the girl became engaged to marry" (204). After his business with Mr. Coldfield, Sutpen "entered Mr Coldfield's gate and strode on up the brick walk to the door, carrying his newspaper cornucopia of flowers" (36). Similarly, the lavish wedding ceremony is a public display for the benefit of the community. Freeman argues that Sutpen expects the "white wedding" to constitute a "reorganization" of his relationship within the community: "it will make him white; it will replace his own racially mixed past with a 'pure' one; it will erase his connection to Eulalia Bon and Haiti; and it will produce a predictable future in the form of racially pedigreed children" (80). Rosa too assumes that Sutpen wants the big wedding to achieve "respectability," but Mr. Compson tells Quentin that Sutpen wanted the wedding license: "he did want, not the anonymous wife and the anonymous children, but the two names, the stainless wife and the unimpeachable

father-in-law, on the license, the patent” (39). While “respectability” may function on a local level, the marriage license documents Sutpen’s status as a member of a much larger community than just Jefferson. It documents Sutpen’s citizenship within Yoknapatawpha, the state of Mississippi, and the United States by severing and erasing any connections he has to Haiti. The license, rather than the wedding itself, also contractually assures him the “predictable future” of children resulting from marriage. But unlike his first marriage, which Sutpen argues was nullified by his wife’s and his father-in-law’s intentional withholding of information, so too can his second marriage—as a contract—be put at risk by the appearance of Charles Bon.

BON’S LEVERAGE FOR SUTPEN’S ADMISSION

Bon reveals his use of Judith as leverage for a paternal admission from Sutpen after Henry learns that Bon is his brother from their father. When Henry asks Bon, “But must you marry her? Do you have to do it?” (272). Bon’s response reveals that Judith is indeed a blank shape onto which he has projected his desire for acknowledgement: “If he had [told me], I would have agreed and promised never to see her or you or him again. But he didn’t tell me” (272). As Henry has grown accustomed to his knowledge of Bon’s marriage to the octoroon woman, so too does he believe he will grow used to the potential incest within the marriage. “But you will have to give me time to get used to it” (272), Henry tells Bon. Henry is thus willing to allow Bon to marry their sister knowing that Bon is his brother because, unlike when he was faced with Bon’s octoroon wife for the first time, Henry can find a precedent for incestuous marriage in his Anglo-Saxon heritage. He agrees to the

marriage, crying out to himself: “But kings have done it! Even dukes! There was that Lorraine duke named John something that married his sister. The Pope excommunicated him but it didn’t hurt! It didn’t hurt! They were still husband and wife. They were still alive. They still loved!” (273). Henry is thus able to reconcile the potential incest between Bon and Judith by finding a precedent for it in Anglo-European history while he is unable to find such a precedent for an interracial marriage between a white man and woman with black blood.

The threat of interracial sex, not incest, causes Henry to murder Bon. Henry acknowledges even to his father that he will allow Judith and Bon to marry knowing that Bon is their brother: “Yes. I have decided. Brother or not, I have decided. I will. I will” (283).¹¹ But, in order to prevent the marriage, Sutpen ultimately reveals Bon’s black ancestry: “*He must not marry her, Henry. His mother’s father told me that her mother had been a Spanish woman. I believed him; it was not until after he was born that I found out that his mother was part negro*” (283). When Henry confronts Bon with this knowledge, Bon points out to him the truth of his biases: “*So it’s the miscegenation, not the incest, which you cant bear*” (285). Henry is unable to kill Bon though, because, Henry tells Bon, “*You are my brother*” (286). As before with Bon’s octoroon wife, Henry ignores both the racial and sexual dimensions of Bon’s potential marriage to Judith until Bon forces him to acknowledge both. “*I’m the nigger that’s going to sleep with your sister*” (286), Bon challenges. Just as he invoked the racial heritage of the octoroon woman and child to shatter Henry’s understanding of “marriage,” Bon shocks Henry with this statement. Forced to

acknowledge the sexuality inherent in the potential marriage between Bon and Judith, Henry kills Bon, ruining Judith's hopes for marriage and vanquishing himself from his own heritage forever.

THE ERASURE OF BON'S OCTOROON WIFE

Judith attempts to erase the marriage between Charles Bon and the octoroon by performing as Bon's widow within the Yoknapatawpha community and raising his son. Judith's response to the discovery of Bon's octoroon wife and child¹² appears honorable because she invites them to visit Sutpen's Hundred and pay respects to Bon's grave.¹³ I believe Judith has alternative motivations for doing so, however, given Quentin and Shreve's speculation as to what Judith would have done had she known of Bon's octoroon wife: "She would have acted as Sutpen would have acted with anyone who tried to cross him: she would have taken Bon anyway. I can imagine her if necessary even murdering the other woman" (96). Judith does try to "take Bon away" from the octoroon though in terms of narrative privilege. She leaves tangible evidence for posterity that connects here solidly with Bon: her letter from Bon that she gives to Grandmother Compson and the grave markers she purchases for Bon and Etienne in the Sutpen family plot. Taking the letter to Grandmother Compson for safekeeping, Judith explains the necessity of leaving behind a narrative "scratch":

And so maybe if you could go to someone, the stranger the better, and give them something—a scrap of paper—something, anything, it not to mean anything in itself and them not even to read it or keep it, not

even bother to throw it away or destroy it, at least it would be something just because it would have happened, be remembered even if only from passing from one hand to another, one mind to another, and it would be at least a scratch, something, something that might make a mark on something that *was* once. (101, emphasis in original)

Like Rosa who tells Quentin her story in order to inscribe her mark on literary history, Judith leaves this “scrap of paper” with Grandmother Compson as a means of leaving behind her story.

While Elisabeth Muhlenfeld argues that Judith “seeks to insure Bon’s immortality by giving away the letter” (“We” 78), it is her relationship with Bon that Judith documents for posterity. While she may not have married him legally or even socially, this letter documents her betrothal. Judith’s explanation to Grandmother Compson also explains her purchase of the tombstones for Bon and his son, Etienne. As Muhlenfeld points out, “Judith goes to General Compson and orders a tombstone for him [Etienne] to match his father’s paying a hundred dollars, an immense sum for her to amass. Judith commits herself *before* Etienne arrives to the life-long care of her dead fiancé’s son, knowing he is a Negro. And by insuring that he, too, will have the formal recognition as a family member implicit in the gravestone, she, in effect, pledges to him the security and tradition which she represents” (“We” 78, emphasis in original).

Not only does Judith ensure Etienne’s formal recognition as a family member, she effectively erases any knowledge of Bon’s octoroon wife. Indeed, when Etienne

arrives at the Sutpen plantation, Judith implicitly replaces his mother with herself. He even sleeps “in the trundle bed beside Judith’s” (AA 160), the traditional location Muhlenfeld argues for a mother’s child to rest. While Judith raises Etienne, the octoroon’s life remains undocumented and irrelevant to the narrative as Mr. Compson states: “you did not wonder what had become of the mother, you did not even care: death or elopement or marriage” (159). Indeed, in the mind of the community, Judith is Etienne’s mother, and Judith’s actions not only erase the octoroon but re-write the narrative of Bon’s death:

the town, the countryside knew [...] that there was a strange little boy living out there who had apparently emerged from the house for the first time at the age of about twelve years, whose presence was not even unaccountable to the town and country since they now believed they knew why Henry had shot Bon and they wondered only where and how Clytie and Judith had managed to keep him concealed all the time, believing now that it had been a widow who had buried Bon even though she had no paper to show for it (163)

Judith’s actions, therefore, effectively re-script the narrative for the community. By raising Bon’s son and allowing the community to believe the child is hers, she transforms herself from Bon’s betrothed into his “widow.” Judith erases all evidence of the octoroon and becomes, de facto, Bon’s wife and Etienne’s mother.

ETIENNE'S MARRIAGE

Bon's son, Etienne, attempts to transform the white racial identity fashioned by Judith's narrative, however, through his marriage to "a coal black and ape-like woman" (166).¹⁴ While Judith shapes her identity as a married woman through her actions "though she had no paper to show for it," Etienne reconstructs his racial identity with a legitimate marriage license. Like the narrator of James Weldon Johnson's *The Autobiography of an Ex-Colored Man* who learns of his mixed race identity by staring at himself in the mirror, as a child on the Sutpen plantation Etienne too "examine[s] himself in the delicate and outgrown tatters in which he perhaps could not even remember himself, with quiet and incredulous incomprehension" (162). Not only does he learn of the ambiguity of his racial identity, Etienne recognizes that Judith's narrative is expunging his identity forged by his relationship with his mother, Bon's unnamed octoroon. As his father did before him, Etienne refuses to forsake the octoroon for Judith. While his mother had an alternative racial identity within the highly sexualized space of *plaçage*, Etienne is unable to do so. Etienne lacks an identity that links him to his biological mother because the boundaries of *plaçage* are permeable to male children of such relationships. Outside the confined community of New Orleans, one is either white or black due to the legalities of the one-drop rule.

Etienne thus employs marriage as the vehicle for socially, culturally, and legally switching identities and forcing community recognition of his mother's heritage. Etienne's life parallels Joe Christmas's in *Light in August*, a life that

Etienne “did not, possibly could not recount” (166) because he is neither white nor black. In search of a racial identity, Christmas lives, to again employ Nagel’s terminology, as an “ethnosexual settler” (15) solely among blacks and attempts an ethnic or racial conversion by living as “man and wife with a woman who resembled an ebony carving” (*LIA* 225). Etienne, unable to locate or fashion an alternative racial identity, converts the white racial identity Judith crafted for him into a black identity: “he had come back, appeared, with a coal black and ape-like woman and an authentic wedding license, brought back by the woman since he had been so severely beaten and mauled recently that he could not even hold himself on the spavined and saddleless mule on which he rode while his wife walked beside it to keep him from falling off” (166). Etienne continually receives beatings on his journey to the Sutpen plantation because he, like his father, refuses to alienate blackness. By refusing to pass, Etienne converts to blackness specifically through his marriage. His marriage, rather than buttressing his citizenship within the white community, alienates him from social acceptance.

The male narrators’ interpretation of Etienne’s marriage reveals their unwillingness and inability to comprehend the marriage in any context other than as a method of reinforcing the breakdown of racial boundaries by socially and legally separating black from white in ways that anticipate Ike McCaslin’s narrative in *Go Down, Moses*. Grandfather Compson refuses to acknowledge the potential for love within Etienne’s marriage because of the woman’s blackness: Etienne “rode up to the house and apparently flung the wedding license in Judith’s face with something of

that invincible despair” (166). His narrative thus frames Etienne’s marriage as an act of revenge against Judith consisting of “despair” and discounting any potential for love or affection between Etienne and the woman. Quentin and Shreve do the same thing when they recount the reasons for Bon’s action of replacing Judith’s picture with the octoroon’s in the locket Judith gives him: “It was because he said to himself, ‘If Henry dont mean what he said, it will be all right; I can take it out and destroy it. But if he does mean what he said, it will be the only way I will have to say to her, *I was no good; do not grieve for me*” (287). While this is a comforting conclusion for Shreve and Quentin to arrive at for the protection of Judith, it is a conclusion that again objectifies the octoroon woman just as Grandfather Compson objectifies Etienne’s wife. While Quentin and his grandfather invoke love to protect Judith, they discount the same possibility of love within the marriages of Bon or Etienne.

Jim Bond, Etienne’s son, is the sign of his grandfather’s and father’s refusals to forsake the octoroon woman and the negress for their blackness. While the child’s first name appears insignificant and his “family” name appears to be a misrendering of the name “Bon,” I believe it is much more important. The narrative emphasis on Grandfather’s calling, “Jim, Jim, *Jim!*” (165), upon rescuing Etienne from indictment by Jim Hamblett highlights this name as the one that Etienne gives his own child. Similarly, as Luster points out to Quentin when asked to spell Jim Bond’s last name, “Dat’s a lawyer word. Whut dey puts you under when de Law ketches you” (174). While Luster is certainly correct that a “bond” functions as a payment of bail or a fine within the legal system as Grandfather Compson pays to secure Etienne’s release

from jail, the term also functions in a multitude of ways that connect—or bond—Jim Bond to Mr. Compson and thus to Quentin Compson. A bond also acknowledges indebtedness to an individual by an issuer as well as a form of insurance taken out by one party to assure the performance of an obligation by another. As Jason Compson emphasizes to Quentin, “Then your grandfather told him he must go away, disappear, giving him money to go on: ‘Whatever you are, once you are among strangers, people who dont know you, you can be whatever you will. I will make it all right’” (165). With these actions and statements, Grandfather Compson makes a bond with Etienne. By giving Etienne money, Grandfather Compson makes an investment in Etienne’s future by giving him both money and opportunity to start fresh in a new community, one in which both Grandfather Compson and Judith assume Etienne will pass as a white man. Grandfather’s speculative investment fails; Etienne not only returns but he returns to the Yoknapatawpha community legally married to a black woman, exposing his interracial heritage. Although Grandfather Compson assumes that Etienne flaunts the marriage license for Judith’s benefit, Etienne’s marriage also provides Grandfather Compson with an undesirable return on his investment. Etienne acknowledges his connection to Grandfather Compson by naming his son “Bond.” Grandfather Compson also made a promise in return for Etienne’s acceptance of the money and departure from town: that Etienne can “be whatever you will” and that Grandfather Compson “will make it right” with Judith. This promise remains unfulfilled. Etienne is not able to live within the community he chooses (evidenced by the most recent severe beating because of his relationship with the negress).

Grandfather Compson, Mr. Compson, and Quentin continue breaking this promise, moreover, by relying upon the “old virtues” that Mr. Compson admits are depended upon when “we try to reconstruct the causes which lead up to the actions of men and women” (96). Dismissing the possibility of love or other emotion between Etienne and the black woman, the Compsons rely instead upon the “old virtue” of revenge to account for Etienne’s marriage to the black woman.

Confusing the marriage with slavery, the Compson men fail to account for this woman as a human being. She is referred to as an “ape-like woman” (166), “an authentic wife resembling something in a zoo” (169), and a “black gargoyle” (170) who “existed in that aghast and automaton-like state” (166). They render the marriage simply in terms of the woman’s commodified blackness in ways reminiscent of Charles Bon’s wife’s beauty and sexuality:

he had found her, dragged her out of whatever two dimensional backwater (the very name of which, town, or village, she either had never known or the shock of her exodus from it had driven the name forever from her mind and memory) her mentality had been capable of coercing food and shelter from, and married her, held her very hand doubtless while she made the laborious cross on the register before she even knew his name or knew that he was not a white man. (166-67)

Etienne’s wife, therefore, is not only described in increasingly animalistic terms emphasizing her blackness (contrasting vividly with the whiteness and beauty of Etienne’s mother), but she is merely a tool Etienne uses to enact revenge against his

racialized past. She is instrumental, the Compsons determine, for enacting Etienne's ritualistic violence and suffering at the hands of both blacks and whites: "the man apparently hunting out situations in order to flaunt and fling the ape-like body of his charcoal companion in the faces of all and any who would retaliate" (167). And, upon returning to Sutpen's Hundred, they deduce that Etienne "kenneled her with a gesture perhaps" in a dilapidated slave cabin when he returned to the house to visit with Judith. Thus, while the Compson men are able to attribute love to the relationship between Judith and Bon ("*Because there was love* Mr Compson said" [168]), and thereby account for Judith's actions of raising and encouraging Etienne to pass as a white man, the Compsons are unwilling and unable to attribute love to the relationship between Etienne and his wife simply because of her blackness, confusing the marriage with a form of slavery.

Etienne's wife is ultimately erased from the narrative, her fate unknown. Although it may be fair to assume that she too dies of yellow fever like Etienne, it is Judith who cares for Etienne when he becomes ill, eventually dying from it too. Etienne's death is marked by the gravestone Judith paid for with the proceeds from the sale of her father's store, and Judith's death is marked by the gravestone Rosa purchases for her. There is no marker documenting Etienne's wife's death. This woman's fate, like that of Charles Bon's octoroon wife, is unknown. As Grandfather Compson said of Etienne's mother, "you did not wonder what had become of the mother, you did not even care" (159) because Clytie thereafter raises Jim Bond. But as was the fate of children of interracial relationships during the antebellum period,

the condition of Jim Bond follows that of his mother. Despite his ability to articulate his name to Miss Rosa—“Calls me Jim Bond” (297)—Quentin’s narrative paints him as idiotic and animalistic as his mother:

Jim Bond, the scion, the last of his race, seeing it too now and howling with human reason now since now even he could have known what he was howling about. But they couldn’t catch him. They could hear him; he didn’t seem to ever get any further away but they couldn’t get any nearer and maybe in time they could not even locate the direction of his howling anymore. (300-301)

Unable to reason or to articulate his emotion in a way that Quentin is able to understand, Jim Bond can only “howl” like an animal, a sound that anticipates the disrupting laughter we see in *The Unvanquished*. Like his ancestors born into slavery, Quentin believes Jim Bond needs to be caught, controlled, and contained. This containment would repair the damage to racial boundaries and borders caused by Bond’s parents and grandparents because of their attempts to reshape racial identity through marriage that threaten white identity.

QUENTIN’S *BILDUNG*

While Miss Rosa is unable to do accounting because she never handled money, she nevertheless takes responsibility for accounting within the Coldfield family Bible, legitimizing her aunt’s marriage and even accounting for Charles Bon. Similarly, the male narrators ultimately attempt to structure the narratives of the

marriages of Thomas Sutpen, Charles Bon, and Etienne, into a system of finance and accounting, one not found in the family bible but instead in a hypothetical ledger:

So it took Charles Bon and his mother to get rid of old Tom, and Charles Bon and the octoroon to get rid of Judith, and Charles Bon and Clytie to get rid of Henry; and Charles Bon's mother and Charles Bon's grandmother got rid of Charles Bon. So it takes two niggers to get rid of one Sutpen, dont it? [...] Which is all right, it's fine; it clears the whole ledger you can tear all the pages out and burn them, except for one thing. And do you know what that is? [...] You've got one nigger left. One nigger Sutpen left. Of course you cant catch him and you dont even always see him and you never will be able to use him. But you've him there still. You still hear him at night sometimes. (302)

This final accounting of the Sutpen family saga fails to balance, however. This accounting does not compute because, like Coldfield's privileged narration in the family bible, the narrators fail to credit certain relationships in their accounting:

Charles Bon + Octoroon	=	Thomas Sutpen
Charles Bon + Octoroon	=	Judith
Charles Bon + Clytie	=	Henry
Charles Bon's mother + grandmother	=	Charles Bon

What immediately becomes apparent in this ledger format is the number of people—mostly women—who are not documented in Shreve's final but selective accounting.

Not figured into this accounting is the fact that Clytie too is a Sutpen, her unnamed mother only known to be one of Sutpen's wild negroes that he brought with him to Mississippi from the West Indies. It fails to take into consideration Sutpen's wife, Ellen, or her sister, Rosa. It certainly fails to consider Etienne, his wife, or their child. It also fails to consider Milly Jones, or her daughter fathered by Sutpen, whose birth Sutpen disregards because the child is female, an action that ultimately impels Wash Jones—not Charles Bon and the octoroon—to “get rid of old Tom.” In their selective accounting, Shreve and Quentin focus on those people and the relationships that they think they can understand, ignoring those that they cannot. Shreve and Quentin try to reconcile the ledger because if it balances, then their economic system will be validated and sustained. But like Ike McCaslin learns in *Go Down, Moses*, the financial ledger cannot adequately account for human lives and impulses. Because it is an incomplete accounting, they find a “remainder” in the haunting presence of Jim Bond.

Specifically for Quentin Compson, who, like Henry Sutpen, believes in the three categorizations of women in relation to men, the collapse of these classifications must prove troubling. Quentin's preoccupation with his sister's sexuality throughout *The Sound and the Fury* is complicated by this analysis of the women in the Sutpen family saga. Caddy Compson, pregnant and unmarried, tells her brother, “I've got to marry somebody” (*SF* 113). She is, thereafter, blamed and becomes the scapegoat for the fall of the Compson family when her husband divorces her after finding out she is pregnant with another man's child. As John T. Matthews points out, “Caddy's simple

physical appetite for sexual pleasure endangers the elaborate code of purity and property upon which the patriarchy depends” (91). A woman born into the classification of a “lady” yet who explores her developing sexuality, Caddy is in effect “sold” into marriage by her family, a woman of the “Lost Cause.” But while Caddy cannot “ever conform to inhuman perfection erected by male idolatry” (*Faulkner* 91), because of her lost virginity in *The Sound and the Fury*, Faulkner more pointedly deconstructs the notions of female sexuality relied upon by the Compsons in *Absalom, Absalom!* Caddy’s marriage, which proves so troubling for Quentin, is an attempt to legitimize her sexuality in return for the family’s reputation. This attempt fails, however, resulting in Caddy’s ultimate and complete rejection by the family and a similar yet ineffective attempt to erase her from the family narrative. Caddy’s attempt to “pass” as a marriageable lady mirrors larger social fears of blacks passing as white. Quentin’s anxieties concerning collapsing social distinctions are intensified by his explicit relationship with the “idiot” Jim Bond who haunts him and doubles his own “idiot” brother Benjy. Through his inheritance of Judith’s letter given to his grandmother, through the inheritance of his grandfather’s bond to Etienne, and through his inheritance of Rosa’s story, Quentin becomes a direct descendent of the Sutpen family history that exacerbates his troubled understanding of his sister’s sexuality and marriage. He recognizes that Jim Bond is a living symbol of his grandfather’s attempts to reshape Etienne’s racial identity and evict him from the community, attempts that Etienne foiled with his marriage. Quentin’s unborn niece, named after him, will be the living symbol of his family’s attempts to mask

Caddy's sexuality from the community exposed by her divorce. This bond between race and sexuality as accounted for through marriage is one that Quentin is ill equipped emotionally to satisfy.

NOTES

¹ The term "female" also has been interpreted as suggesting bestiality. For example, when Vassar College opened it was originally called "Vassar Female College." Many women objected, including Sarah Hale, the editor of *Godey's Lady's Book*, because the term made women sound like animals: "'The Female Mind.' What female do you mean? Not a female donkey. Must not you reply 'I mean a female woman?' Then why not say, 'Woman's mind' at first, and not degrade the feminine sex to the level of animals?" (1860-1867). My thanks to Elizabeth Cornell for bringing this to my attention.

² Matthews (1980), for example, points out that "In several respects marriage is one of the chief figures for storytelling in *Absalom*" ("Marriage" 575). He argues that "a peculiar, perhaps even parodic, version of marriage embodies the intimacy and pleasure of narration, and also suggests how fiction makes its meaning" (575). Similarly, Eric Sundquist (1983) argues that marriage both metaphorically and literally structures the novel:

There is no way to overestimate the stupendous, tortuous effort Faulkner makes in *Absalom, Absalom!* to force into crisis and overcome the tragic divisions upon which his novel is built; the

repeated metaphor of that effort, and its perfect formal analogy, is marriage and its implied recognitions and responsibilities. It operates throughout the book in ways we must take into account, but it derives its power quite simply from expressing, at its deepest, potentially most tragic and threatening level, one central issue that the Civil War would in retrospect seem to be about and the issue *Absalom, Absalom!* is so outrageously about: amalgamation—or rather, miscegenation. (115)

Taking a different approach, Linda Dunleavy (1993) has argued that marriage, which she describes as “romanticism institutionalized,” attempts to make women invisible: “Rosa’s rejection of Sutpen’s terms is the refusal of woman’s invisibility, something that she was willing to accept when he proposed unconditional marriage; Ellen’s invisibility within her marriage to Sutpen; and Judith’s position as an invisible fantasy space for the homosocial and erotic desires of Henry and Bon as they plan her marriage” (457). Louise Westling (1999) has described the novel as “obsessively focused on forbidden passions, thwarted courtships, and failed marriages,” focusing on “the reconstruction of these doomed courtships and marriages” (126). “These courtship themes are really only a diversionary tactic to deflect attention from the real passion of *Absalom, Absalom!*” (127), she argues, from “Sutpen’s real marriage [...] to the primitive landscapes of Haiti and Mississippi” (128). Marriage functions in Westling’s argument as a metaphor for Sutpen’s “union” with the land from which “he draws his strength” and which “produces his wealth and power” (128).

Gina L. Hicks (1997) and Elizabeth Freeman (2002) have focused on the role of ceremony—and wedding ceremonies in particular—in the text. Hicks argues that Thomas Sutpen’s marriage to Ellen is recognition that the “transition from a Caribbean colonial system to an American configuration entails a transition from the creolized racial system of hybridity to the rigid Anglo-Saxon hierarchy of white racial purity over blackness” (29), while she reads Charles Bon’s “critique of ceremony as symptomatic of Creole resistance to Anglo-Saxon colonial ventures” (25). Freeman argues that Thomas Sutpen’s marriage to Ellen is an attempt to overcome racial exclusion and impurity: “This marriage, in other words, is explicitly figured as a racial makeover in which Ellen’s whiteness will overwrite Sutpen’s prior ‘colored’ qualities” (78). By unpacking the detailed wedding narrative, however, she ultimately demonstrates that Sutpen’s attempt fails: “Not only does this wedding fuse Sutpen more tightly with the Native American and African American bodies from which he aims to distance his own, it also performs temporal rearrangements quite different from the amnesia that the wedding seems on the surface to demand and that he seeks to will on the town” (81).

³ Nagel argues that people who enter into long-term sexual relationships with “ethnic Others” can be considered “ethnosexual sojourners who arrange for a brief or extended stay, enter into sexual liaisons, but eventually return to their home communities” (14). Others who “establish long-term liaisons, join and/or form families, and become members of ethnic communities ‘on the other side’” are called “Ethnosexual settlers” (14). As a result of either sojourning or settling over a long

period of time, Nagel describes instances of “ethnic conversion” or “ethnic switching” in which “an individual changes ethnicity” (15). Nagel’s descriptions of both switching and conversion imply choice on the part of individuals. But as historical documents support and I will demonstrate in *Absalom, Absalom!*, racial identity is legally not a matter of choice.

⁴ For example in her book-length treatise *The Plantation Mistress* (1982), historian Catherine Clinton argues that “wealth was a primary factor in matchmaking” (59): “Men commonly described women in terms of their property values; one bridegroom detailed his wife’s ‘excellent qualities’ and added that ‘she is worth \$2,500. She has a good piece of land he says about 10 or 12 miles from Nashville’” (6). This understanding of women as property is certainly not unique to either the South or the antebellum era, however, as the dowry system has a far reaching history in Western civilization. As Cott points out, “Political and legal authorities endorsed and aimed to perpetuate nationally a *particular* marriage model: lifelong, faithful monogamy, formed by the mutual consent of a man and a woman, bearing the impress of the Christian religion and the English common law in its expectations for the husband to be the head and economic provider, his wife the dependent partner” (3). Part of this “impress” from English common law was the understanding of marriage as a “contract”: “Yet as a contract it was unique, for the parties did not set their own terms. The man and woman consented to marry, but public authorities set the terms of the marriage so that it brought predictable rewards and duties” (11). Specifically English law, and ultimately American law as well,

absorbed the common law understanding that marriage turned the “married par
legally into one person—the husband. [...] This legal doctrine of marital unit was
called *coverture* and the wife was called a *femme covert*. [...] Coverture in its
strictest sense meant that a wife could not use legal avenues such as suits or contracts,
own assets, or execute legal documents without her husband’s collaboration.” (11).
Thus, any assets that the wife obtained, through inheritance or otherwise, upon
marriage reverted to the power and control of her husband.

⁵ Simply described, *plaçage* was cultural practice in New Orleans in which
white men would set up contracts with quadroon or octoroon women. In return for
the women's virginity and sexual relations, white European men would provide the
women with homes and protection as well as financial support for the women and any
resulting children. Sally McMillan points out that these highly-sexualized mulatta
women were known as “fancy girls”:

Planters, gamblers, merchants, and visitors desired these beautiful,
well-mannered young women as mistresses or concubines. Not being
allowed to marry them, a white man supported two lifestyles, as
husband and father to his white family and protector of a particular
octoroon woman (having one-eighth black blood), often supporting her
and her offspring for years or even a lifetime. (33)

Men thus had the choice to continue these relationships if they entered into traditional
marriages with white women or they could sever relations with agreed-upon financial
support. For extended discussions of the practice see Bryan, Li, and Martin.

⁶ This relationship that Henry cannot understand similarly complicates Nagel's understanding of "ethnic frontiers." New Orleans, as Bon demonstrates, is an "ethnosexual destination" in the same way as Memphis in Henry's more provincial understanding. But the sexuality that Bon reveals for Henry is not as simple as the "ethnic adventuring and invasion" that occurs on the plantation of North Mississippi. By virtue of the slave system, children, the products of such ethnosexual adventuring and invasion, followed the state of the mother and were controlled by the slave system that fails to recognize their existence. This contact zone in New Orleans becomes a space where ethnic adventurers and invaders become "ethnic sojourners or settlers." But unlike the settlements that Nagel describes in which settlers adapt to the culture of the ethnic people, white men do not "switch" or "convert." Neither do the women adapt to or assimilate into the larger white society. This "frontier" of *plaçage* is, as Henry demonstrates with his absurd mathematical equation, an uninterpretable institution in Nagel's theories. It is a formal and cultural institution that reflects both slavery and marriage and accentuates sexuality. It is also recognized as a formal contract between two willing participants. But while the boundaries forged by *plaçage* are strong—the women's virginity, the white men's financial obligation of housing and protection for the women and heirs—these boundaries are also permeable since the institution is only social and cultural. It is a practice recognized by its participants but unrecognized—overlooked—by the wider society. Marriage, in contrast, is recognized by those both within and outside the

institution and, more importantly, it is recognized legally on the local, state, and national level.

Perhaps this is why plaçage itself does not threaten the larger boundaries between white and black. Plaçage isolates a very narrow space between white and black that has distinct boundaries into which ethnic adventurers can enter, become settlers or sojourners at will and exit back into white culture without crossing into the border of blackness. The women, themselves products of interracial relationships are born into this space of opposition between white and black, and who may never leave it because they are unable either culturally or legally to penetrate the boundaries isolating them. This highly sexualized space is not permeable for the women; they become a stable frontier. They neither attempt to pass as white nor do they adhere to the one-drop rule that legally defines them as black (nor were they able to as they were often shunned by black society and it was, moreover, illegal for them to marry black slaves). This space, therefore, operates as “a live sex act” (Nagel 15) that disallows assimilation because of its isolation outside the long reach of the law. As Bon’s presence demonstrates, the apparent isolation of plaçage, which cloisters women within its rigid and protective confines, emancipates male children resulting from these relationships. Bon and his son Etienne both reflect the absolute permeability of these boundaries for men who appear white.

⁷Historian Joan Martin states that “Plaçage was the practice that existed in Louisiana (and other French and Spanish slaveholding territories) whereby women of color—the option of legal marriage denied them—entered into long-standing

formalized relationships with white European men.” (57). One such territory, according to Martin, is St. Dominigue (now commonly referred to as Haiti) from where many planters fled with their placées and children to New Orleans during the slave rebellions (62). See also Bryan.

⁸ For further discussion of the shadowy existence of Sutpen’s first wife, see Folsom.

⁹ Martin, for example, emphasizes the financial considerations involved in plaçage arrangements: “Once agreement was reached [between the woman and her suitor], the girl was spoken of as *placée*. This gave her a status similar to an honorable betrothal and secured her future. Custom dictated that the man buy a small house on or near *rue de Rampart* and present it to her. Until the house was finished, he never saw the young woman without her chaperone. It was also understood that he would care for her completely during their life together, provide for any children they might have, and present her with a proper settlement in the event of their separation. Some of the relationships terminated when the man married; others lasted for life. Seldom did any of them end in scandal” (67).

¹⁰ For a detailed discussion of the Coldfield slaves, see Parker, who argues that these women manage “an escape from their prescribed place in a social system that treats them as explicit objects of exchange, buying, selling them even more plainly than Goodhue sells his daughter Ellen” (247).

¹¹ Henry’s declaration, “I will. I will,” bears remarkable resemblance to the ceremonial “I will” or “I do” that takes place within a traditional marriage ceremony.

¹² While unclear whether Judith ever learns of Bon's racial heritage or the fact that he is her half-brother, Judith does learn of the presence of the octoroon woman after Bon's death. Rather than a picture of herself, she finds a picture of the woman and child in "the metal case which she had given him" (286) containing her own photo.

¹³ Continuing to ventriloquize his own father's recollection of events, Mr. Compson again portrays Judith as a "blank shape" in contrast to the octoroon woman whom he continues to define by her sexuality:

the magnolia-faced woman a little plumper now, a woman created of by and for darkness [...] in a soft flowing gown designed not to infer bereavement or widowhood but to dress some interlude of slumbrous and fatal insatiation, of passionate and inexorable hunger of the flesh, walking beneath a lace parasol and followed by a bright gigantic negress carrying a silk cushion [...] who] took the cushion and knelt beside the grave and arranged her skirts and wept. (157)

This description of Bon's mulatta wife highlights her exoticism: her clothing, her finery, her servant, and her emotional state. Mr. Compson, in contrast, describes Judith "who stood just inside the cedars, in the calico dress and the sunbonnet to match it, both faded and shapeless—the calm face, the hands which could plow or cut wood and cook or weave cloth folded before her, standing in the attitude of an indifferent guide in a museum, waiting, probably not even watching" (157-58).

Whereas Judith is cold and stoic, her “face like a mask or like marble” (158), Bon’s wife is highly emotional, watering Bon’s grave with tears (157-58). Judith is dressed poorly; this woman wears fashionable finery. Judith works with her hands and maintains the plantation; this woman passes time and commands attention from in bed, the place in which Mr. Compson’s narrative seeks to confine her:

She stayed a week. She passed the rest of that week in the one remaining room in the house whose bed had linen sheets, passed it in bed, in the new lace and silk and satin negligees subdued to the mauve and lilac of mourning—that room airless and shuttered, impregnated behind the sagging closed blinds with the heavy fainting odor of her flesh, her days, her hours, her garments, of eu-de-cologne from the cloth upon her temples, of the crystal phial which the negress alternated with the fan as she sat beside the bed between trips to the door to receive the trays which Clytie carried up the stairs. (158)

Even in the context of grieving for Bon, this octoroon woman is sexualized, denied the possibility of honest emotion in the face of Judith’s stoicism.

¹⁴ The narrative, moreover, implicates Quentin and his family in shaping Etienne’s white identity. It is Grandfather Compson who, in trying to help Etienne, encourages him to pass. Grandfather Compson helps Judith rescue Etienne from the court where he is taken after an altercation at a “negro ball held in a cabin a few miles from Sutpen’s Hundred” (164)—a ball that mirrors his father’s visits to the octoroon

balls in New Orleans. At this ball, Etienne starts a fight with the negroes and is on the brink of being orally indicted by Justice Jim Hamblett (a minor character who is specifically and repeatedly named in the text, an unusual occurrence for a stock character who does not appear in other Yoknapatawpha fiction) for consorting with Negroes. Hamblett's charge against Etienne is interrupted by Grandfather Compson: "Jim. Jim, *Jim*" (165). Grandfather Compson's interruption causes a change in Jim Hamblett's accusation: "looking at the prisoner now but saying 'white' again even as his voice died away as if the order to stop the voice had been shocked into short circuit, and every face in the room turned toward the prisoner as Hamblett cried, '*What are you? Who and where did you come from?*'" (165). Etienne has no answer to this question though nor to Grandfather Compson's question of his paternal heritage. Grandfather Compson, as he did for Sutpen years earlier when the town turned against him, "got [Etienne] out, quashed the indictment and paid the fine and brought him back to his office and talked to him" (165). When Etienne admits that he does not know his ancestry, Grandfather Compson gives him money to disappear and start a new life. Etienne refuses to pass, returning within a year, however, with legal documentation in the form of a marriage license that certifies his black heritage, flaunting it as though it were a slave's freedman's papers. Marriage thus becomes Etienne's way of acknowledging his blackness and his way of rejecting Judith's and Grandfather Compson's attempts to absorb him into the white community. Etienne's wife thereafter gives birth to a child whom he names "Jim Bond."

I was dreaming, it was like I was looking at our place and suddenly the house and the stable and cabins and trees and all were gone and I was looking at a place flat and empty as the sideboard and it was growing darker and darker and then all of a sudden I wasn't looking at it, I was there: a sort of frightened drove of little tiny figures moving on it, they were Father and Granny and Joby and Louvinia and Loosh and Philadelphy and Ringo and me and we were wandering around on it lost and it getting darker and darker and we forever more without any home to go to because we were forever free

~*The Unvanquished*

**“We were forever free”:
The Collapse of the Household in *The Unvanquished***

Just as the howling freedom of Jim Bond who runs from the burning destruction of the Sutpen house in *Absalom, Absalom!* frightens Quentin Compson, freedom scares Bayard Sartoris throughout *The Unvanquished*. Bayard's freedom dislocates him from the social institutions—specifically marriage and slavery—that he uses to establish and buttress his white male identity in a war-ravished South. Quentin is unable to reconcile his own masculine identity with the Southern traditions he narrates and hears about in the Sutpen family tragedy while he is at Harvard in 1910. Bayard, however, is born into the antebellum South, his father a contemporary of Colonel Sutpen. But similar to Quentin Compson, Bayard is 24 in the final episode of *The Unvanquished*, in his third year of college and studying law. Bayard describes childhood tales of adventure and revenge during the Civil War leading up the culminating episode in which he successfully breaks with the old Southern traditions of violence in favor of legal order in the post-bellum South. Like the various narrative threads of *Absalom, Absalom!*, Bayard's self-reflexive narration raises questions concerning narrative authenticity and rhetorical purpose as he

contemplates the legitimacy of war stories: “old men had been telling young men and boys about wars and fighting before they discovered how to write it down: and what petty precision to quibble about locations in space or in chronology, who to care or insist *Now come, old man, tell the truth: did you see this? were you really there?*” (94, italics in original). Despite his central role in the narration of war and adventure, Bayard is rarely at the center of the action.¹ Instead, he is an observer.

As a *Bildungsroman*, the novel attempts to capture Bayard’s development from a boy to a man courageous enough to repudiate his heritage of violence and vengeance. Bayard thus attempts to identify and define his masculinity. Too young to fight in the Civil War, Bayard did not directly see nor directly experience the potential heroism, violence, or brutality of the battlefield that dominate masculine understandings of identity during these crucial years. He was not really there. Instead, as a boy, he lived on the periphery of the War: drawing maps in the dirt, performing mock battles, hiding under the skirts of his grandmother in the face of Yankee invasion, seeing his female cousin ride as a soldier in the War, watching his grandmother and black childhood playmate swindle the Yankees out of mules and silver, and listening to the stories of others. Bayard does, however, track down and murder his grandmother’s killer. This journey appears to result in his ascent into Southern masculinity and prepares him for the role of “The Sartoris” when his father is murdered.

But Bayard’s ascent into manhood faces extreme challenges in the war-ravished South. In Bayard’s prescient nightmare of “freedom” we see the obliteration

of the Sartoris plantation household that also comprised Sutpen's design: house, plantation, slaves, and a family. Wiped clean from the land are the house, stable, cabins, and trees like the heirloom silver that has been removed from the dining room sideboard and buried in the back yard. People wander together free without any home. Bayard recognizes that without the physical architecture of "home" that gives shape and meaning to the people within a community, there is only freedom. The people in Bayard's dream are his "family"—his father and plantation landowner John Sartoris and his Grandmother, Rosa Millard. But also in this "family" are the black slaves: Bayard's best friend Ringo, Ringo's grandparents Joby and Louvenia, and their son (and Ringo's uncle) Loosh and his wife Philadelphly. Bayard's "family" is, therefore, everyone who lives on the Sartoris plantation, and he dreams of losing this household before he even inherits it.

The house, cabins, and stable that are "gone" in Bayard's dream are the physical structures that represent the relationships and hierarchies imbedded within the ideologies of the household. Bayard therefore recognizes the social construction of slavery and marriage symbolized by these plantation buildings. When Bayard's household is destroyed, literally and figuratively, by the War, he is like other young men of his generation whom Bercaw identifies as struggling to locate a masculine identity. In order to claim his identity as a white Southern man and "The Sartoris," Bayard crafts his masculinity by rebuilding his household through the social containment of his cousin Drusilla Hawk in his narrative.

Bayard attempts to identify and define his masculinity through Drusilla's marriage because she is more of a man than he. As the "unsexed" female soldier,² Drusilla rides with his father's Confederate troop during the War while Bayard stays behind on the remaining vestiges of the Sartoris plantation. I will demonstrate through a careful analysis of Bayard's narration that he adheres to traditional Southern patriarchal understandings of gender and race embodied and enforced by the institutions of marriage and slavery throughout the War and into Reconstruction. Drusilla's unrestricted presence within his father's household after the War continues to challenge Bayard's masculinity. Marriage functions in Bayard's narrative as a controlling mechanism that relocates Drusilla back within the proper boundaries of the patriarchal order. In the final episode of the novel, however, Drusilla demonstrates continued resistance to the boundaries of marriage that attempt to contain her. The death of Bayard's father, who is also Drusilla's husband, threatens once again to release Drusilla from the restrictive confines of marriage. While Bayard appears to delineate his masculinity by establishing a new order of authority as he becomes "The Sartoris," he does so only by vanquishing Drusilla's character from the text, relegating her once and for all to the patriarchal structure of her married brother's household.

DRUSILLA HAWK

Unlike her contemporary character Judith Sutpen in *Absalom, Absalom!* who conforms to the ideal of the Confederate Woman in both actions and appearance after Charles Bon's death,³ Drusilla is freed from the social constraints of white Southern

womanhood by her fiancé's death. Engaged at least a year before the War, Drusilla loses both her fiancé, Gavin, and her father in the battle at Shiloh in April 1862.

Drusilla's mother desires, therefore, that Drusilla conform to the romantic idealization she defines for herself: "the highest destiny of a Southern woman—to be the bride-widow of a lost cause" (191). Rather than becoming a romantic archetype after Gavin's death and leading a life of quiet fortitude and resilience that characterizes other Confederate Women, Drusilla explains to Bayard that she is liberated from the impositions of impending matrimony and social convention:

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 you 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. (100-101)

Drusilla scorns here the very societal design that Bayard mourns—the house, the marriage, the children, the slaves, and even the heirloom silver. With her father and

fiancé dead, Drusilla's much younger brother Denny is the only remaining vestige of the patriarchal order. Just as the Sartoris plantation house was razed by Yankees, so too was the Hawkhurst house, releasing Drusilla from the confinement of the domestic space of the home.

Not only is Drusilla freed from the physical restrictions of the home, but she also sheds all notions of Southern white femininity by acting and dressing like a man.⁴ While Bayard refers to himself as a boy ("I was just fourteen then" [86]), in his first description of Drusilla, Bayard compares her to a man:

Then we all heard the horse at once; we just had time to look when Bobolink came up the road out of the trees and went across the railroad and into the trees again like a bird, with Cousin Drusilla riding astride like a man and sitting straight and light as a willow branch in the wind. They said she was the best woman rider in the country. (88-89)

The contradictory understandings of Drusilla's actions "like a man" with "woman rider" underscore Bayard's increasingly-fragile understanding of cultural identity politics inherent in gender. Drusilla not only rides like a man but she dresses like one too:

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 country; when Granny and I were here that Christmas before the War and Gavin Breckbridge had just given Bobolink to her, they looked fine together;

it didn't need Jingus to say that they were the finest looking couple in Alabama or Mississippi either. But Gavin was killed at Shiloh and so they didn't marry. (89)

Of interest here is Bayard's use of the pronoun "they" referred to as looking "fine together" because of the unclear antecedent. Although the couple would seem to be Gavin and Drusilla, I read the antecedent as Drusilla and Bobolink given the proximity of the description to the name Bobolink. Further, Jingus, the black former slave, would have no cause—indeed it would be inappropriate—to remark on a white couple, whereas his opinion relating to a horse and rider would be accepted by Bayard. It appears, therefore, that Bobolink becomes Gavin's substitute that, rather than symbolically binding Drusilla into the role of wife as an engagement ring would, is the instrument that allows her emancipation.⁵ In other words, even while Gavin is alive, Drusilla is more naturally paired with her horse than with her fiancé and her ability to ride a well-established and admired trait that sets her apart from stereotypes of the white Southern lady.

Drusilla's masculine appearance and actions alarm Bayard. Despite the War, the few women with whom Bayard associates adhere to social conventions and clothing. This contrast is made clear by Granny Millard, who is pictured "in Mrs. Compson's hat sitting bolt upright under the parasol which Ringo held" (103): although acting outside conventional gender roles as she chases Yankees to retrieve her silver and mules, Granny adheres to the expectations of a white Southern woman; Drusilla does not. Drusilla's hair is "cut short; it looked like Father's would when he

would tell Granny about him and the men cutting each other's hair with a bayonet. She was sunburned and her hands were hard and scratched like a man's that works" (91). The multitude of additional details Bayard gives of her appearance—"her short jagged hair and the man's shirt and pants" (99-100) and "her neck that had got thin and hard like her hands" (100)—all contribute to an unclear understanding of Drusilla's gendered identity as critics have documented.⁶ Even Louvinia essentially adheres to conventionally-feminine attire despite "the old hat of Father's which she wore on top of her head rag even when she just stepped out of the kitchen for wood" (7-8).

Drusilla is unlike most Southern mistresses and daughters whom Bercaw explains felt vulnerable and defenseless during war or who adhered "to hierarchies of the plantation household even as their households slowly dissolved around them" (52). Drusilla, for example, successfully defends Bobolink from the Yankees by threatening to shoot him rather than letting the Yankees take him—all while wearing her Sunday dress. Indeed, in young Denny's rendition of Drusilla's confrontation with the Yankees, Drusilla's actions evoke hero worship in the young boy for her courage:

When They come to burn the house Dru grabbed the pistol and run out here, she had on her Sunday dress and Them right behind her, she run in here and she jumped on Bobolink bareback without even waiting for the bridle and one of Them right there in the door hollering Stop and Dru said Get away or I'll ride you down and Him hollering Stop Stop

with his pistol out too [. . .] and Dru leaned down to Bobolink's ear and said Kill him Bob and the Yankee jumped back just in time; the lot was full of Them too and Dru stopped Bobolink and jumped down in her Sunday dress and put the pistol to Bobolink's ear and said I cant shoot you all because I haven't enough bullets and it wouldn't do any good anyway but I wont need but one shot for the horse and which shall it be? (90)

While Drusilla's emotional attachment to Bobolink is evident in this passage, Drusilla is not a sentimentalist. Nor is she a martyr. Instead, Drusilla instinctively counters the violent actions of pillaging and burning her home with violence of her own that shock the Yankees into retreat. The last images of Drusilla riding Bobolink amidst the melee between the emancipated slaves and the Yankees at the river takes this imagery one step further for Bayard depicts her as a pistol: "Drusilla leaning forward a little and taut as a pistol hammer holding Bobolink" (104). This description highlights her masculine appearance and capabilities. Drusilla thus chooses to be a soldier rather than a bride.

THE COLLAPSE OF THE HOUSEHOLD

Emancipation also contributes to the collapse of the Sartoris household. Loosh claims authority from John Sartoris and establishes himself as the head of his own household granted by his marriage and abandons the Sartoris family. The tension that Bercaw identifies between black men's understanding of the family and white planter's understanding of the household came into recognizable conflict when

slavery ruptured. Black men like Loosh had to choose between the option of staying on the plantations with their biological families, which stunted their own masculinity, or migrate North in a manner that demonstrated their new-found freedom:

Young men broke away from the plantation community and ran for the Union camps while women, children, and the elderly remained on the plantations. The young men laid claim to their bodies and to the right of self-determination, forcefully denying slaveholders' rights of mastery. Upending the plantation household, they also appear to have walked away from their own households. (Bercaw 25)

Loosh is one of these black men who not only abandons the Sartoris "household" (and discloses the location of the family's buried silver in the backyard), but also deserts his parents in his quest to establish his independence:

"Loosh," Granny said. "Are you going too?"

"Yes," Loosh said. "I going. I done been freed; God's own angel proclaimed me free and gonter general me to Jordan. I dont belong to John Sartoris now; I belongs to me and God."

"But the silver belongs to John Sartoris," Granny said. "Who are you to give it away?"

"You ax me that?" Loosh said. "Where John Sartoris? Whyn't he come and ax me that? Let God ax John Sartoris who the man name that give me to him. Let the man that buried me in the black dark ax

that of the man what dug me free.” He wasn’t looking at us; I dont think he could even see us. (74-75)

For Loosh, the Yankees’ emancipation has freed and uncovered his individual identity making him master of his own body rather than a dependent and the property of John Sartoris. Not only does Loosh leave the plantation, but he also takes his wife Philadelphia with him in order to secure his own nuclear family and prove his masculinity by assuming the role as head of his own household, a role unavailable to him as a slave. Although Granny questions Philadelphia’s loyalty—“Dont you know he’s leading you into misery and starvation?”—Philadelphia demonstrates that her allegiance lies not with the Sartoris family but instead with her husband: “I knows hit. I knows whut they tole him cant be true. But he my husband. I reckon I got to go with him” (75). Philadelphia thus follows Loosh because he is her husband, not because she necessarily desires to leave the plantation.

Bayard also witnesses conflict between white and black understandings of the household when his grandmother attempts to help a former slave woman with a child who cannot keep up with the other emancipated slaves migrating North like Loosh and Philadelphia. Bayard’s grandmother explicitly juxtaposes marriage and slavery in her conversation with the hurt African American woman highlighting both institutions in terms of ownership:

“Is your husband with them?” Granny said.

“Yessum,” the woman said. “They’s all there.”

“Who do you belong to?” Granny said. Then she didn’t answer. She squatted there in the dust, crouched over the baby. “If I give you something to eat, will you turn around and go back home?” (84)

Just as she did in her conversation with Philadelphly, Granny blurs the distinctions of marriage and slavery by asking the woman who she “belongs to.” Granny’s question demonstrates adherence to traditional patriarchal understandings of both race and gender as located with the household: this woman either belongs to her white master or she belongs to her husband. The option of independence is denied to her as a black woman with a dependent child. She is abandoned by her husband and black community who race North because she cannot keep up. Nevertheless, like Philadelphly, this woman rejects Granny’s order, “You go back home, girl” (85), and instead attempts to catch up to her husband. She does not have a “home” to which she can return.

Bayard’s journey with his Grandmother and Ringo to Hawkhurst when their household is destroyed by Yankees thus parallels the slaves migration to the river Jordan. On his journey, Bayard witnesses the migration of freed slaves who, like Loosh and Philadelphly, follow the Yankee army to the river, which they believe to be the river Jordan, the passage to freedom and the promised land:

We couldn’t count them: men and women carrying children who couldn’t walk and carrying old men and women who should have been at home waiting to die. They were singing, walking along the road

singing, not even looking to either side; the dust didn't even settle for two days because all that night they still passed [...] Going to Jordan, they told me. Going to cross Jordan—. (91)

Bayard also observes the destruction of households across the South.⁷ Just like his own, white households have collapsed and family homes burned leaving white women and children living in the former slave cabins:

We went on. It seemed like we went slower than ever now, with the dustcloud behind us and the burned houses and gins and thrown down fences on either side and the white women and children—we never saw a nigger at all—watching us from the nigger cabins where they lived now like we lived at home. (82-83)

The migration of former slaves throughout the South upsets Bayard's understanding of his identity. As the son of a Southern planter and aristocrat, Bayard grows up understanding and relying upon the ideologies of the household. But the War and emancipation upset this doctrine. Like other men of his generation, Bayard can no longer assume mastery over African-American men and women, yeoman farmers, or even over women. This utter collapse of the Southern household is dramatized in Bayard's narration of the melee at the river. In this scene all understandings of identity—Yankee and Southern, black and white, masculine and feminine, man and animal—break down. Bayard, Granny, Ringo and Bayard are in the wagon, Drusilla is on Bobolink, and, as they approach the crossing where the emancipated slaves have also congregated, the Yankees blow the bridge:

It was sunset; now there was a high bright rosy glow quiet beyond the trees and shining on the river, and now we could see it plain—the tide of niggers damned back from the entrance to the bridge by a detachment of cavalry, the river like a sheet of rosy glass beneath the delicate arch of the bridge where the tail of the Yankee column was just crossing. They were in silhouette, running tiny and high above the placid water; I remember the horses' and mules' heads all mixed up among the bayonets, and the barrels of cannon tilted up and kind of rushing slow across the high peaceful rosy air like split-cane clothespins being jerked along a clothesline, and the singing everywhere up and down the river bank, with the voices of the women coming out of it thin and high: “Glory! Glory! Hallelujah!” (104-05)

The river is a topographical boundary that functions as a physical and symbolic line of demarcation between freedom and bondage that the former slaves refer to as “Jordan.”⁸ But the river also becomes a boundary that “frees” Bayard from his understanding of the household because the river not only symbolizes the separation of the slaves from white households, it is also in the midst of this chaos in the river that Drusilla disappears. After ensuring the safety of the wagon and its occupants, Bayard explains, “Then she was gone, we passed her, turned and holding Bobolink like a rock again and leaning down and talking to him and patting his cheek; she was gone” (107).

The melee at the river thus marks Bayard's loss of inheritance. Young men like Bayard, Bercaw explains "suffered the most extreme reactions" to the loss of ingrained power structures imbedded in the household: "They, like their mothers and sisters, saw defeat as betrayal. The older generation had failed them, leaving them without their true inheritance. In many ways, they could not mature because they could never assume mastery over slaves" (82). Indeed, Bayard's inheritance is wiped out: his father is away fighting at war, his home has been burned, his literal inheritance of the family silver stolen by Yankees, and his role and position of authority over slaves and women undermined by emancipation and collapsing gender roles. This latter is ultimately demonstrated by Bayard's discussion of Drusilla. While Bayard is a child, Drusilla is already a "man" who can ride well enough to be a soldier, an occupation not possible for him. Further, when Bayard notes a second time Drusilla's plea to him to ask his father if she can ride with his troop, Bayard says, "But I didn't tell Father. Maybe I forgot it" (189). Bayard did not forget her request though; instead, he failed to pass on her request because of his own jealousy that a girl is more of a "man" than he is. This is confirmed when a year after the melee at the river, Bayard and his family receive a letter from Aunt Louisa at Hawkhurst: "she had been missing from home for almost a year now and at last Aunt Louisa found out that [Drusilla] was with Father away in Carolina like she had told me, riding with the troop like she was a man" (149). Thus Drusilla secures a position for herself as a soldier in his father's troop and fighting Yankees in Carolina as a "man," a position unattainable for Bayard.

BAYARD'S FAILED ASCENT INTO MASCULINITY

In contrast to Drusilla who becomes an active participant in the War after being freed from the confines of impending matrimony, Bayard remains primarily an observer and does not take over the role of the head of the household during his father's tenure at war. For example, after Drusilla's disappearance, Bayard's narrative focuses on his grandmother and Ringo's business of defrauding the Yankee army of mules and horses. Bayard functions merely as a reporter of events, neither having nor taking any direct part in the action of the story. Instead, Ringo assumes the position of authority within the household. Ringo becomes Granny's partner in crime in such a way that completely leaves Bayard out—doing the accounting (“Ringo closed the book and got the new receipts together” [138]), drawing the map, forging the orders from Colonel Dick (“Ringo had learned to copy it so that I don't believe that Colonel Dick himself could have told the difference” [127]), and scouting and planning the forays (“all they had to do was to put in the right regiment and whatever number of mules Ringo had examined and approved” [127]). Indeed, Ringo and Bayard switch roles within the household:

Father was right; he was smarter than me; he had even learned to draw, who had declined even to try to learn to print his name when Loosh was teaching me; who had learned to draw immediately by merely taking up the pen, who had no affinity for it and never denied he had not but who learned to draw simply because somebody had to. (125)

Invoking his father's name in conjunction with Ringo's intelligence belies Bayard's position as an outsider, associating himself instead with Loosh, Ringo's uncle, who had attempted to teach Bayard to write. That Ringo learned to draw "simply because somebody had to" demonstrates, moreover, that Bayard was either unable or unwilling to do so. Such comparisons continue throughout the war years as if Bayard is the household dependent and Ringo is the head of the household while John Sartoris is at war: "he had got to treating me like Granny did—like he and Granny were the same age instead of him and me" (126), "he just stood there, thin and taller than me against the light from the window" (127), and "He turned his head a little toward me without moving. 'Get the pen and ink,' he said" (127). Ringo also successfully distracts the Yankee soldiers when they realize they are duped while Bayard merely sits silently in the wagon with Granny. Indeed, in the Yankee lieutenant's response to Granny's claim of being a defenseless woman, Bayard is not even perceived as a threat: "Defenseless! God help the North if Davis and Lee had ever thought of the idea of forming a brigade of grandmothers and nigger orphans and invading us with it" (144). Bayard is therefore left out and excluded from the excitement and thrill of defrauding the Yankees and participating in an adventure of war and adventure in contrast to Ringo's literacy, authority, and agency.

Bayard's lack of masculinity—his understanding of himself as a child without responsibility ("I was just fifteen" [153])—is brought to crisis during Granny's fatal confrontation with Grumby. As Granny prepares to confront Grumby, Bayard sits in the wagon crying rather than acting like a "man" as Granny requests of him and

Ringo: “I would be sixteen years old before another year was out, yet I sat there in the wagon, crying” (152). Granny, moreover, makes clear to Bayard that she too, like Drusilla, is fighting in the War in ways that he is both unable and unwilling to do: “You never cried when you knew [your father] was going into a battle, did you?” (152-53). By comparing herself to Colonel Sartoris, Granny’s death in battle, with the “smell of powder” surrounding her body reinforces Bayard’s lack of masculinity as he looks at the body of his elderly grandmother: “she looked like she had collapsed, like she had been made out of a lot of little thin dry light sticks notched together and braced with cord, and now the cord had broken and all the little sticks had collapsed in a quiet heap on the floor, and somebody had spread a clean and faded calico dress over them” (154). Looking at the frailty of his grandmother’s body clothed not in a soldier’s uniform nor in the masculine clothing that Drusilla wears but instead by the femininity of the calico dress, Bayard claims for the first time masculine power as he requests a pistol from Uncle Buck: “I just want a pistol. Or a gun.” (159).

In a scene that anticipates the competition between Zach Edmonds and Lucas Beauchamp in *Go Down, Moses*, Bayard finally confronts his grandmother’s murderer, Grumby across a loaded pistol. Bayard’s chase has become so burdensome that Grumby’s own men turn him over to Bayard, and they toss the pistol down between Bayard and Grumby in an attempt to even the odds between them. Bayard, however, sits motionless holding Uncle Buck’s pistol, while Grumby gains possession of the weapon, fires on his own men, and then fires two shots at Bayard.

While Bayard continues to sit motionless, thinking “*In a minute I will hear my fingers breaking, but I have got to hold onto it*” (183), Ringo acts. Ringo with an “open pocket knife in his hand” attacks Grumby, straddling his back, while Bayard “tried to raise the pistol only my arm wouldn’t move” (183). It is not until Grumby shakes off Ringo and turns his back, running, that Bayard is able to act: “then my arm began to come up with the pistol and he turned and ran. [...] my arm had come up and now I could see Grumby’s back (he didn’t scream, he never made a sound) and the pistol both at the same time and the pistol was level and steady as a rock” (183). Using the same language that he used to describe Drusilla in his last sighting of her in the melee at the river (“she turned and holding Bobolink like a rock” [107]), Bayard describes the pistol and himself as a rock. By shooting Grumby, albeit in the back, Bayard appears to have attained the power of his masculinity through this act of violence and vengeance.

RECONSTRUCTION OF THE HOUSEHOLD THROUGH MARRIAGE

Bayard’s momentary ascension to “manhood” by killing Grumby, nailing Grumby’s body to the door of the compass where Granny was murdered, and leaving Grumby’s hand on Granny’s grave is only temporary. Returning home, Bayard and Ringo learn that John Sartoris and Drusilla have also returned home from war and are out searching for them. Bayard thus retreats from his masculinity, returning to the position of a child within the reconstructed household with its conventional power structures in place. Within this new household, albeit a former slave cabin, his father reclaims his position as the head of the household: Joby, Louvenia and Ringo

maintain their position as family servants, and Drusilla becomes a stand-in for the mother figure who protected him and whom he lost with Granny's death. Indeed, when Bayard learns that "Father had tried to make Drusilla wait at home but she had refused" (185), Bayard couches her actions in terms of Drusilla's maternal concern for him rather than in competitive terms. This is further demonstrated when Bayard awakes:

Father holding me and Ringo and I held to him and then it was
 Drusilla kneeling and holding me and Ringo and we could smell the
 rain in her hair too while she was hollering at Uncle Buck to hush.
 Father's hand was hard; I could see his face beyond Drusilla and I was
 trying to say "Father. Father" while she was holding me and Ringo
 with the rain smell of her hair all around us and Uncle Buck hollering
 [...]

"Hush! Hush!" Drusilla said. "That's all done, all finished.
 You, Uncle Buck!" (185-86)

On her knees, holding Bayard and Ringo, Drusilla transforms from a soldier into a maternal figure. Having apparently known no mother and raised only by Granny who is now dead, Bayard looks to Drusilla for comfort and receives it. Contrasting the scent of rain in her hair with the hardness of his father's hand, Bayard highlights her femininity for the first time in any of his descriptions of her, never mentioning her masculine appearance and clothing. She becomes, moreover, his protector, sheltering him from the violence of his own actions rather than celebrating his vengeance as

“John Sartoris’ boy.” Instead, she silences Uncle Buck as though the horrors of his actions should remain unspeakable. Thus, in the arms of the maternal Drusilla, Bayard regresses from the status of a “man” to the status of a sheltered child and dependent.

But these household power structures that comfort Bayard do not hold in the developing days of Reconstruction. Drusilla does not continue to conform to the role of the mother, nor does she revert to traditional notions of the Southern woman, confining herself to the domestic space. Instead, she works “with Joby and Ringo and Father and me like another man, with her hair shorter than it had been at Hawkhurst and her face sunburned from riding in the weather and her body thin from living like soldiers lived” (192). Not only does she work side-by-side with both white and black men, she is aligned more directly with the work of Ringo and Joby than with the work of Bayard: “I filled the bucket at the spring and went back to the log-yard where Drusilla and Ringo and Joby were feeding the bandsaw and the blindfolded mule going round and round in the sawdust” (195). As Yaeger points out in her discussion of this scene, “Working in the yard alongside two black male laborers was a role forbidden to young women in Faulkner’s own world, with its paranoid rendition of the South’s Afro-phobic romance, in which black men become the hallucinatory mirrors of a predatory white economy” (“Faulkner’s” 215-16). Drusilla is not, however, someone to be protected from black men because she has rendered herself masculine in both appearance and actions: “Drusilla standing there in the sawdust and shavings, in her dirty sweated overalls and shirt and brogans, with her face sweat-

streaked with sawdust and her short hair yellow with it" (195-96). To end this gender confusion and Drusilla's threat to Bayard's masculinity, Drusilla must be relocated back within the proper confines of the household through the ritual of marriage to Colonel John Sartoris.

Bayard initially perceives Drusilla "beaten" not by marriage but by the arrival of Aunt Louisa with the dresses: "that's what beat Drusilla," he says, "the trunks" (200). While critics have all taken Bayard's word that it is the dresses that beat Drusilla,⁹ this is not a trustworthy conclusion. Bayard has already displayed his bias about Drusilla in his descriptions of her appearance. Although Dwyer argues that Bayard comments on Drusilla's attempt "to look and act 'like a man'" "a number of times, but without any hint of disapproval" (61), I disagree. The sheer number of times that Bayard mentions Drusilla's appearance implies his extreme disapproval. Bayard mentions Drusilla riding astride two times, her short hair eight times, her male attire six times, her hard and scratched hands four times, her sunburned skin five times, and her thinness two times. The descriptions of her clothing decrease, though, once she is forced by her mother to change into a dress and stay inside the house. Such characterizations are indicative of Bayard's continued jealousy of her, which is why he states that her defeat is due to the dresses. Like the repetitive nature of Bayard's descriptions of Drusilla, Bayard similarly repeats at least six times that the dresses "beat her." "But she was beaten," he says, "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). But Drusilla has already demonstrated that wearing a dress fails to

disempower her as she defends Bobolink against the Yankees by threatening to shoot him rather than letting the Yankees take him—all while wearing her Sunday dress. Even John Sartoris fails to see her as anything less than a soldier when she attempts to hide herself and her skirts from him: “‘What’s a dress?’ [...] ‘It dont matter. Come. Get up, soldier’” (201). It is not the clothing that “normalizes” Drusilla’s behavior but it is the patriarchal game imposed by the ladies of Yoknapatawpha in the form of marriage.

As it is inconceivable to the arbiters of Yoknapatawpha morality (all of whom are married women) that Drusilla could sleep in Sartoris’s tent or in his home after the War without having sex, Drusilla is ultimately forced to conform to the role of wife despite her protests against marriage. “Cant you understand,” she tells her mother, “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?” (191). But the ladies of Yoknapatawpha reintroduce the patriarchal game that Drusilla cannot win. “Drusilla broke,” Bayard states, “they beat her. Because she was strong; [...] 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” (202). That game, of course, is Aunt Louisa’s version of a shotgun wedding with Drusilla rather than John Sartoris as her opponent. Drusilla’s response, Bayard reports, is one of defeat: “I heard the light sharp sound when Drusilla’s head went down between her flungout arms on the table” (203). Sartoris too acknowledges that Aunt Louisa’s challenge is Drusilla’s downfall—but not his own—as he states, “They

have beat you, Drusilla” (203). Commenting upon this scene, Towner argues that Bayard “understands the injustice of gender politics that force his father and Drusilla to marry; he must run from the room when he sees the trap close on her” (*Introduction* 47); I disagree. Bayard instead relies upon these gender politics to relocate Drusilla back within the proper confines of his father’s household. All parties recognize that John Sartoris is willing to marry Drusilla in order to satisfy the patriarchal impulses of the women, and thereafter both he and Drusilla will be expected to act according to social strictures. As John Sartoris’s young cousin-in-law, Drusilla may be able to wear muddy brogans, be sunburned with scratched and hardened hands, and have straw in her hair, but the wife of Colonel Sartoris will not.

POLITICAL RECONSTRUCTION OF THE HOUSEHOLD

Bayard’s desire to reconstruct the Sartoris plantation through Drusilla’s engagement and marriage parallels his father’s attempt to rebuild his political household. Bayard’s anxieties are caused by Drusilla’s behavior and actions outside her proscribed role within the household, which stunt Bayard’s ability to locate his identity in the post-war South. While his father seems secure in his role as the head of the household, his political power within the larger community is threatened by the political campaign of former slave Cassius Q. Benbow for town marshal. As Bercaw points out, “without the plantation household, domestic authority no longer translated into public authority. Emancipation and Reconstruction extended state regulation into what had always been defined as a man’s private domain. Stepping into the household, the Federal government freed men’s slaves” (77). This juxtaposition

between Bayard's attempt to reconstruct the household through Drusilla's marriage and his father's attempt to rebuild his authority as head of the household highlights the struggle that white men faced to reclaim the power structure afforded them through the ideologies of the household. While white men were attempting to recreate their households, black men such as Benbow, as Bercaw points out, were also attempting to build their political freedom as heads of their own households:

The fear of black male suffrage haunted white southerners from the moment of their defeat. Suffrage, they assumed, would follow race, not class. [...] Therefore, while upholding the [black] nuclear family with one hand, many planters worked systematically to disrupt it with the other. Black families might be accepted, but only on certain terms. As far as planters were concerned, acceptance did not mean a relinquishment of control. (129)

In other words, black families were trying to establish their own "households" that would grant black men political power in the larger social structure in the same way as the household afforded white men political influence.

These two understandings of the household clash violently on Drusilla's wedding day. While the fourteen women of the community led by Mrs. Compson congregate at the Sartoris home in an effort to study, evaluate, judge, and ultimately decide Drusilla's fate, the men assemble in town to control and staunch the racialized nature of its political reconstruction: "They were building Jefferson back, the courthouse and the stores, but it was more than that which Father and the other men

were doing: it was something which he would not let Drusilla or me or Ringo go into town to see” (198). It is not until Ringo sneaks into town that the implications of John Sartoris’s business in town is made clear. “I aint a nigger anymore. I done been abolished,” Ringo tells Bayard, showing him a dollar signed by the acting town marshall, Cassius Q. Benbow: “Uncle Cash that druv the Benbow carriage twell he run off with the Yankees two years ago. He back now and he gonter be elected Marshall of Jefferson. That’s what Marse John and the other white folks is so busy about” (199). The fact that Benbow, like Loosh, had followed the Yankees two years earlier resonates with Bayard, instigating his response: “‘A nigger?’ I said. ‘A nigger?’” (199). Although Benbow returns, his return does not integrate him back into the household structure. Instead, Benbow returns in a political capacity that dislocates former understandings of the household and proves him independent of white mastery.

The ritual of marriage is not what re-establishes the political household but the ritual of violence that establishes political mastery. “Mastery, at its most basic level,” argues Bercaw, “relied on the use of brute force” (84) in the antebellum South:

Many white men, therefore, perceived violence as a cornerstone of civil order—as state-sanctioned behavior. Before the War, violence was the legitimate right of all white men, regardless of status. A white man, whether master or hireling, could legally use force against any black southerner by serving on a slave patrol or local militia. In whippings, beatings, and sexual assaults, white men expressed their

right to rule. Moreover, the proper use of violence represented a noble virtue. Any questioning of a man's honor called for a duel or a beating. Ritualized violence thus served as the foundation of chivalry and honor. The display of force secured white men's control over all others—both black and white. (85)

John Sartoris and Drusilla's trip to town to marry turns into a ritual of violence resulting in the death of two Yankee carpetbaggers who attempt to railroad the election. The consequence is not that Drusilla comes home from town married; instead, she returns, to the horror of the ladies waiting to greet the bridal couple with a reception, not as wife, a title designed to cleanse her of the impurities of her improper conduct by containing her within the household, but as "voting commissioner" (207) despite her dress, wreath and veil.¹⁰

The political clashes again and again in Bayard's narration highlight the reciprocal relationship between marriage and gender and class structures held in place by the ideologies of the household. In addition to freed blacks, John Sartoris attempts to establish his dominance over white yeoman farmers. Bercaw explains that after the War, "planter men confronted class conflict" (79) over both property and political rights: "As the unity among white men dissolved, planter men responded by stripping poorer men of their claims to mastery" (79). Because of the collapse of the household and the political power that emanated from that household, John Sartoris again resorts to violence to quash threats to his political dominance from yeoman farmers:

I watched him clean the derringer and reload it and we learned that the dead man was almost a neighbor, a hill man who had been in the first infantry regiment when it voted Father out of command: and we never to know if the man actually intended to rob Father or not because Father had shot too quick, but only that he had a wife and several children in a dirt-floored cabin in the hills, to whom Father the next day sent some money and she (the wife) walked into the house two days later while we were sitting at the dinner table and flung the money at Father's face. (221)

This poor neighbor, like black men, now has a household equal in structure to that of John Sartoris because of his marriage and dependents that grants him equal political power. The only means through which Sartoris is able to establish his authority is through violence and the organization of the “night riders” (222) rather than the traditional structure of the household that once secured his political authority.

John Sartoris nevertheless attempts to rebuild his household and relocate political authority through his home. Indeed, his movement of the election in town to his home after the aborted wedding—“This election will be held out at my home” (207)—demonstrates Sartoris's understanding of his household as the center of political activism. He, like Bayard, requires the physical architecture of his rebuilt house to demonstrate his dominance: “Father had rebuilt the house too, on the same blackened spot, over the same cellar, where the other had burned, only larger, much larger” (220). This house, Drusilla explains to Bayard, “was the aura of Father's

dream” (220). Drusilla thus compares this “dream” to Sutpen’s design but on a larger scale: “But his dream is just Sutpen. John’s is not. He is thinking of this whole country which he is trying to raise by its bootstraps (223). As we saw in *Absalom, Absalom!*, Sutpen, used as a basis of comparison for Drusilla and Bayard here in *The Unvanquished*, is intent on rebuilding his own design after the War by establishing his own household through a wife and male heir (although not necessarily in that order). John Sartoris, in contrast, has a house, a wife, and a male heir, Bayard. As Nancy Dew Taylor states, John Sartoris “concerns himself with those things that will create his and his son’s future: house, town, politics, a kind of recreation of the past in order to continue their life as he envisions it” (356). Sartoris, therefore, is intent on rebuilding his home as the center of political power that secures his dominance over blacks and poor whites alike through his run for State legislature.

DRUSILLA’S RESISTANCE

Drusilla is ultimately absorbed into the household and appears to be controlled by her marriage to John Sartoris. Mrs. Habersham, Bayard explains, “herded them into her carriage and drove them back to town and dug her husband out of his little dim hole in the new bank and made him sign Father’s peace bond for killing the two carpet baggers, and took Father and Drusilla to the minister herself and saw that they were married” (220). Drusilla, however, continually pushes against the boundaries of marriage that seek to contain her, refusing the role of maternal step-mother that Bayard desires of her. Bayard must ultimately acknowledge that marriage does not succeed in making Drusilla into a lady. Forced into a marriage not of her choosing in

an attempt to contain her discursive nature, Drusilla becomes a caricature of the Southern belle in his narration. Wearing a dress by Sartoris's decree (221) and unable to partake in masculine activities, Drusilla is uninterested in the feminine pursuits allotted to her as a married woman. Her yellow ball gown and "short jagged hair" (228) serve, moreover, as conflicting reminders for Bayard that the ideologies of the household have failed to mold Drusilla into a lady. Even after her marriage, Bayard still compares her to a man: "She was already running, the skirts she did not like to wear lifted almost to her knees, her legs beneath it running as boys run just as she rode like men ride" (224).

Drusilla also pushes against her role as a married woman by sexually challenging Bayard's masculinity. During a walk in the garden with Bayard (Bayard is now 24 [224]), Drusilla declares her belief that men achieve honor when they die for something important, conflating masculine honor with sexual potency:

There are worse things than killing men, Bayard. There are worse things than being killed. Sometimes I think the finest thing that can happen to a man is to love something, a woman preferably, well, hard hard hard, then to die young because he believed what he could not help but believe and was what he could not (could not? would not) help but be. (227)

This apparent allusion to the Confederate beliefs and themes present throughout *The Unvanquished* becomes a metaphor for the masculinity of the "hard hard hard" power of masculinity that Drusilla is now denied because of her marriage. Drusilla,

therefore, issues a challenge to Bayard's masculinity with her shocking demand, "Kiss me, Bayard" (227): is he willing to act on his sexuality and risk facing his father in a potentially deadly confrontation?¹¹ Bayard's outraged refusal based on her marriage to his father—"No. You are Father's wife" (227) underscores his reliance on the ideologies of the household. As his father's wife, Bayard expects Drusilla to fill the role of the maternal figure and, as such, this kiss would therefore be incestuous. But Drusilla does not adhere to these same ideologies.¹²

Forced into a culturally written script of marriage that disempowers her, Drusilla is deprived of the emotional or physical attention from her husband promised by that same script. This seduction is apparently a failed attempt on Drusilla's part to provoke a physical and emotional reaction within her marriage and even perhaps a potentially deadly confrontation between father and son. Bayard thus describes Drusilla as the temptress Eve seducing him with a kiss back into the world of violence and vengeance from which she had once tried to protect him when she adhered to the role of mother: "I thought then of the woman of thirty, the symbol of the ancient and eternal Snake and of the men who have written of her, and I realized then the immitigable chasm between all life and all print—that those who can, do, those who cannot and suffer enough because they cant, write about it. Then I was free" (228). Bayard's statement here begins as an indictment of Drusilla as the seductress, but digresses again into a meditation on his own narrative authority and his freedom. What is it that Bayard is unable to do, what action is he unable to perform, that he instead can only write about? The obvious answer lies in Bayard's

unwillingness or inability to respond to Drusilla's seduction as well as his own masculinity both of which are outside the boundaries of proper household conduct.

Having succumbed to Drusilla's second demand that he kiss her and dismayed at Drusilla's actions, Bayard once again draws upon traditional notions of patriarchy in an effort to reinforce marital control of Drusilla. After this kiss, Drusilla removes a verbena sprig, the "only scent you could smell above the smell of horses and courage" and hence the only one Drusilla ever wears (220) and places it in Bayard's jacket. "Now I must tell Father," Bayard tells her and Drusilla quickly agrees, encouraging him to do so: "Yes," she quickly responds, "You must tell him" (229) and repeats, after kissing him again, "Tell John. Tell him tonight" (229). Bayard's father, however, fails to respond to Bayard's admission in an expected manner. While Bayard stands straight at attention "like soldiers stand" (230, 231), Sartoris, the man who has "killed too much" (231) and from whom Bayard expects a violent response to this infidelity, responds to Bayard's revelation only with "Hah?," a response that completely dismays Bayard: "I looked at him, watched him fill both glasses and this time I knew it was worse with him than not hearing: it didn't even matter" (231). The "it" that does not matter is not just the kiss but is Drusilla herself and their marriage.¹³

This lack of response from such a man as Sartoris strongly suggests that Drusilla and her sexuality are of absolutely no concern to him. James Hinkle and Robert McCoy read this response differently, arguing that Bayard tells his father not of the kiss but of the danger posed by Redmond: "Col. Sartoris's response would

make no sense if the subject were kissing. [. . .] If Bayard had told his father he had just kissed his wife (or his wife had just kissed him), this response by Col. Sartoris would be literally incredible, an absolute non-sequitur” (190-91). Their reading assumes Sartoris’s adherence to the traditional Southern code of marital behavior, a highly questionable assumption. Although Faulkner himself said in an interview at the University of Virginia that Sartoris “had stamped the whole tone of that household with his, the father’s, importance, that nobody would have dared tamper with his wife, for instance” (Gwynn 256), Faulkner was twenty years removed from the tale. The tale, rather than the teller, gives no indication that Sartoris has—or ever had—more interest in Drusilla than he has in any soldier or related dependent within his household or that he views Bayard as anything other than a boy and therefore not a threat to his dominance. These interpretations rely on the presumption that sex is inherent within a marriage or that a man will automatically assert his conjugal rights in a marriage or his masculine prerogative in certain extra-marital opportunities.¹⁴ As Bayard comes to realize, Sartoris’s attention to Drusilla is more paternal than connubial: he sat “at the head of the table and repl[ied] to Drusilla as she talked with a sort of feverish and glittering volubility—to reply now and then to her with that courteous intolerant pride which had lately become a little forensic” (230). Sartoris’s “forensic” attention to Drusilla has more political motivation behind it than sexuality attached to it, demonstrating to Bayard that the marriage fails to function as a socially-prescribed cure for those acting outside the boundaries of respectability. Hence, Sartoris’s unexpected lack of response, his failure to engage in a violent

defense of his wife's sexuality, and his apparent indifference to her potential infidelity demonstrate to Bayard that his father is not the potent and virile man he is purported to be within his household (perhaps best symbolized by the "dead cigar" on his desk [230]). Instead, his father is more concerned with establishing his dominance and virility within the political household.

BAYARD AS "THE SARTORIS"

The death thereafter of Bayard's father, Drusilla's husband, threatens to once again release Drusilla from the restrictive confines of marriage. Drusilla is unable, however, to break free of the expectations imposed by widowhood. Unable to claim the power of masculinity for herself, Drusilla attempts to bequeath its power to Bayard through the pistols just as she had earlier attempted to convey to Bayard the power of a dream through the imagery of a pistol. "A dream is not a very safe thing to be near, Bayard," she says: "I know; I had one once. It's like a loaded pistol with a hair trigger: if it stays alive long enough, somebody is going to be hurt. But if it's a good dream, it's worth it" (223).¹⁵ Drusilla thus attempts to transfer to Bayard the passion and desire that she witnessed and experienced during the War, the willingness to suffer, sacrifice, and die for one's beliefs. Unable this time to shed her yellow ball gown for men's clothing, Bayard again portrays Drusilla as the seductress promoting violence and vengeance for his father's death. She becomes the "Greek amphora priestess of a succinct and formal violence" (219) who attempts to initiate Bayard into manhood:

her voice whispering into that quiet death-filled room with a passionate and dying fall: “Bayard.” She faced me, she was quite near; [...] she stood holding out to me, one in either hand, the two dueling pistols. “Take them, Bayard,” she said, in that 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: “Take them. I have kept them for you. I give them to you. Oh you will thank me, you will remember me who put into your hands what they say is an attribute only of God’s, who took what belongs to heaven and gave it to you. Do you feel them? the long true barrels true as justice, the triggers (you have fired them) quick as retribution, the two of them slender and invincible and fatal as the physical shape of love?” (237)

The eroticism of this scene reads as a virginal bridal bedroom scene as Drusilla offers Bayard the pistols rather than a viewing of Sartoris’s dead body.¹⁶ But Bayard rejects her offerings because he continues to adhere to the ideologies of the household governing both his behavior and Drusilla’s. As such, Bayard again rejects his step-mother’s attempts to seduce him with the violence and vengeance that ignited his father’s political passion within the household.

Drusilla’s sanity is ultimately sacrificed for Bayard’s masculinity. In response to Bayard’s rejection, Drusilla erupts into laughter. “the laughter rising, becoming a scream yet still remaining laughter, screaming with laughter, trying herself to deaden

the sound by putting her hand over her mouth, the laughter spilling between her fingers like vomit, the incredulous betrayed eyes still watching me across the hand” (239). Bayard interprets this laughter as “hysteria,” projecting onto Drusilla the medically and historically female affliction of the unsatisfied or wandering womb.¹⁷ Hysteria is, however, as Elaine Showalter states, “a form of expression, a body language for people who otherwise might not be able to speak or even to admit what they feel” (7). While Freud classed hysteria as “narrative incoherence” (11), Showalter argues that “hystories,” being narratives, have their own intertextuality, their own “conventions, stereotypes, and structures” (6), offering “insights into language, narrative and representation” (7). Hysteria “tells a story” that can be read by “specialists in understanding and interpreting stories” (6). Drusilla’s laughter is thus her attempt to break through Bayard’s confining narration. Despite his legal training and meditations on the writing process, Bayard is unable or unwilling to understand or interpret the laughter because to do so would require that he recognize patriarchal responsibility for Drusilla’s condition. This laughter, in H el ene Cixous’ words, is Drusilla’s attempt to speak, to break through the patriarchal structures of marriage and narratives controlling her: “it is volcanic; as it is written it brings about an upheaval of the old property crust, carrier of masculine investments; there’s no other way. [...] [I]t’s in order to smash everything, to shatter the framework of institutions, to blow up the law, to break up the ‘truth’ with laughter” (888). But Drusilla’s laughter cannot shatter or break through the institution of marriage; it continues to control her even after her husband’s death. But Bayard does not realize

this and, because he views her as a threat because she is no longer married, she is vanquished forever from Bayard's narrative to Denny's household.

It is thus through his adherence to traditional understandings of the household ideology that Bayard is able to find the courage to not seek vengeance for his father's death and refuse Redmond's challenge to duel. The social structures that were ripped from Bayard as a child are back in place: Drusilla departed for her married brother's household; Aunt Jenny now living at the Sartoris plantation and filling the maternal role that Drusilla could not; and Loosh restored as a servant within the household. Because these structures are back in place within Bayard's household, Bayard locates his mastery into his narration rather than the pistol. Bayard, as a student of the law, refuses to act outside the law and enact the ritualized violence that his father relied upon to establish his dominance.¹⁸ But as Bercaw points out, the role of the narrative functions as a form of mastery in the post-war South: "Weaving fantastic narratives of racial and gender inversions, racial ideologues attempted to classify people by race and gender rather than social position" (78). Similarly, Anne Goodwyn Jones argues that "it is in the control of language, not guns or sexuality, that *The Unvanquished* finally locates its patriarchal base" (30-31); Bayard relies upon words for his "ultimate accession to authority" (31-32). Bayard's entire narrative concerning Drusilla is Bayard's attempt to establish mastery over her and contain her. Bayard focuses on her actions, her behavior, her masculinity rather than his own. Whereas Drusilla rejects the home and the ideologies of the household scripted for her, Bayard relies upon the house and its architecture—physically and culturally—for his identity.

Indeed, in the final scene, Bayard tells us, “I went into the house” to underscore his position as “The Sartoris.”

Bayard’s narrative, however, is haunted by Drusilla’s laughter that cannot be contained or controlled. Jones argues that at the end of the novel, Drusilla’s “voice is gone, along with her body (and presumably even the odor of verbena), and the power of the narrative, once in the hands of the gynaecocracy, is now aligned with the phallus” (35). While I agree that Drusilla’s voice and body are certainly gone, her laughter remains. An attempt, in Cixous’ words, to “shatter” or “break up” Bayard’s narrative, Drusilla’s haunting laughter resonates long after Bayard’s narrative ends. Her laughter, moreover, recalls Loosh’s laughter at the novel’s beginning when he stands and looks down at the map of Vicksburg made by Bayard and Ringo, unable to tell what he should not know: “Loosh laughed. He stood there laughing, not loud, looking at the chips” (4). Silenced by his wife’s fear from explaining to the boys that Vicksburg had fallen, “Loosh stooped before Ringo or I could have moved, and with his hand he swept the chips flat” (5). Further silenced from telling “nother un you aint know” (5) about Corinth’s fall, Bayard describes Loosh in similarly grotesque terms as Drusilla:

Now he sounded as if he were about to chant, to sing; squatting there with the fierce dull sun on his iron skull and the flattening slant of his nose, he was not looking at me or Ringo either; it was as if his redcornered eyes had reversed in his skull and it was the blank flat

obverses of the balls which we saw. “Far dont matter. Case hit’s on the way!” (6)

With his red eyes that seem to roll back into his head, Loosh becomes a diviner of the fall of the Southern household, his laughter foreboding and haunting in an attempt to say what cannot be said and what cannot be understood by Bayard. While Loosh is present but silenced at the end of the novel and Drusilla banished from the household, their laughter remains as disconcerting to the reader as it is to Bayard. Acting as a bookends for the novel, this laughter speaks to the past—before Bayard’s narrative begins—and to the future. Together Drusilla and Loosh continue to push against the boundaries of the household as imposed by Bayard’s white patriarchal narrative: Loosh’s laughter speaks of his life before the War that, like the family’s trunk of silver, is buried in the darkness of slavery, and Drusilla’s laughter speaks of her life after Bayard’s rejection, the mad sister upstairs in her married brother’s attic.

NOTES

¹ In an analysis of the plot of the novel, Warren Akin argues that Bayard’s non-centrality to the novel’s focus about his maturity causes confusion for the novel’s plot: “Though Bayard, of course, does not have to have center stage if the material is central to his development, it is not, and his absence illustrates confusion in the novel’s focus” (8). I disagree with Akin. Instead, because Bayard is often left out of the major action of the novel (such as Granny and Ringo’s mule-trading adventures),

his elusive narration illuminates the jealousies and concerns about masculinity and race that plague him Bayard throughout the novel.

² Aunt Louisa's reference to Drusilla who "tried to unsex herself by refusing to feel any natural grief at the death in battle not only of her affianced husband but of her own father" (189) recalls Lady MacBeth's speech concerning her own emotions in Shakespeare's *MacBeth*:

[...] Come, you spirits
 That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,
 And fill me from the crown to the toe topful
 Of direst cruelty! Make thick my blood,
 Stop up th' access and passage to remorse,
 That no compunctious visitings of nature
 Shake my fell purpose, nor keep peace between
 Th' effect and it! [I.iv.40-47]

Aunt Louisa's deliberate use of this term alludes to a deliberate attempt on Drusilla's part to literally make herself into a man rather than face her grief, while Lady Macbeth desires to remove all gendered emotion from murder. For a detailed analysis of grief and gender in *The Unvanquished* see Arnold (2002).

³ Diane Roberts defines the Confederate Woman as a redefined Southern lady: "the designated work of art of the plantation South, [. . . the] top of a chain of being that proceeds down through social ranks and races, white to black, plantation owner to slave" (2). She is, moreover, the epitome of purity, so "that the ideology of the

plantation may be inscribed on her: she is represented as being what men are not and what blacks are not—soul, not flesh” (2). But, during the civil war, Roberts notes, the “lady recreated herself to accommodate, even valorize, hardship. With the men away, women had to run plantations and farms, sometimes taking to the fields themselves to bring in the crops” (3).

⁴ Diane Roberts has observed that the Southern lady “is allowed ‘masculine’ freedom of movement, riding, shooting, even wearing boys’ clothes, until her betrothal to a suitable white gentleman” (3).

⁵ There is reason to believe that the marriage of Gavin and Drusilla would have been unconventional and not conformed to the traditional script of marriage that Drusilla scorns specifically because Gavin gives Drusilla the stallion, Bobolink, as an engagement gift rather than the traditional symbol of a ring. Gavin’s gift demonstrates an awareness of Drusilla as more than a traditional white Southern lady who may have found freedom riding beside him outside the constrictive space of the home.

⁶ See, for example, Dwyer (1991), Jones (1994), Roberts (1994), and Clarke (1996). Additionally, although she does not specifically address Drusilla’s clothing, Gantt (1996) discusses the political nature of women’s clothing in Faulkner’s fiction.

⁷The migration witnessed and participated in by Bayard functions in the novel in the same way that the Great Migration that began in the 1890s operated for white Southerners generally. John Duvall, in his recent study *Race and White Identity in Southern Fiction* (2008), links the Great Migration to what he terms a “white

diaspora.” For white Southerners, “home becomes more a concept (whether idealized or reviled) than a physical location” (1) and this understanding of home is necessarily tied to racial otherness: “this problem of home and homelessness can be related to the politics of racial difference, which is grounded in a key piece of Southern epistemology: whiteness knows itself in distinction to “the Negro” (2). If blackness is not available to support the identification of one’s self as white through contrast, then whites too are “homeless,” creating a white diaspora: “Complicit with the conditions that cause the black diaspora, these privileged whites find their senses of home disintegrate; if not a literal dispersal and scattering, there is a psychological one. In short, the Great Migration changes things, constituting the dislocation of southern culture” (15-16).

⁸ A similar use of the “Jordan” imagery is evident in “There Was a Queen” (1933), in which Narcissa goes to Memphis in order to retrieve the letters sent to her by Byron Snopes in *Flags in the Dust*. She presumably secures the letters through sexual favors, and she thereafter attempts to cleanse and purify from her body by sitting with her son in the creek in the back pasture. Miss Jenny refers to the creek as Jordan: “And so you came back home and you took Johnny so you and he could sit together in the creek, the running water. In Jordan. Yes, Jordan at the back of a country pasture in Mississippi” (*CS 741*). Miss Jenny presumably attempts to conjure the baptismal and cleansing symbolism of Jordan; in *The Unvanquished*, Jordan functions as both a topographical boundary between bondage and freedom as well as a metaphor for freedom.

⁹ See Dwyer (1991), Berg (1993), Roberts (1994), and Clarke (1996).

¹⁰ Drusilla's participation in the Confederacy and political system is, in fact, troubling given the same system that she fights to protect others her. Clarke argues that her actions "liberat[e Drusilla] from domesticity and marriage," but, nevertheless she "fight[s] to support the system which has imposed that domesticity upon her" ("Gender" 242). Similarly, Roberts states that Drusilla "aligns herself fully with the reactionary anti-Reconstruction vigilantism that seeks to keep power in the hands of the plantation lords" (21). Her actions during the election, argues Roberts, "is, perhaps, the most grievous assault on the signs of purity, fragility, and 'femininity' contained in the wedding dress and veil" (21). Nevertheless, the reason, states Clarke that Drusilla participates in these events is that she is "[a]pparently unable to see beyond her immediate situation, she tries to become a man in order to preserve the man's world against which she rebels" (Gender 242). Drusilla cannot be expected to see beyond her own situation, though. Her understanding of the patriarchal political system that others both blacks and women is nonexistent. Her personal experience illustrates that she gets more respect from the men than the women around her. The men in her father's troop accept her, John Sartoris sees beyond her dress and calls her a "soldier," John, Joby, and Ringo accept her presence as she works side-by-side with them building the new house, and the town men accept her as voting commissioner (albeit by John Sartoris' decree) and follow her to Sartoris where she participates in the election by "call[ing their] names out" (73). The men cheer for her and John Sartoris—not as a couple but as distinct individuals—as they carry the voting box

back to town, hollering “Yaaaaay, Drusilla!” “Yaaaaay, John Sartoris, Yaaaaay!” (73). Drusilla would only have received a similar cheer from the women of Jefferson and her mother if she married John Sartoris—the very action that deprives her of all agency. The women cast Drusilla into the role of the other for the very same reasons that the men cheer for her. The women assume illicit sexual relations between her and John Sartoris, chastise her for “forgetting” to marry, and reduce her to a “little girl that has been caught playing in the mud” (209)—a description that recalls the sexuality of Caddy Compson with her muddy drawers. Condemning Drusilla for not looking beyond her own situation and understanding the implications of fighting for the Confederacy and accepting the role of voting commissioner in a fraudulent election, therefore, is the same as condemning Ringo for helping Granny trick the Yankees out of their horses and mules.

¹¹ Although this argument is complicated by Faulkner’s own statement that he “didn’t think” there was any “romantic attraction” between Bayard and Drusilla (Gwynn 256), this does not, in fact, contradict my reading. Drusilla is not “romantically” attracted to Bayard nor is he to her. She uses him only in an attempt to provoke a response from Sartoris, and she is willing to sacrifice Bayard in order to do it—much as she was willing to sacrifice Bobolink.

¹² Drusilla’s sexuality throughout Bayard’s narration has always been ambiguous. Queered by her masculine-gendered appearance, Drusilla’s sexual identity is at issue at several moments in the narrative such as this one. For example, Drusilla says to her mother, “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 (191), but her sentiment becomes problematic within pages as she cries out to Louvinia, "We went to the War to hurt Yankees, not hunting women!" (197). The slippage in this latter statement raises questions of Drusilla's sexual identity. There are various possible reasons that account for this statement, none of which support a reading of Drusilla as a lesbian. In the first instance, Bayard reports on a conversation described in a letter from Aunt Louisa in which she writes to Granny (unaware of her death) that Drusilla "deliberately tried to unsex herself" (189) as a response to Gavin's death. In the second instance, Bayard reports a conversation between Drusilla and Louvinia when Drusilla is under siege by Mrs. Habersham and the other ladies of Jefferson who believe she is pregnant with Sartoris's child. (This is the reason they account for Drusilla working in the sawmill—"What other reason can you name why she should choose to conceal herself down there in the woods all day long, lifting heavy weights like logs and—" [195].) The trauma of the women's attack may account for Drusilla's statement as she appears shocked not only at the suggestion but the implications. Repressing both her femininity and gender, Drusilla takes on the persona as well as the role of the soldier she has been performing. In a subsequent conversation with her mother, Drusilla does refer to herself as a man rather than a sexual target for Sartoris though: "Cant you understand that in the troop I was just another man and not much of one at that, and since we came home here I am just another mouth for John to feed, just a cousin of John's wife and not much older than his own son?" (203). Aunt Louisa refuses to consider the possibility that

Sartoris and Drusilla could sleep in the same tent without sexuality and lust prevailing, perhaps supporting Bayard's understanding of her as a seductress. More importantly, however, the accuracy and credibility of Bayard's narration again must be questioned. Drusilla is performing the role of a "man" within the context of the family dynamics, while Bayard retains his status as a child. (Drusilla works in the sawmill and his helping to rebuild the plantation while Bayard fetches water from the well. Although he is fifteen, Bayard is considered and referred to as a "poor child" by the ladies of Jefferson [195] and as an "innocent victim" by Aunt Louisa [203].) This statement may be read as either an elision on Bayard's part as he attempts to substitute himself for Drusilla or as authorial slip in which Bayard is consciously or unconsciously attempting to queer her.

¹³ This scene recalls a similar one in *The Hamlet* in which Eula Varner's school teacher, Labove, makes a sexual overture that Eula rejects. Labove then waits for Eula's brother, Jody, to arrive and defend her honor. As time passes and Jody fails to arrive, Labove recognizes, to his horror, that his pass made so little difference to Eula that she did not even tell her brother: "She never told him at all. She didn't even forget to. She doesn't even know anything happened that was worth mentioning" (140). The ultimate insult to Labove, causing him to leave town, is not that he assaulted Eula's honor but that he did not matter enough to offend her.

¹⁴ Similarly, Susan Donaldson states of "An Odor of Verbena" that "this last story reveals that readers can by their own expectations, [and] it also suggests that the horizons or boundaries defining those expectations can be changed or expanded"

(“Dismantling” 191). Donaldson demonstrates, utilizing reception theory that this last story, rejected by *The Saturday Evening Post* challenges the expected readership expectations of “adventure and glory” provided in the earlier texts published in (and revised for) this magazine: “But if ‘An Odor of Verbena’ evokes the sort of ‘horizon of expectations’ associated with *Post* stories, it also seeks to shift that horizon by casting stock traditions and the expectations they arouse in a suspicious light.

Essentially, what this final story does is offer not one but two ways of reading those stock traditions, one that is defined by those original expectations and one that resists and disrupts them” (“Dismantling” 189). This correlates with my argument that this story challenges public perceptions of marriage and the sexual relations between the parties within the marriage.

¹⁵ Although not explicitly stated, I interpret Drusilla’s dream as a reference to her pre-war plans for a future with Gavin Breckbridge, a man who appears to have understood and respected her and her tomboy tendencies well enough that he gives her not a ring, the traditional token of engagement, but the stallion, Bobolink, a gift that allows her emancipation from the role of a bride-widow of the Lost Cause.

¹⁶ In his reading of this passage, Melvin Backman argues that “Drusilla serves as priestess of the South. By marrying Colonel Sartoris she had embraced all that he represented in this Reconstruction era. [...] Her very description [...] invests her with a savage, fanatical dedication” (Faulkner’s 254). Backman, therefore, sees a “curious conjunction of an invitation to love and an invitation to violence in this passage, as if to suggest how seductively violence proffers itself to the Southerner” (Faulkner’s

255). Similarly, Winifred L. Frazer states, “Drusilla, a moon-cycled, bloody priestess, is a symbol of destruction” (169), who is “carried away by the romance of love and death as a sexual experience for both the killer and the killed” (168). Yaeger interprets the “Greek amphora priestess” as “a vessel ritualizing and containing regional trauma” (“Faulkner’s” 206). The conflation of Drusilla’s offerings of her body and violence thus work together as a ritualistic offering to Bayard that will induct Bayard into manhood on both levels.

¹⁷Elaine Showalter gives the following historical definition and understanding of the term “hysteria” in relation to women: “Its name comes from *hystera*, the Greek word for uterus. Classic healers described a female disorder characterized by convulsive attacks, random pains, and sensations of choking. They believed the uterus traveled hungrily around the body, unfettered [...] producing a myriad of symptoms in its wake” (15). When it was proven, she continues, that the “uterus too was anchored in the body, medical theories of hysteria shifted to the mobile, capricious, unstable, and emotional female personality, to the fragile nervous system and the cyclical and spasmodic manifestations of female sexuality” (64).

¹⁸Taylor argues that Bayard’s ultimate action is all part of Sartoris’s plan. Having sent Bayard to law school, Sartoris is planning a future for Bayard as “The Sartoris.” John Sartoris’s “moral housecleaning” will expunge his own destructive actions and purify the role for Bayard. Through his death—going unarmed to meet Redmond (or not using his hidden gun against Redmond)—Sartoris wants “to recover

his good name so that Bayard can be The Sartoris with pride, without the cloud on his father's reputation which would dull the name and fame of the Sartorises" (361).

“I’m the man here. I’m the one to say in my home, like you and your paw and his paw were the ones to say in his.”

~*Go Down, Moses*

**“The Mausoleum of his Defeat”:
Fears of Matrimonial Bondage in *Go Down, Moses***

“Let him go!,” Isaac McCaslin begs his cousin McCaslin Edmonds for his mentor Sam Fathers, the man who teaches him about the wilderness and initiates him into the blood ritual of hunting. Ike’s entreaty comes in the midst of the discussion of Sam’s “expression,” that “something else” that Cass attempts to explain to Ike (161). Cass says “not the mark of servitude but of bondage” is responsible for Sam’s look: “He was born in the cage and has been in it all his life; he knows nothing else. Then he smells something. [...] It was the cage he smelled. He hadn’t smelled the cage until that minute. [...] That’s what makes his eyes look like that” (161). In response to Ike’s appeal, Cass attempts to explain the constitution of Sam’s cage: “His cage aint McCaslins” (162), but is instead himself: “his own battleground, the scene of his own vanquishment and the mausoleum of his defeat. His cage aint us” (163). The battleground is caused, Cass explains, by the unintentional betrayal of Sam’s mixed race mother who passed to him a heritage tainted by bondage. Caged by his internal conflict, Sam Fathers remains a loner on the plantation, living among the Negroes in a cabin but doing “white man’s work” in the blacksmith shop (163). Although black, Sam lives his life as a white man, apparently answering to no one: he “bore himself [...] toward all white men, with gravity and dignity and without servility or recourse to that impenetrable wall of ready and easy mirth which negroes sustain between

themselves and white men, bearing himself toward [Ike's] cousin McCaslin not only as one man to another but as an older man to a younger" (164). Sam is, moreover, the respected elder of the hunting camp, eventually moving to the "big bottom" to live permanently in a small cabin by himself.

Beginning a discussion of marriage in *Go Down, Moses* with Sam Fathers, unmarried and childless, may seem like a peculiar choice. But the world of *Go Down, Moses* is a patriarchal one in which Sam Fathers is a model of masculinity. The woods, the hunting camp, and the outdoor structure of the plantation and wilderness dominate understandings of masculinity. The discussion between Ike and Cass about Sam Fathers highlights an essential masculine element in the novel: the distinction between freedom and bondage. Although Sam is sold into literal slavery as a child, along with his mother (both of whom are swapped for "an underbred trotting gelding" [252]) and the unnamed man whom she is forced to marry, Sam remains caged psychologically within his own mind long after slavery ends—a psychological wound that never heals. The novel is an attempt to document the genealogy of the McCaslin family, and Sam Fathers is part of that genealogy. He becomes a surrogate father for Ike, passing on to Ike his knowledge of the wilderness and hunting. But as Doreen Fowler has pointed out, he also teaches Ike "to be single and solitary, to cherish freedom, and to divest himself of all attachments" ("Nameless" 529). As Sam's heir and in his old age, Ike bears a striking resemblance to Sam: childless, "uncle to half a country and father to no one" (3), and widowed, Ike is the aged elder attempting to preside over the hunting camp.

A model of masculinity, Sam embodies a freedom envied by the white patriarchy that once enslaved him. As Toni Morrison states in *Playing in the Dark*, “nothing highlighted freedom—if it did not in fact create it—like slavery” (38). Sam, a man of interracial heritage, is viewed by Ike as “free” through comparison to his past bonds of slavery. Other than his maternal connection, no mention is ever made of Sam Fathers having a relationship with a woman. As readers, we can accept Cass’s reasoning for Sam’s look—the psychological damage caused by slavery—and accept, as young Ike does, that Sam blames his mother for passing on to him her tainted heritage rather than the McCaslin family who purchased and enslaved him. I would like to consider though what Cass’s statement reveals about Cass and the white patriarchy that he represents as much as it may shed light on Sam’s “look.” A misogynistic connotation underscores Cass’s statement: a fear of the maternal, a fear of woman. It is she who is to blame for the enslavement rather than Cass’s family who purchased and held Sam’s family in bondage. This statement appears to be one of many anti-woman sentiments in the novel, such as Lucas Beauchamp’s accusations (and disdain) of the Edmonds line being passed through the distaff rather than through the paternal family structure, along with the multitude of white women—wives in particular—who are not named in the text.¹

Cass’s statement, however, points toward a more complex reading of these misogynistic moments and the underlying fears that they reveal about marriage. It reflects Cass’s fears of women not simply because they represent an otherness, but because they symbolize a threat of marriage and the “bondage” that it represents. I

argue that Ike internalizes Cass's fears and his failure to name wives in his narrative—and specifically his own wife—is symptomatic of this fear of marriage. Ike's fear of women reflects the fear of emotional attachment and ultimately the fear of marriage that threatens the encoded understanding of masculinity within the novel. To name is to acknowledge existence and in the case of marriage, the necessity of that existence because of needed progenitors. White men—other than Ike—are rarely seen inside the threatening confines of the home in *Go Down, Moses*, because the home represents their entrapment. They inhabit instead the outdoor world. Ike, therefore, adheres to Sam Fathers' model of masculinity living as a bachelor, despite being married, in order to demonstrate and prove his masculinity by way of his prowess as a woodsman and hunter, the activities that emphasize his "freedom."

Ike, as a representative of the white patriarchy throughout the novel, suffers a psychic wound caused by the institution of slavery that even when he does marry leaves him feeling trapped and looking for a means to escape from its bonds.² Ike's fear of marriage is highlighted by a contrasting desire for marriage by black characters for whom marriage functions quite differently. With the exception of Sam Fathers, most black characters (Tomey's Turl, Fonsiba Beauchamp, Lucas Beauchamp, Rider, George Wilkins) view marriage as a path towards freedom or a form of independence not available to them during slavery. As we already saw with Loosh and Philadelphia in *The Unvanquished*, marriage allows black characters to assume their rightful positions as within their own households. I argue that Ike's fear of marriage—his confusion of the institution with slavery—is magnified through

contrast with the desire for and willing participation in marriage by Tomey's Turl, Fonsiba Beauchamp, and, most prominently, with Lucas Beauchamp who establishes his masculinity by creating his own household on the McCaslin plantation. Specifically, Fonsiba's husband and Lucas Beauchamp inhabit the seemingly feminine space of the home, the place that offers them the freedom to call themselves men.³ It is not just wives, therefore, whom Ike neglects to name. Ike also avoids naming his Uncle Hubert's mulatta mistress, the black man who marries and takes Fonsiba away to Arkansas, and Roth's mulatta mistress. They too are feared because they threaten the white household, for they fail to conform to their scripted positions within the hierarchy. Black women are named, in contrast, because they do not threaten this hierarchy. By virtue of their blackness, they fail to pose a marital threat to Ike and the other white men in the novel because of the "ethnic boundary" bolstered by interracial marriage laws.

ISAAC MCCASLIN

Ike states that Sam Father's "set me free." He refers, of course, to his initiation into manhood as represented by Sam's guidance through a blood ritual at age thirteen: "He pulled the trigger and Sam Fathers marked his face with the hot blood which he had spilled and he ceased to be a child and became a hunter and a man" (171). Sam's ritualistic marking of Ike's face with the blood of the slain animal, argues LaLonde, is "an act that is meant to honor the animal he has killed and insure that Ike will not shame the memory of the animal's spirit" (107). Ike's hunting experience in "The Bear" constitutes a successful initiation from which Ike

successfully emerges from the Big Bottom an honorable and successful hunter. Ike believes this establishes his manhood. But Ike's initiation into domestic masculinity, a journey which Sam Fathers also acts as guide, is not as successful. As Sanford Pinsker has stated, as Ike's guide in the wilderness, Sam's wisdom "takes on almost monumental significance" (37), but "Sam's inability to adjust to the changing world around him (as evidenced by his retreat into the woods) not only limits his effectiveness, but sharply affects his value as Ike's tutor" (38). Ultimately, Pinsker concludes, Sam "is not equipped to teach Ike about such non-woodsy matters as marriage or social responsibility" (39). Ike's continued pronouncements that "I am free" (285, 286) substantiate Pinsker's conclusion. Ike has never been enslaved. A descendent of Lucius Quintus Carothers McCaslin, Ike is instead a descendent of the white patriarchy who enslaved Sam Fathers and many others. Unlike Thomas Sutpen, John Sartoris, and even Bayard Sartoris who establish their freedom as heads of households, Ike attempts to free himself from this heritage—and the social responsibility that comes with it—by repudiating his household. At the age of sixteen, Ike reads the ledgers found in the plantation commissary that, as Richard Godden and Noel Polk argue, he uses to support his decision to renounce his inheritance.⁴ In these ledgers "his forebears have recorded the business and personal affairs of the McCaslin family over the course of the plantation's life during the first half or so of the nineteenth century" (301). It is this "family business" that leads to his repudiation: "Isaac posits his grandfather's incestuous miscegenation as the immediate proximate cause of his own renunciation not just of the land and not just of

slavery, but of the entire history of land ownership—of the very idea of possession, which he believes to be directly connected to the practice of slavery, as concentrated and focused in his grandfather's incest" (302). If, then, for Ike the very idea of possession is tied to ownership, his understanding of his own "freedom" is directly connected to his relationship with the wilderness, a place where he can be "free" in the manner of Sam Fathers. The woods, therefore, symbolize freedom for Ike on a multitude of levels: a location free of the taint of ownership (an understanding that is nevertheless challenged throughout the novel); a location where Ike is free of social responsibility; and a location free of women in favor of masculine fraternization; and, most importantly, a location in which his success as a hunter emphasizes his masculinity.

But Ike only lives in the woods a few weeks out of the year. As Pinsker points out, "Although the wilderness may fortify some abstract notion about 'manliness,' the 'proven hunters' realize the reality centers exist in towns, not the forest" (36). But this is an understanding that Ike fails to recognize and learn from his elders: "Ike arranges the hierarchy of his elders solely on the basis of their ability to cope with the wilderness" (37). Sam, of course, ranks highest in this hierarchy for Ike, and Ike takes lessons from no other. Ike fails to recognize, however, that once Sam retires to the wilderness, he never leaves as Ike must do. As a young man, Ike prioritizes the woods and wilderness over any potential marriage because he already conflates marriage with ownership:

he would marry someday and they too would own for their brief while that brief unsubstantiated glory which inherently of itself cannot last and hence why glory: and they would, might, carry even the remembrance of it into the time when flesh no longer talks to flesh because memory at least does last: but still the woods would be his mistress and his wife. (311)

Positing that the woods will be “his mistress and his wife” in spite of a potential marriage demonstrates Ike’s confused understanding of the institution. The woods and wilderness represent freedom and masculinity throughout the novel, a place to which men such as Sam Fathers and the other hunters escape their domestic responsibilities, and, implicitly, their own marriages. Ike queers this masculine symbol and space, representing it as feminine. His reference to the woods as “his mistress and his wife” substantiates the power and influence—the ownership—the woods have over him. The erotic description of his first entrance into the wilderness evidences his entrapment: “He entered his novitiate [...] while the wilderness closed behind his entrance as it had opened momentarily to accept him, opening before his advancement as it closed behind his progress” (187). Ike again feminizes the space by emphasizing his penetration of it, but Ike fails to recognize the emotional trap that has sprung as it engulfs him. While Ike advances into manhood in the wilderness, when he ventures back into civilization, his “progress” is completely stunted.

THE BIG HOUSE

In his attempt to apply his lessons of the wilderness to his social reality, Ike rejects his inheritance and rightful position as head of the McCaslin household on his twenty-first birthday: the land that once was wilderness before it was “tamed and ordered” for his grandfather, LQC McCaslin, by the sweat and blood of slaves. On the land too, as the monument, as the plantation’s center, is the “big house” that Ike also rejects. Ike instead, lives

in one small cramped fireless rented room in a Jefferson boarding-house where petit juries were domiciled during court terms and itinerant horse- and mule-traders stayed, with his kit of brand-new carpenter’s tools and the shotgun McCaslin had given him with his name engraved in silver and old General Compson’s compass (and, when the General died, his silver-mounted horn too) and the iron cot and mattress and the blankets which he would take each fall into the woods for more than sixty years and the bright tin coffee-pot (287)

Ike’s choice to live in this small rented room contrasts with the “big house,” the antebellum mansion, that he inherits from his father who in turn inherited it from Ike’s grandfather. Ike’s repudiation of the “big house” is a reversal of Sutpen’s design. Given that this “big house” is the symbol of the plantation system—the taming of the wilderness—that in turn represents ownership and property, Ike’s repudiation of his household is his attempt to restructure the class system, living not as a landed white man, but as a poor bachelor much like Sam Fathers. As a bachelor,

moreover, Ike not only stands on the threshold of domesticity that Snyder discusses, but he refuses to even enter the threshold for fear of the door closing and trapping him within.

For Ike the “big house” (287) is more than the typical symbol of domesticity, the epicenter of plantation life. The “big house” is described first as “the tremendously-conceived, the almost barn-like edifice which [old Carothers] had not even completed” (250), which Uncle Buck and Uncle Buddy vacate immediately upon their father’s death, moving instead to a “one-room log cabin which the two of them built themselves and added other rooms to while they lived in it” (251). The “big house” thereafter becomes the “domicile” of the plantation slaves, into which the slaves are herded each night and the front door locked, leaving the slaves free to come and go from the “unhinged” back door until morning. Ike’s narration of his father’s darkly humorous chase to catch Tomey’s Turl, a black slave who does not return by morning, an event that occurred before his birth and witnessed by his cousin, Cass, demonstrates Ike’s internalized understanding of freedom and bondage in relation to houses and domesticity.

As the McCaslin brothers and Cass know, Tomey’s Turl has escaped “the big house” to visit a female slave, Tennie, on the neighboring plantation: “he went there every time he could slip off, which was about twice a year. He was heading for Mr Hubert Beauchamp’s place just over the edge of the next county” (5). The chase, though, is farcical in the sense that Tomey’s Turl’s intent is not to escape. His break is instead designed to push against the tensions between the McCaslin brothers and

Hubert Beauchamp, the neighboring plantation owner, putting them in proximity and generating a constructed space in which Tomey's Turl and Tennie can be together:

They couldn't keep him at home by buying Tennie from Mr Hubert because Uncle Buck said he and Uncle Buddy had so many niggers already that they could hardly walk around on their own land for them, and they couldn't sell Tomey's Turl to Mr Hubert because Mr Hubert said he not only wouldn't buy Tomey's Turl, he wouldn't have that damn white half-McCaslin on his place even as a free gift, not even if Uncle Buck and Uncle Buddy were to pay board and keep for him. (5-6)

This constructed space is reflected in the idea of the "house" and the concept of marriage that it represents. Unlike Tomey's Turl, who runs toward and is, in fact, almost "caught" at Tennie's cabin as expected, Buck and Buddy are confirmed bachelors, living "where ladies were so damn seldom thank God that a man could ride for days in a straight line without having to dodge a single one" (7). But if Buck does not chase Turl, his bachelor space will be invaded and threatened by Hubert and his sister, Sophonsiba, who will accompany Hubert when he returns Turl: "And if somebody didn't go and get Tomey's Turl right away, Mr Hubert would fetch him back himself, bringing Miss Sophonsiba, and they would stay for a week or longer, Miss Sophonsiba living in Uncle Buddy's room" (6). But entering the Beauchamp house is "bear-country" (21) because of Sophonsiba's parallel pursuit of Uncle Buck whom she hopes to trap in matrimony:

Miss Sophonsiba said Uncle Buck was just a confirmed roving bachelor from the cradle born and this time Uncle Buck even quit chewing and looked and said, Yes, ma'am, he sure was, and born too late at it to ever change now but at least he could thank God no lady would ever have to suffer the misery of living with him and Uncle Buddy, and Miss Sophonsiba said ah, that maybe Uncle Buck just aint met the woman yet who would not only accept what Uncle Buck was pleased to call misery, but who would make Uncle Buck consider even *his freedom* a small price to pay, and Uncle Buck said, "Nome. Not yet." (11; emphasis added)

The entrapment of Tomey's Turl at Tennie's cabin is the ideal solution for Buck. If he can capture Tomey's Turl, he can make the half day's ride home without the necessity of staying the night in Sophonsiba's home and he can avoid further contact with her—and win the \$500 bet he made earlier with Hubert that he would catch Tomey's Turl before midnight. The comic result of the attempted capture, however, is that Tomey's Turl's desire for Tennie literally overrides Buck's desire for freedom:

Uncle Buck said he never even saw the door open; that the fyce just screamed once and ran between his legs and then Tomey's Turl ran right clean over him. He never even bobbed; he knocked Uncle Buck down and then caught him before he fell without even stopping, snatched him up under one arm, still running, and carried him along

for about ten feet, saying, “Look out of here, old Buck. Look out of here, old Buck,” before he threw him away and went on. (18)

The failure to capture Tomey’s Turl at Tennie’s home results in Buck’s near capture. Young Cass and Buck are forced to return to Hubert’s house for the night. As it is after midnight, the house is dark and quiet. Reasoning that Sophonsiba’s room will be at the back of the hallway where she can “holler down to the kitchen without having to get up” (19), Buck and Cass enter a quiet and unlocked bedroom at the front of the hallway to bed down for the night but, unlike Tomey’s Turl who is primed for escape, Sophonsiba is poised for the capture:

Uncle Buck threw down his suspenders and unbuttoned his trousers and went to the bed and eased himself carefully down onto the edge of it, [...] when Uncle Buck lifted the mosquito-bar and raised his feet and rolled into the bed. That was when Miss Sophonsiba sat up on the other side of Uncle Buck and gave the first scream. (19-20)

Hubert’s subsequent statement, “She’s got you at last” (21), appears to cement Uncle Buck’s fate. Instead, the desires of Tomey’s Turl and Tennie as well as Sophonsiba are silenced and become further entangled together in the poker game that puts Buck’s bachelorhood at risk against the \$500 winnings of the earlier bet and the future of Tomey’s Turl and Tennie: “Five hundred dollars against Sibbey. And we’ll settle this nigger business once and for all too. If you win, you buy Tennie; if I win, I buy that boy of yours. The price will be the same for each one: three hundred dollars” (23). While the fate of Tomey’s Turl and Tennie is sealed at the outset of the

poker game—regardless of who wins, they will be together—Buck’s freedom is at risk and is posited in direct correlation with Hubert’s. “After all,” Hubert tells Buck, “I’d like a little peace and quiet and *freedom* myself, now I got a chance for it” (22, emphasis added). Tomey’s Turl deals the hand that ensures Buck’s purchase of Tennie and, more significantly, Buck’s freedom.

While his narrative seems to end in a traditional happily-ever-after manner for Tomey’s Turl and Tennie, Ike’s narrative emphasizes the failure of Sophonsiba to catch Buck in matrimonial bondage. This failed marriage plot of Buck and Sophonsiba, therefore, has a resounding satisfactory ending much like the failed marriage plot ending “Skirmish at Sartoris” in *The Unvanquished*. Tennie rides silently home in the back of the wagon with Uncle Buddy and Cass to begin her productive and regenerative life with Tomey’s Turl. The flamboyant, roan-toothed, and grotesque Sophonsiba (Ike’s own mother) who dared to voice her desires is left silenced at home with her brother. We find out later in the novel, however, that Buck ultimately cedes his bachelorhood and freedom and marries Sophonsiba. Ike’s narrative—about his own parents—focuses through its title on what “Was” though. He emphasizes not the marriage of Buck and Sophonsiba but places importance instead on Buck’s freedom in direct contrast to Tomey’s Turl’s marriage.⁵ “After his father’s and his Uncle Hubert’s sister’s marriage,” Ike explains, “they moved back into the big house, the tremendous cavern which old Carothers had started and never finished, cleared the remaining negroes out of it and with his mother’s dowry’s completed it, at least the rest of the windows and doors and moved into it” (287). The

McCaslin “big house” thus carries with it the literal connotations of being a house that not only slaves built but one which housed slaves until Uncle Buck’s marriage when he takes their place. But unlike when the slaves lived in it, the doors and windows are completed, effectively trapping Buck within the “big house.”

IKE’S MARRIAGE

Ike’s repudiation of “the big house” and the “tamed and ordered” land that trapped his father, however, does not free Ike as he hoped from all social responsibilities. Ike marries but lives his life as a bachelor in an ineffectual marriage after its almost immediate failure. Ike attempts to characterize his entrance into the institution as a “natural” progression much as he characterized his entrance into the woods:

they were married, they were married and it was the new country, his heritage too as it was the heritage of all, out of the earth, beyond the earth yet of the earth because his too was of the earth’s long chronicle, his too because each must share with another in order to come into it and in the sharing they become one: for that while, one: for that little while at least, one: indivisible, that while at least irrevocable and unrecoverable, living in a rented room still but for just a little while and that room wall-less and topless and floorless in glory for him to leave each morning and return to at night (297)

Ike deliberately attempts to naturalize the union with this woman by describing it as his “heritage,” but a heritage “out of the earth” rather than a socially-constructed

tradition. His description of the “glory” days distinguishes the elements of masculine freedom that Ike finds so appealing and different from the claustrophobia of the feminine space of the home. The “wall-less,” “topless,” and “floorless” room represent a lack of boundaries and separation that allow Ike to leave and return at will unlike the finished “big house” in which his mother trapped his father. Ike internalized the importance of this “natural” state when he left behind his gun, watch, and compass as symbols of the civilized and mechanized world in order to meet “the man” (190), the old bear Ben.⁶ But Ike’s attempt to apply this lesson to his marriage fails. Ike wants to believe that his marriage with this woman is “natural” rather than a man-made institution he has chosen. His description of the courtship with this woman demonstrates that it was more economic circumstance, perhaps obligation, and maybe even convenience that causes him to marry rather than natural love or desire. The repetition of the passive statement “they were married,” moreover, underscores Ike’s attempt to eliminate his responsibility from the action.

Ike’s wife’s understanding of marriage is quite different. Her perception of the institution—and Ike’s responsibilities as a participant in it—is much more traditional. As Cott’s historical discussion of marriage has already demonstrated, American society is structured on the assumption that a man’s willingness to enter into marriage demonstrates his assent to individual and social responsibility as well. Thus, Ike’s wife expects that Ike’s promise of marriage demonstrates his commitment to his household—specifically accepting his inheritance and the responsibilities that

accompany the plantation and its inhabitants. Her expectations, moreover, are implied in the brief conversation between them *before* the marriage:

“Papa told me about you. That farm is really yours, isn’t it?”

and he

“And McCaslin’s:” and she

“Was there a will leaving half of it to him?” and he

“There didn’t need to be a will. His grandmother was my father’s sister. We were the same as brothers:” and she

“You are the same as second cousins and that’s all you ever will be. But I don’t suppose it matters:” and they were married, they were married. (297)

This conversation can certainly be interpreted in a manner that reflects poorly on Ike’s wife: she is a gold-digging woman seeking to entrap naïve Ike into marriage, elevate her status in society, and initiate Ike’s fall from his moral ideologies and beliefs about ownership.⁷ This is certainly the portrait that Ike seeks to paint (and critics have accepted) because it alleviates Ike’s responsibilities. But never in this conversation—nor in any other after their marriage—does Ike tell her that he has repudiated his birthright.

The issue of the household destroys Ike’s marriage. Knowing that he has no intention of moving to “the farm” as his wife refers to it,⁸ Ike makes a pretense of building a bungalow for his wife as a wedding present. But this house is Ike’s own attempt to entrap her—and himself—into his ideologies of non-ownership:

her father already owned the lot in town and furnished the material and he and his partner would build it, her dowry from one: her wedding-present from three, she not to know it until the bungalow was finished and ready to be moved into and he never knew who told her, not her father and not his partner. (297-298)

By Ike's own admission elsewhere, the house is "cheap" (4) and "jerrybuilt" (269), sounding more like a hut or shack than the more romantic descriptor of "bungalow." But these descriptions come when Ike is accounting for his ideologies later in life:

a widower these twenty years, who in all his life had owned but one object more than he could wear and carry in his pockets and his hands at one time, and this was the narrow iron cot and the stained lean mattress which he used camping in the woods for deer and bear or for fishing or simply because he loved the woods; who owned no property and never desired to since the earth was no man's but all men's, as light and air and weather were; who lived still in the cheap frame bungalow in Jefferson which his wife's father gave them on their marriage and which his wife had willed to him at her death and which he had pretended to accept, acquiesce to, to humor her, ease her going but which was not his, will or not, chancery dying wishes mortmain possession or whatever, himself merely holding it for his wife's sister and her children who had lived in it with him since his wife's death, holding himself welcome to live in one room of it as he had during his

wife's time or she during her time or the sister-in-law and her children during the rest of his and after (3-4)

1874 the boy; 1888 the man, repudiated denied and free; 1895 and husband but no father, unwidowed but without a wife, and found long since that no man is ever free and probably could not bear it if he were; married then and living in Jefferson in the little new jerrybuilt bungalow which his wife's father had given them. (269)

In both descriptions, Ike's responsibility for the construction of the bungalow is erased. Instead, the bungalow is described as a gift from his wife's father, emphasizing Ike's lack of responsibility for his home and putting the onus of property ownership on his wife.

Ike's emphasis on his wife's ownership of the bungalow highlights the issues of ownership and control that Ike seeks to avoid by building the house for her. Davis states that for Ike "sexuality is burdensome precisely because it is bound up in a heritage of ownership, slavery, and property" (167). Ike's explicit narration of the culminating scene of their "glory days" of marriage portrays his wife as a conniver who attempts to "manipulate" him into accepting his heritage and moving to the big house through her nakedness much as Eve tempted Adam into sin. Just as Ike's discussions of his entrance into the wilderness are eroticized, so is his wife's attempt to "trap" Ike into moving to the farm:

"Stand up and turn your back and shut your eyes:" and repeated before he understood and stood himself with his eyes shut and heard the bell

ring for supper below stairs and the calm voice again: “Lock the door:” and he did so and leaned his forehead against the cold wood, his eyes closed, hearing his heart and the sound he had begun to hear before he moved until it ceased and the bell rang again below stairs and he knew it was for them this time and he heard the bed and turned and he had never seen her naked before. (298-99)

Even before Ike recognizes her intent to show him her nakedness, he expresses fear at closing and locking the door—actions that symbolize his capture. Despite his attraction to her nakedness, Ike focuses on her physical touch that ensnares him: “her hand moving as though with volition and vision of its own, catching his wrist at the exact moment when he paused beside the bed so that he never paused but merely changed the direction of moving, downward now, the hand drawing him [...] drawing him still downward with the one hand down and down” (299). It is then that she asks for his promise:

“Promise:” and he

“Promise?”

“The farm.” He moved. (300)

But she does not allow his escape: “He had moved, the hand shifting from his chest once more to his wrist, grasping it, the arm still lax and only the light increasing pressure of the fingers as though the arm and hand were a piece of wire cable with one looped end, only the hand tightening as he pulled against it” (300). Ike focuses on her hand three more times. First it is a shackle that grabs him and holds him,

drawing him down, holding him, and making him available for violation. In doing so, she makes a sexual victim of him. His merged understandings of sexuality and ownership are aroused by her actions and invokes the haunting reminder of his grandfather's sexual violation of the slaves Tomasina and Eunice, the impetus for rejecting his heritage. Because his wife gives him the one thing he had asked of her—her nakedness—he cannot sustain this imagery. Instead, her hand becomes the hand of the puppetmaster controlling his actions and limiting his freedom to act independently when she asks in return for him to take his rightful place as head of the household. In the aftermath of the unique sexual encounter, which Ike describes as “like nothing he had ever dreamed, let alone heard in mere man-talking,” his wife “turned and *freed herself*” (300, my emphasis). By freeing herself, she tells Ike, ““And that’s all. That’s all from me. If this dont get you that son you talk about, it wont be mine:’ lying on her side, her back to the empty rented room, laughing and laughing” (300-01). Ike’s wife’s hysterical laughter recalls Drusilla’s laughter at the end of *The Unvanquished*. This woman, like Drusilla, attempts to speak for herself, but Ike is unable and unwilling to comprehend it. Like Drusilla, Mrs. McCaslin’s laughter is unable to break through the patriarchal boundaries that bind and control her, including Ike’s narration. She is bound and trapped into a marriage, blamed for its failure,⁹ yet known only as Mrs. Ike McCaslin, a “tense bitter indomitable” woman whom Ike pities later in their marriage (104). But much as Ike shunned responsibility for the marriage itself in his attempts to “naturalize” it, he does the same later when he discusses the collapse of the marriage:

husband and wife did not need to speak words to one another, not just from the old habit of living together but because in that one long-ago instant at least out of the long and shabby stretch of their human lives, even though they knew at the time it wouldn't and couldn't last, they had touched and become as God when they voluntarily and in advance forgave one another for all that each knew the other could never be.

(104)

Ike tries to dismiss his wife's bitterness, by normalizing and idealizing it simultaneously. As Vanderwerken states, Ike's concept of marriage is surely "mystical, idealistic, and very sentimental" ("From" 95). This description of their marriage when Ike is approximately 28 years old, sounds remarkably similar to his description of marriage and sex when he is in his eighties:

I think that every man and woman, at the instant when it dont even matter whether they marry or not, I think that whether they marry then or afterward or dont never, at that instant the two of them together were God. (332)

Ike's "freedom" is truly a contradiction in terms. He tries to live a life free of the taint of bondage, but his attempts to do so fail. Instead, he lives trapped in his own romantic notions of the wilderness, sexuality, and Godliness, which he is unable to sustain in reality. His discussions of his wife whom he is unwilling to even name reveals his fears of her. While Ike's discussion of her certainly opens her to the harsh critical discussions of her, his failure to name her demonstrates his attempt to silence

her—and the threats she represents—through his narrative power in the same way that we see Bayard do with Drusilla.

FONSIBA BEAUCHAMP

Just as Ike fails to name his wife, he fails to name the black “Yankee” whom Fonsiba marries, a marriage that complicates and contradicts Ike’s understanding of freedom and demonstrates his inability to understand freedom in relation to masculinity. Nineteen-year-old Ike is shocked by McCaslin’s words, “He wants to marry Fonsiba” (262). Ike’s distress appears to be caused by the thought of Fonsiba suddenly marrying a man who is unknown to either Ike or Cass and who is a Yankee landowner with a farm in Arkansas. Cass’s choice of words, however, emphasizes the words “wants,” highlighting the man’s desire to marry Fonsiba, a statement and desire that is never affirmed by a white man. This comment, then, stands in direct contrast to what Ike sees when he looks at the man:

he looked past McCaslin and saw the man, the stranger, taller than McCaslin and wearing better clothes than McCaslin and most of the other white men the boy knew habitually wore, who entered the room like a white man and stood in it like a white man, as though he had let McCaslin precede him into it not because McCaslin’s skin was white but simply because McCaslin lived there and knew the way, and who talked like a white man too, looking at him past McCaslin’s shoulder rapidly and keenly once and then no more, without further interest, as

a mature and contained white man not impatient but just pressed for time might have looked. (262)

Interestingly, while Ike refers to Fonsiba's "coffee-colored face" (265), he makes no mention of this man's skin color. The only inference is through the man's comparison to whiteness. The five instances of Ike's direct comparison of the man with white men highlights the man's equivalency if not his superiority to the white men. If, as Davis argues, whiteness is the equivalent of superiority for Ike (222), this confrontation that Ike witnesses between Cass and the man is a contest of masculinity, a contest in which the black man wins but is not entitled to do so by virtue of his skin color. The man's attitude toward Cass, moreover, causes Cass to insultingly remind the man of his ancestry: "Then your father was a slave," to which the man replies, "Yes. Once" (263). By quantifying his father's status as a slave as "once," the man limits the intended power dynamic of Cass's words and reinforces his status as a free man and his ability to marry, an ability that is inherent within that freed status. "I acknowledge your authority," he tells Cass, "only so far as you admit your responsibility toward her as a female member of the family of which you are the head. I dont ask your permission" (263). In response to Cass's interjection, "That will do!," the man continues: "I inform you, notify you in advance as chief of her family. No man of honor could do less. Besides, you have, in your way, according to your lights and upbringing—" (263). In response to this last statement, McCaslin again interjects this time with an implied threat: "Be off this place by full dark. Go" (264).

Ike, as witness-narrator of this exchange, emphasizes the man's masculinity and the challenge he poses to Ike's understanding of his own developing masculinity. (He consistently refers to himself as "the boy" in his narration of the events despite his age of 19.) Indeed, Ike imagines the man "watching reflected in McCaslin's pupils the tiny image of the figure he was sustaining" (264). While Ike's interpretation is that this man is posturing and "sustaining" a sense of masculinity that mirrors that of McCaslin. This encounter has a powerful effect on Ike. He perceives in the man's words—"you have, in your way, according to your lights and upbringing"—a risk to Cass's position as head of the household, a position that Ike is in line to inherit and has not yet repudiated. The man's attempt to compliment Cass on his treatment of Fonsiba is interpreted as condescension because it questions the beliefs, values, and intellect of not only McCaslin but the entire heritage that McCaslin represents. The confrontation between Cass and Fonsiba's soon-to-be husband takes place in the commissary, moreover, the place where financial transactions between the plantation owner and his tenants take place.¹⁰ This location highlights the tension between the two men over the black woman's body in an economic manner. With his belief in freedom, equality, and landownership, this black man represents the North that is drawing away black tenants like Fonsiba's brother, James Beauchamp, before her. This confrontation thus underscores McCaslin's reluctance to cede control of the black female body and the black man's willingness, ability, and desire to obtain that control.

When Ike finds Fonsiba five months later to deliver her inheritance, he is appalled to find the couple living not on a working farm, one with “no barn, no stable, not so much as a hen-coop,” but simply living in a “log cabin built by hand” (265). He finds the man there with a Fonsiba who is foreign to him. Ike interprets their existence with horror: “that rank stink of baseless and imbecile delusion, that boundless rapacity and folly, of the carpetbagger followers of victorious armies” (266). He blames the man for coming and taking Fonsiba away and turning her into someone he no longer knows. But when he asks if she is alright, her reply, “I’m free” (268)—the only words and only voice given to Fonsiba in the narrative—reflect those of her husband: “The curse you whites brought into this land has been lifted. It has been voided and discharged. We are seeing a new era, an era dedicated, as our founders intended it, to freedom, liberty and equality for all” (267). His rhetoric is imbued with the patriotic language of the Constitution, Declaration of Independence, and Pledge of Allegiance. This man’s understanding of freedom is tied to his ability to participate in the legal world around him: choosing to marry; choosing whom to marry; moving and taking ownership of his own parcel of land, sitting and reading through his spectacle-less glasses, banking his monthly pension check, and participating in the legal system—by means of his power of attorney. And, these activities are the very offenses that were made illegal by the laws in Mississippi in 1860. Ike cannot comprehend this understanding of freedom though, hypocritically demanding of her husband, “Freedom from what? From work?” (267). As a result, as Davis points out, “Ike’s conception of what freedom should be for the couple intrudes

on their freedom and their ability to exercise will and rights in an emancipated state. Ultimately, Ike circumvents the husband's will by leaving money in a bank with directions to pay Fonsiba directly three dollars a month. [...] His attempt to give Fonsiba an economic personality is figured against the context of a husband, house, and farm, which he deems inadequately productive and protective" (166).

The juxtaposition of Ike's marriage with Fonsiba's marriage demonstrates Ike's inability to distinguish between entrapment and freedom. While Ike cannot fathom Fonsiba's sense of freedom found within her marriage because of her and her husband's financial impoverishment, he paints a portrait of himself victimized by his own wife who would rather live on his family plantation than in the cheap bungalow in town. His wife's actions and body become representative of the marital bonds that he believes entrap him within a sterile marriage without progenitors. Much like his mentor Sam Fathers, Ike is trapped in a cage, "himself his own battleground, the scene of his own vanquishment and the mausoleum of his defeat" (162).

LUCAS BEAUCHAMP

In contrast to Ike's repudiation of his inheritance on his twenty-first birthday, Lucas Beauchamp, Ike's mirror image, confronts Ike on his own twenty-first birthday to claim the inheritance left to him and his siblings by Old Carothers and Uncle Buck and Uncle Buddy.¹¹ Ike believes that Lucas is asking for it so he can leave the plantation, as his siblings James and Fonsiba have done before him when they turned twenty-one. Instead, with Ike's help, Lucas deposits his inheritance in the bank, writes a check to withdraw the money, and then redeposits the funds once again.

Lucas thus begins to establish his manhood by claiming his inheritance and participating in a banking transaction on his twenty-first birthday.¹² Unlike his siblings, however, Lucas does not leave the plantation but instead marries:

But he didn't leave. Within the year he married, not a country woman, a farm woman, but a town woman, and McCaslin Edmonds built a house for them and allotted Lucas a specific acreage to be farmed as he saw fit as long as he lived or remained on the place. Then McCaslin Edmonds died and his son married and on that spring night of flood and isolation the boy Carothers was born. (106)

Not only are Lucas's actions here contrasted overall with Ike McCaslin's, but Lucas's choice and desire to marry is also juxtaposed with the contemporary plantation heir, Zack Edmonds, whose marriage is framed simply as an imperative due to his father's death. Lucas's decision to marry and remain on the plantation, moreover, is rewarded with land and a home, reinforcing his understanding of manhood in relation to marriage.

The marriage of Lucas and Molly Beauchamp arguably centers the narrative of *Go Down, Moses*, and becomes the epicenter of plantation life when Cass Edmonds builds a home for Lucas and Molly in the middle of the plantation on a parcel of land deeded to Lucas. Their marriage is represented and symbolized by the fire started on their wedding day that burns in the hearth of their home, one which "burned ever since though there was little enough cooking done on it now" (46). The hearth is the domestic center of their marriage, the structure that contains the fire—

love and passion—much as the home houses Lucas and Molly. Their marriage and the representative symbol of it within their home becomes a model for others living on the plantation. Roth, the plantation patriarch, “actually prefer[ed] the negro house, the hearth on which even in summer a little fire always burned, centering the life in it, to his own” (107). Similarly, black tenants Rider and Mannie in “Pantaloon in Black” understand the marriage and home of Lucas and Molly as one to emulate: they “built a fire on the hearth on their wedding night as the tale told how Uncle Lucas Beauchamp, Edmonds’ oldest tenant, had done on his forty-five years ago and which had burned ever since” (134). Thus, the symbol of the constantly-burning hearth conjures an understanding for Roth, Rider, and Mannie of Lucas and Molly’s enduring domestic commitment. Their home (and relationship) is viewed as stable and one admired by black and white characters alike.

While a consistent symbol of Lucas and Molly’s marriage, the symbolism of the “fire and the hearth,” evolves. The hearth is also the domestic containment of not only the love and passion of the individuals, but it is also the institution that validates Lucas’s masculinity. This relationship between Lucas’s marriage and his masculinity is demonstrated in a flashback scene in which Molly moves into Zack Edmonds’s house to care for Roth when Zack’s unnamed wife dies giving birth:

It was as though the white woman had not only never quitted the house, she had never existed—the object which they buried in the orchard two days later [...] a thing of no moment, unsanctified, nothing; his own wife, the black woman, now living alone in the house

which old Cass had built for them when they married, keeping alive on the hearth the fire he had lit there on their wedding day. (46)

Zack's wife's death poses an inconvenience because she is needed to run the household and take care of the child, but her death also conveniently frees Zack from the marital bonds while leaving him an heir for the plantation. In contrast, Lucas's frustration is caused by Molly's absence from their home. This frustration almost causes Lucas to put out the flames in the hearth:

But there had been that half-year almost and himself alone keeping alive the fire which was to burn on the hearth until neither he nor Molly were left to feed it, himself sitting before it night after night through that spring and summer until one night he caught himself standing over it, furious, bursting, blind, the cedar water bucket already poised until he caught himself and set the bucket back on the shelf, still shaking, unable to remember taking the bucket up even. (46)

While Lucas is left to tend the fire alone in his home, the elemental forces of love and passion that keeps the marriage alive, Lucas finds he is unable to do it on his own. The passion turns, moreover, to smoldering anger because Lucas believes that Zack has also exploited Molly sexually. Despite having his own home, Lucas has no power to protect Molly from the sexual advances of the white landowner:

He breathed slow and quiet. *Women*, he thought. *Women. I wont never know. I dont want to. I ruther never to know than to find out later I have been fooled.* He turned toward the room where the fire

was, where his supper waited. This time he spoke aloud: “How to God,” he said, “can a black man ask a white man to please not lay down with his black wife? And even if he could ask it, how to God can the white man promise he wont?” (58)

Lucas’s anger at his position outside the white patriarchal society, combined with his jealousy over what he views as Molly’s betrayal, coalesce into the fire in the hearth: “It was hot, not scorching, searing, but possessing a slow, deep solidity of heat, a condensation of the two years during which the fire had burned constantly above it, a condensation not of fire but of time, as though not the fire’s dying and not even water would cool it but only time would” (50-51). Rather than putting out the flames that heat the marriage, however, Lucas confronts Zack and demands Molly’s return: “almost half a year had passed and one day he went to Zack Edmonds and said, “I wants my wife. I needs her at home (46). Although often appearing to subscribe to the white patriarchal misogynic attitude, Lucas desires and cares for Molly and is committed to their marriage. His willingness to ask Zack for Molly’s return demonstrates this commitment because he risks his masculinity in doing so because the act of asking for Molly’s return will challenge Lucas’s understanding of himself as the “man of his house” by recognizing another’s authority over her.

Lucas’s inability to prevent Zack’s (perceived) sexual advances and his lack of control over her highlight the ways in which Lucas’s understanding of power and masculinity are tied to his marriage. His need to ask Zack for his wife back—“I wants my wife. I needs her at home” (46)—threatens to emasculate him: “I’m a

nigger,' Lucas said. 'But I'm a man too. I'm more than just a man. The same thing made my pappy that made your grandmaw. I'm going to take her back'" (46-47).

While recognizing his interracial heritage, his statement that he is "more than just a man" emphasizes not only that he wants her back, but that he is "going to take her back." Thus, when Zack fails to ask for his child back in return, Zack fails to restore Lucas's pride and manhood with an action that would be equitable to Lucas having had to ask for his wife back. Seeing his wife in his own bed fails to restore Lucas's manhood. Instead, Lucas focuses on her shoes: "he recognised them too. They had belonged to the white woman who had not died, who had not even ever existed" (51). This recognition—the second and final reference to Zack's wife—fuels Lucas's anger even more because Molly's wearing Zack Edmonds's dead wife's shoes symbolizes his belief that Molly had been filling the dead woman's shoes literally and metaphorically for the last half year. Lucas, therefore, resolves to confront and kill Zack regardless of the consequences—the rope and coal oil—to prove he is more than "a critter not responsible like men are responsible, not to be held like men are held" (52). He approaches Zack with the razor owned by L.Q.C. McCaslin, Lucas's grandfather and Roth's great-great-great grandfather, saying, "You never even thought that, because I am a nigger too, I wouldn't dare [try to kill you]. No. You thought that because I am a nigger I wouldn't even mind" (52). After Lucas throws his "naked blade" away (52), Zack and Lucas grapple over a pistol in the middle of the bed. Lucas succeeds in overpowering Zack and turning the pistol on him, but when he shoots, the pistol misfires.

In an ironic understanding of the incident, Lucas reminisces, "That had been a good year" (56). As readers, however, we can see that Lucas's action is impotent. Both the "naked blade" and the pistol are phallic symbols that both prove ineffective in Lucas's hands. The first Lucas "flung out the open window" saying, "I dont need no razor. My nekkid hands will do" (52). His insistence, nevertheless, that Zack get his pistol, the more powerful of the two weapons, is indicative of his understanding of their masculinities. As a black man, Lucas cannot own or carry a gun; the only weapon available to him is his white grandfather's razorblade, a weapon he deems ineffectual against Zack's pistol; thus, he throws it out the open window. By insisting that Zack get his pistol, Lucas wants to believe that his naked hands are as effective as the white man's pistol. Lucas nevertheless accepts the challenge Zack poses by throwing the pistol in the middle of the bed. The bed becomes the representation of Molly's black body, and the gun symbolizes masculine control of Molly's sexuality. Lucas thus regards his ability to turn the gun on Zack and pull the trigger an effective demonstration of his manhood even when challenged by a white man. In fact, Lucas views the entire incident as a doubly-good omen. Not only did he win the challenge, Zack lived and Lucas can, therefore, live too. If the pistol had worked properly and had not misfired, Zack would be dead and Lucas would have been faced with the choice to kill himself or face a lynching. The underlying impotence of the misfire does not matter to Lucas; what matters is the truth as he understands the incident. As Genovese describes, slavery not only had powerful ramifications on black men's

understandings of their masculinity but also on their perceptions of themselves in relation to their wives and families:

The slaveholders deprived black men of the role of provider; refused to dignify their marriages or legitimize their issue; compelled them to submit to physical abuse in the presence of their women and children; made them choose between remaining silent while their wives and daughters were raped or seduced and risking death; and threatened them with separation from their family at any moment. (490)

This treatment did not dissipate as soon as slavery ended but continued to affect black males' understandings of masculinity afterward. Thus, Lucas's associates not only his marriage with the fire in the hearth but also his recovered masculinity that he wrestled from and used against the white man by speaking up for his wife. The hearth, therefore, signifies his marriage to Molly and, more importantly, his masculinity. It becomes the centralized symbol around which Lucas establishes his manhood. Although the hearth is typically associated with the feminine, Lucas Beauchamp considers the hearth a safe and enduring receptacle for his masculinity as also represented by the fire.

Despite outside appearances, however, Molly and Lucas's later years of marriage are quite troubled due to Lucas's infatuation and obsession with a gold-finding machine. As a result, after forty-five years of marriage, Molly asks white plantation owner Roth Edmonds to assist her in getting a divorce: "I got to go clean away" (98), Molly tells him, "He's bad sick, marster" (99). Molly's request for

freedom—“And I’m afraid. I got to go. I got to be free of him” (99)—echo those of both Ike McCaslin and Fonsiba Beauchamp. Molly’s reference to Roth as “marster” demonstrates her understanding of Roth Edmonds as the head of the plantation household who can free her from her husband, a holdover from the days of slavery when slaveholders could break up families at will. Roth visits Molly and Lucas’s home in an effort to “talk to” Lucas, a confrontation that takes place in front of the hearth: “Lucas did not sit down. He went and stood at the other side of the hearth” (115). In response to Roth’s statement that Molly wants a divorce, Lucas agrees: “‘She wants a voce,’ Lucas said. ‘All right’” (115). Like Molly, Lucas asks why Roth cannot “declare us voced like you done Oscar and that yellow slut he fotched out here from Memphis last summer? You not only declared them voced, you took her back to town yourself and bought her a railroad ticket back to Memphis” (116).¹³ Roth’s response, “Because they were not married very hard” (116) reflects the durability of their marriage illuminated by the fire: Molly’s “shrunkn and tragic mask touched here and there into highlight by the fire” (115) and “the firelight touching [Lucas] too” (115). Thus while both Lucas and Molly are illuminated by the fire, it is the hearth—the marriage and the institution—that is the subject of discussion. The marriage is threatened, however, by Lucas’s need to establish his position as the patriarch of his home. When Roth attempts to tell Lucas to stop searching for gold, Lucas’s response demonstrates his need for control of his own actions, especially in his own home: “I’m a man. [. . .] I’m the man here. I’m the one to say in my house, like you and your paw and his paw were the ones to say in

his” (116). In response to Roth’s final question, “Do you want [Molly] to go?,” Lucas reiterates his position within his household: “‘I’m going to be the man in this house,’ Lucas said. It was not stubborn. It was quiet: final. His stare was as steady as Edmonds’ was, and immeasurably colder” (117). Lucas’s thus appears to prioritize his masculinity over his marriage and any threats to it—whether by Roth or Molly—are subordinate to his need to be the patriarch within his home.

Lucas’s masculinity is reified, however, by his commitment to the marriage, hearth, and home when Roth takes them to Jefferson to the county courthouse for the divorce proceedings. The Chancellor, speaking to Roth Edmonds in the courtroom, confirms Molly’s position as plaintiff, and asks if there’s “contest,” then seeing Lucas, admonishes him for his insolent behavior: “‘You, nigger! Take off your hat!’” In response, “Lucas thrust Molly aside and came to the table, removing his hat as he did so” (123), saying “We aint gonter have no contest or no voce neither” (124). In response to the Chancellor’s question, “Are you the husband?,” Lucas responds “That’s right. [...] We dont want no voce, he says, I done changed my mind” (124). Lucas’s choice to speak up in the courthouse at this particular moment is revealing. As Polk has demonstrated, “courthouse and mansion—legal structures and domestic structures—always to work to reify each other, to confirm the other in their mutually-reinforcing hegemonic positions as arbiters of law, power, and order” (“Children” 28). Lucas demonstrates his ability to make decisions about his home, his mansion, within the white power structure of the county courthouse. Like Fonsiba’s husband, Lucas demonstrates his ability to participate in legal society by reaffirming his

masculinity by way of his marriage. While including Molly in the “we” who does not desire the divorce and who wants to be married, Lucas emphasizes that it is *his* choice. His emphasis, moreover, undermines the white patriarchal control of Roth Edmonds who previously spoke for, and therefore controlled, Molly. Lucas demonstrates his masculinity by controlling Molly and his marriage and rejecting the court’s ability to say otherwise. This is his way of contradicting the Chancellor’s reference to him as “nigger,” a term Lucas associates with a lack of power and control and thus masculinity. While ceding to Molly’s wishes outside the courtroom and asking Roth to sell the gold finding machine so it no longer tempts him, Lucas emphasizes within the courthouse his ability and willingness to recommit to the marriage, emphasizing his power and control. Molly, however, is completely silenced.

NAT BEAUCHAMP’S MARRIAGE

The relationship between Lucas’s daughter, Nat, and George Wilkins also delineates Lucas’s complicated racial understandings of his masculinity. He attempts to control—and silence—the black female body of his daughter in the same manner that his power and authority are suppressed by the white patriarchy. His attempts, moreover, mirror the white patriarchy because they are motivated by financial considerations. While Lucas locates his own masculinity within his marriage, he attempts to withhold that same understanding from his daughter’s suitor for his own financial benefit when George sets up a competing alcohol still. But Nat suspects her father’s plans to tamper with George’s still, and she and George set a trap of their

own for Lucas, much like Tomey's Turl before them, which will construct a space for their marriage: "We never aimed to get you into no trouble. [Nat] say maybe ifn we took and fotch that kettle from whar you and Mister Roth told them shurfs it was and you would find it settin on yo back porch, maybe when we offered to help you git shet of it fo they got here, yo mind might change about loandin us the money to—I mean to leffen us get married" (66). Lucas therefore acquiesces to George and Nat's marriage to protect himself and George from the legal imbroglio concerning the bootlegging.

Unlike her grandmother Tennie, Nat refuses to be silent when her father acquiesces though: "Me, marry George Wilkins and go to live in a house whar the whole back porch is done already fell off and whar I got to walk a half mile and back from the spring to fetch water? He aint even got no stove!" (67). As a younger black woman, Nat's understanding of freedom is more complicated. Not content to simply marry, Nat pushes for Lucas's financial support in obtaining the household implements to complement her married life. While ceding to her wishes in order to protect himself, Lucas does demonstrate, however, paternal (and justified) concerns for Nat and her marriage that also reflect his understanding of his own troubled marriage: "She was too young to be married and face all the troubles which married people had to get through in order to become old and find out for themselves the taste and savor of peace. Just a stove and a new back porch and a well were not enough" (71). While Nat and George's marriage—and the certificate documenting it—effectively quashes the court's ability to compel Nat to testify against her father or

George and gives her a brief voice in the courtroom, Nat soon learns that her marriage has thereafter effectively silenced her voice too when, like her mother, she complains to Roth about her marriage. “Mister Roth started in to cussing and say I done waited too late because I’m Gawge’s wife now and the Law wont listen to me,” Nat tells her mother (74). Thus, while Lucas—and perhaps George too—use marriage as a way of establishing and demonstrating their masculinity, it represses and objectifies the black women.

ISAAC’S *BILDUNG*

The juxtaposition of Isaac McCaslin and Lucas Beauchamp effectively demonstrates two very contradictory understandings of masculinity in relationship to marriage. Lucas establishes and demonstrates his masculinity by not only claiming his inheritance, but, more importantly, by marrying and establishing a home in the middle of the McCaslin plantation. It is he who attempts to take on the patriarchal position that Ike relinquishes, an action of which Lucas clearly disapproves:

He, Lucas Beauchamp, the oldest living McCaslin descendent still living on the hereditary land, who actually remembered old Buck and Buddy in the living flesh, older than Zack Edmonds even if Zack were still alive, almost as old as old Isaac who in a sense, say what a man would, had turned apostate to his name and lineage by weakly relinquishing the land which was rightfully his to live in town on the charity of his great-nephew. (39)

While it may be “ironic that Lucas, the descendent of slaves is disdainful of Isaac, the descendent of slaveowners, for relinquishing his birthright” (Milloy 398), Lucas’s only way of establishing his manhood, of being “more than a nigger,” is by demonstrating his citizenship and participating in the social and legal institutions allowed to him. Marriage holds no fear of emotional entrapment that can compare with the physical bondage of slavery experienced by his parents, Tomey’s Turl and Tennie. Lucas’s marriage thus successfully adheres to the domestic *Bildungsroman*. Within his marriage he finds opportunities for growth. He confronts his mortality and understanding of himself and his masculinity in his confrontation with Zack and likewise challenges the legal representative’s description of him as a “nigger” by again taking charge of his marriage and establishing his masculinity in the court of law. His success leaves us unsurprised to find Lucas and his marriage a model for Chick Mallison in *Intruder in the Dust*.

Ike is not successful. Instead, as Vanderwerken concludes, “Ike’s life unfolds as a reverse *Bildungsroman*” (*Faulkner’s* 91). His initiation into the wilderness and his success as a hunter, ultimately stands in the way of Ike’s initiation into the community, evidenced by his extensive narration of his stunted and impotent relationship with his wife. Ike’s marriage, and specifically his refusal to name his wife, demonstrates his fear of emotional entrapment within matrimony that he psychologically has confused with the bodily entrapment and ownership of slavery. Ike’s narrative, therefore, fails to adhere to Carter’s definition of “normality” discourse. While Ike does rely on understandings of “normal” as white and

heterosexual, men in Ike's narrative are not "normal" if they are in an affectionate, reproductive, heterosexual relationship. Instead, "normality discourse," in Ike's narrative, is the privileged site of black marriages, and "normal" white masculinity takes on its oppositions. His father is "normal" when he escapes the clutches of Ike's mother, Sophonsiba, and men are "normal" when free of women's persuasion in the hunting camp.

Ike's fears are, moreover, passed on to Roth Edmonds, the last McCaslin plantation heir. Roth, like his Uncle Ike, also expresses his fear of naming women who pose a threat to his white patriarchal code: "*It was a woman*, he thought. *My father and a nigger, over a woman. My father and a nigger man over a nigger woman*, because he simply declined even to realise that he had even refused to think *a white woman*. He didn't even think Molly's name. That didn't matter" (112). But the name does matter to Roth because if he names Molly, he will have to acknowledge the possibility of his father's "ethnosexual invasion," to use Nagel's terminology, that will simultaneously shatter the myth of Lucas and Molly's home as it he understands it. This fear, if acknowledged, might produce the same understanding of his father's relationship with Molly that Ike experienced when he learned in the commissary ledgers about his grandfather's ethnosexual invasion of both Eunice and their daughter Tomasina. The confrontation between Roth's mistress and Ike in the hunting camp, therefore, allows Ike one more opportunity for domestic growth that will not only allow his arrested development to finally evolve but also allow Roth to grow within the domestic sphere.

This woman enters not only the hunting camp but Ike's tent with the expectation that Roth Edmonds, the heir and current patriarch of the McCaslin plantation, will acknowledge their relationship and child. Rather than facing the woman, Roth flees to the safety and freedom of the wilderness and hunt leaving Uncle Ike behind to face the woman: "'Tell her No,' he said. 'Tell her'" (339). In response to Ike's question, "What did you promise her that you haven't the courage to face her and retract?" (339), Roth replies "Nothing!" (339). Upon the woman's arrival, Ike invokes the language of the hunt that depicted his mother's pursuit of his father in "Was": "He's gone. You wont jump him here. Not this time" (340). Even before Ike recognizes the woman's interracial heritage, he further protects Roth's freedom by disavowing any possibility that Roth would relinquish his freedom: "'But not marriage,' he said. 'Not marriage. He didn't promise you that'" (341). But the woman—James Beauchamp's mulatta granddaughter—confronts Ike and his white male assumptions about marriage and masculinity by indicting the white patriarchal code of freedom constituting manhood for the white heirs of the McCaslin family: "I would have made a man of him. He's not a man yet. You spoiled him. You, and Uncle Lucas and Aunt Mollie. But mostly you" (343). With this statement, this woman attacks the very understanding of manhood and freedom that has sustained Ike throughout his life. While Roth is out in the wilderness hunting, Ike fails again to learn the meaning of marriage and masculinity just as he had failed with his own wife fifty years earlier.

Recognizing, moreover, the woman's black heritage, Ike attempts to mitigate the threat she poses to Roth's freedom just as Cass does to Fonsiba's soon-to-be-husband by invoking ethnic boundaries preventing marriage. "You're a nigger!" he states (344). Ike, who lived by choice for years trapped in a loveless marriage, tells her to "Go back North. Marry: a man of your own race.. [...] Marry a black man. You are young, handsome, almost white; you could find a black man who would see in you what it was you saw in him, who would ask nothing of you and expect less and get even still less than that, if it's revenge you want" (346). Ike's statement reveals his understanding of marriage as an institution meaningful only for reinforcing the breakdown of crumbling ethnic boundaries and socially and legally separating black from white. With his statement, Ike conjures the marriages of Sam Fathers' mother and Ike's grandfather's slave Eunice. Both of these female slaves, pregnant with their master's children and, despite prohibitions against slaves marrying, were "married" to male slaves by the very same owners who impregnated them. None of the parties to the marriages had choice in the decisions to marry. The marriages are framed as acts to conceal the white masters' ethnic invasions of these women.

Ike's racialized dismissal and castigation of this woman is remarkably similar to the confrontation Ike witnessed between his mother and his Uncle Hubert over Hubert's ethnic adventures with his mulatta mistress. The "nameless illicit hybrid female flesh" (289) that Ike remembers attired in his mother's dress and earrings is run out of the house by his mother:

the back, the nameless face which he had seen only for a moment, the once-hooped dress ballooning and flapping below a man's overcoat, the worn heavy carpet-bag jouncing and banging against her knee, routed and in retreat true enough and in the empty lane solitary young-looking and forlorn yet withal still exciting and evocative and wearing still the silken banner captured inside the very citadel of respectability, and unforgettable. (290)

Meanwhile, his Uncle Herbert screams, "They're free now! They're folks too just like we are!" (289). His mother's response, "That's why! That's why!" (289) echoes Ike's own statement to Roth's mistress, "Get out of here! I can do nothing for you!" (344). Sophonsiba's actions and response demonstrate even her fear that this woman could pose a threat to the Southern patriarchal mores that ensures her necessity in the culture, the position she desired and ultimately secured as Uncle Buck's wife, just as her son, Ike, recognizes the peril Roth's mistress poses to the culture Ike has rejected.

But the woman's departing statement indicts Ike not only for his racist ideologies centered on freedom and bondage, but also his ultimate understanding of marriage and what it represents. The woman asks him, "Old man, [...] have you lived so long and forgotten so much that you dont remember anything you ever knew or felt or even heard about love?" (346). She reveals her understanding of the white patriarchal code of freedom from marriage and that the fear of marriage is itself a fear of love. Love is a form of "belonging" to another person demonstrated by the accepted social practice of marriage. While male fears of marriage existed long

before American emancipation of slaves, the practice of slavery psychologically damaged the patriarchal forces that Ike represents by perpetuating slavery that bastardized marriage into a feared institution of bondage.

NOTES

¹The connection between the positions of white women and slavery in Southern culture has been noted by critics of Faulkner's work. As a result, much has been written about the treatment of women in Faulkner's texts and *Go Down, Moses* in particular. For example, Muhlenfeld argues, "to the McCaslin-Beauchamp-Edmonds men, women are on the whole unimportant; an astonishing number remain unnamed. Their role is simplicity itself: to give birth and carry on the line" ("Distaff" 198). She ultimately reveals, however, that "the women in *Go Down, Moses* carry great artistic weight" ("Distaff" 199). Muhlenfeld's detailed examination of the women demonstrates that "Faulkner invests his female characters with great strength [...] but life-affirming strength firmly rooted in reality. Each woman is a taker of risks, willing to sacrifice things as precious as reputation, wealth, life itself, to preserve the integrity of the family and the value of human life" ("Distaff" 210). Similarly, Fowler discusses in particular what she terms the "woman-dismissal" of the female characters in *Go Down, Moses*, as revealed by the "reluctance to name women" within the text, reflecting the "patriarchal biases" of the culture ("Nameless" 528). Like Muhlenfeld, she ultimately reveals that the patriarchal dismissal of women fails upon closer examination: "Yet even as Faulkner

simulates the voice of this patriarchal society, he simultaneously exposes its woman-slighting attitude. By pointedly omitting their names, Faulkner calls attention to the neglected state of women in the culture. [...] Paradoxically, then, the stories of these women are all the more poignant precisely because they are not told” (531). Building upon these arguments, I contend that the very fact that these white woman are not named, that they are seemingly dismissed as breeders by the patriarchal culture that narrates—or more often, fails to narrate—their stories reveals its fear of women as reflected within Ike’s narrative. Wedlock or marriage binds men in a relationship psychologically linked to slavery. This fear of marriage is complicated, however, by the need for women to continue the patriarchal line and produce legitimate heirs and progenitors that are only accepted by this same society if they are born within a legitimate marriage. Thus, these men paradoxically fear the very institution that ensures the literal and cultural continuation of the patriarchy.

² In his 1970 essay, “The Hidden Wound,” Wendell Berry explores the ways in which racism affects not only blacks but whites as well:

If white people have suffered less obviously from racism than black people, they have nevertheless suffered greatly; the cost has been greater perhaps than we can yet know. If the white man has inflicted the wound of racism upon black men, the cost has been that he would receive the mirror image of that wound into himself. As the master, or as a member of the dominant race, he has felt little compulsion to acknowledge it or speak of it; the more painful it has grown, the more

deeply he has hidden it within himself. But the wound is there, and it is a profound disorder, as great a damage in his mind as it is in his society. (3-4)

Similarly, Toni Morrison has more recently called for literary critics to explore “the impact of racism on those who perpetuate it.” She writes, “It seems both poignant and striking how avoided and unanalyzed is the effect of racist inflection on the subject. What I propose [...] is [an examination of] the impact of notions of racial hierarchy, racial exclusion, and racial vulnerability and availability on nonblacks who held, resisted, explored, and altered those notions” (11). Both Berry’s and Morrison’s theories help inform my examination of the impact of slavery, race, miscegenation, and gender on the institution of marriage within *Go Down, Moses*. The novel fights to distinguish the white patriarchal structures of marriage from those of the black characters. White characters attempt to escape from the entrapment perceived as a condition of marriage: the novel, in Morrison’s words, “point[s] to the hopelessness of excising racial considerations from formulations of white identity” (21). And within the United States—specifically in the Southern United States—as I’ve demonstrated, marriage laws were constructed to uphold racial purity. Marriage is, therefore, both accepted and *expected* of white patriarchs but is nevertheless an institution for them to escape or avoid.

³Throughout the novel black and white marriages are juxtaposed: in “Was” Sophonsiba Beauchamp’s attempt to entrap Theophilus “Uncle Buck” McCaslin into marriage is contrasted with Tomey’s Turl’s escape from the McCaslin plantation to

visit a female slave on the neighboring plantation; in “The Fire and the Hearth” the marriage of Lucas and Molly Beauchamp centers the narrative and is compared with the marriage of Zack Edmonds and his unnamed wife who dies in childbirth; in “Pantaloon in Black” another marital distinction exists between the black man, Rider, who is grieving for his dead wife, Mannie, and the white sheriff’s deputy who reports Rider’s actions to his own alienated wife; and in “The Bear” the marriages of Ike McCaslin and Fonsiba Beauchamp, a black woman and sister to Lucas Beauchamp, demonstrate the contradictory and racialized understandings of freedom and marriage for black and white characters. Similarly, Millgate noted long ago that the themes of love and marriage permeate the novel:

the theme is explored [...] primarily through the presentation of a series of marriages. In ‘Pantaloon in Black,’ Rider’s agony at the death of his wife is immediately contrasted with the meaninglessness of the deputy’s marriage, making it plain that the deputy’s incomprehension of Rider’s actions springs in part from his utter unfamiliarity with the kind of love which Rider has known. But these marriages connect thematically with others in the novel, principally with that of Lucas and Molly, a union sustained over long years by loyalty and by love and itself contrasted with the marriage of Ike McCaslin, a union begun in love and passion but allowed to founder on a question of principle. The materialism of Ike’s wife, her greed for possession of the plantation, is the root cause of the failure of their

marriage, but Ike's refusal to compromise in this matter contrasts unfavourably with Lucas's decision to abandon the search for gold when his activities provoke Molly to seek a divorce. (205)

While I, like Millgate, am contrasting the marriages in the novel—primarily those of Ike and Lucas as does Millgate—my purposes for doing so are quite different and we come to very different conclusions.

⁴ While recognizing Godden and Polk's alternative reading of the ledgers, my reading and argument adheres to conventional readings of the McCaslin genealogy per Ike's interpretation.

⁵ It is important to note, however, that the marriage of Tomey's Turl and Tennie is never mentioned in "Was." It is not until Ike reads the ledgers do we learn of the marriage: "*Tennie Beauchamp 21 yrs Won by Amodeus McCaslin from Hubert Beauchamp Esqre Possible Strait against three Treys in sigt Not called 1859 Marris to Tomys Turl 1859*" (259).

⁶Old Ben is described much like Ike and Sam Fathers in their old age: "solitary, indomitable, and alone; widowed childless and absolved of mortality—old Priam reft of his old wife and outlived all his sons" (186). In another description, however, Ben is described differently: "the old male bear itself, so long unwifed and childless as to have become its own ungendered progenitor" (201-02). Just as Sam Father's passes on to Ike his understandings of the world, Ben is also Ike's mentor. Vanderwerken takes this observation one step farther, equating Sam, Old Ben, and

Ike as “coevals: all three end up old, ‘unwifed and childless’ anachronisms”
(*Faulkner’s* 89).

⁷ Critics have traditionally been quite hard on Mrs. Ike McCaslin. For instance, Arthur Kinney states, “She easily seduces into marriage the innocent and naïve Ike” (89). There is absolutely no textual evidence, however, that she seduces Ike into marriage. Ike fails to disclose any details of their “courtship.” His only statement is that “he married her” after which he recounts her questions about the farm (GDM 297). Ike would like us to believe that she seduces him because that equates him with his father, Uncle Buck, in “Was” who is trapped by Sophonsiba Beauchamp but manages to escape.

⁸ Ike’s wife’s reference to the plantation house and land as “the farm” has very different connotations than calling it a “plantation.” “The farm” emphasizes the agrarian nature of Ike’s inheritance rather than its economic structure built on the institution of slavery.

⁹ See, for example, Millgate (205).

¹⁰ The commissary is also an important venue for Ike because it is in the commissary where he reads the ledgers started by his grandfather, LQC McCaslin and continued by his father and uncle, Uncle Buck and Uncle Buddy and passed on to Ike, a legacy that he rejects. It is in these ledgers that he reads about the black bodies—both male and female—that were bought and sold and recorded in the commissary ledger.

¹¹ In LQC's will, he left \$1,000 to Tomey's Turl, his "Negro son and his descendents," which Uncle Buck and Uncle Buddy increased by \$1,000 each to \$3,000 total. The inheritance, therefore, for Turl and Tennie's three surviving children—James, Fonsiba, and Lucas—is \$1,000 each (261). James "disappears" on his twenty-first birthday, and Ike attempts to find him in order to give him his inheritance, but loses him somewhere in Tennessee. Ike set up the account for Fonsiba with her share, which will pay her \$3 per month for almost 28 years.

¹² Lucas's willingness to participate in a banking transaction directly contrasts with Ike who refuses to do so. Cass sets up a "loan" for Ike that will pay him \$30 per month and delivers the first \$30 to Ike, telling him "you will have to go to the bank and get it next month because I wont bring it to you" (294). Ike never takes a withdrawal, however, and only deposits enough of his earnings into the account to repay the \$30 Cass loans him (296). When, at Cass's direction, the bank manager cannot transfer the "balance" back to Cass, Ike refuses to open another account for his own money. Instead, "the coins the silver and the bills" accumulate in the bottom of a lockless trunk in his boarding room (296).

¹³ Milloy, commenting upon this passage, states, "the question is disturbing because it shows just how sacred Lucas holds the institution of marriage. He likens his situation to Oscar's and obviously thinks of Molly in the same terms that he thinks of Oscar's mistress. He seems willing to forget quite quickly someone with whom he has spent two-thirds of his life. He wants the easiest, quickest, and cheapest way out of a forty-five-year relationship" (403). I do not think Lucas's statement is quite this

simple. Nor do I find any textual support for Lucas's belief that he thinks of Molly as a "slut." Instead, I think his question to Roth demonstrates Lucas's ignorance of the family law system and divorce in particular. See my discussion of *Intruder in the Dust* for further refutation of this argument.

The American really loves nothing but his automobile: not his wife his child nor his country nor even his bankaccount first [...] but his motorcar. Because the automobile has become our national sex symbol. [...] So we have to divorce our wife today in order to remove from our mistress the odium of mistress in order to divorce our wife tomorrow in order to remove from our mistress and so on. As a result of which the American woman has become cold and undersexed; she has projected her libido onto the automobile not only because its glitter and gadgets and mobility pander to her vanity and incapacity (because of the dress decreed upon her by the national retailers association) to walk but because it will not maul her and tousle her, get her all sweaty and disarranged. So in order to capture and master anything at all of her anymore the American man has got to make that car his own.

~*Intruder in the Dust*

The Man in the House: Domestic Masculinity in *Intruder in the Dust*

At the end of *Intruder in the Dust*, Chick Mallison listens to his uncle and apparent mentor theorize that the automobile has replaced women in men's affections. As though women are a product of Henry Ford's assembly line, Gavin argues that women and cars are interchangeable. While Gavin first places responsibility on men because they love the automobile more than anything else, he conversely argues that men love the car because the woman has intentionally "projected her libido" onto it. Women have spurned affection and physical attention from men by turning into the cold steel body of the car. Men, rather than caressing the bodies of women, spend "all day Sunday morning washing and polishing and waxing [the car] because in doing that he is caressing the body of the woman who has long since denied him her bed" (233-34). In response to his nephew's rejection of his argument—"That's not true" (234)—Gavin uses his personal experience as further

support. “I am a fifty-plus years old,” Gavin tells Chick: “I spent the middle fifteen of them fumbling beneath skirts. My experience was that few of them were interested in love or sex either. They wanted to be married” (234). Despite his uncle’s worldliness, Chick again rejects the argument, crying, “I still dont believe it” (234).

Their discussion appears to be just one more instance when Gavin Stevens sermonizes to Chick about his political beliefs. Gavin’s argument concerning marriage, therefore, seems to have no relation to the novel’s central focus on race relations within the South or the tension between the North and South overall. Under closer examination, however, this flippant and seemingly inconsequential comment about marriage highlights an aspect of the text open for further investigation: the relationships between marriage, masculinity, and mastery. Chick, rather than his uncle, is not only the protagonist of the action, but the novel’s narrator as well. It is Chick’s actions—and more importantly, his willingness to act—that save Lucas Beauchamp from being lynched. The novel is, therefore, Chick Mallison’s *Bildungsroman*. As Cleanth Brooks states, “this novel has to do essentially with a young boy’s growing up into manhood” (288). Chick’s *bildung* involves traveling in the middle of the night to Beat Four to dig up the body of Vincent Gowrie in order to prove Lucas’s innocence. This journey—like Quentin’s journey to the Sutpen house to bear witness to its utter collapse, Bayard’s journey to track down and avenge his grandmother’s murder, and Ike McCaslin’s journey’s into the woods to meet Old Ben without his watch and compass—appears to result in Chick’s ascent into Southern

masculinity or, in Michael Millgate's words, Chick's ability "to find his final affirmative vision of the South" (215).

Manhood, as I demonstrated in the preceding chapters, is not quite this simple, however. Chick's masculinity is also defined by his ability to situate himself in relation to the domestic space of home. In *Go Down, Moses*, we witnessed a sustained comparison between competing understandings of masculinity in relationship to the household. White men, like Ike McCaslin, are rarely seen inside their home; they are found instead in the outdoors. In contrast, black men, like Lucas Beauchamp, establish their masculinity by claiming the domestic space of the home as their own. Thus, marriage and the domestic space are viewed by Ike as a threat to his masculinity, whereas Lucas finds opportunities for growth inside his marriage and home. In *Intruder in the Dust*, Chick Mallison observes a similar understanding of white and black understandings of marriage with his own middle-class white parents' marriage and Lucas Beauchamp's marriage. These specific portraits of marriage are much more sustained and focused comparisons than those in *Go Down, Moses*. They are also viewed from Chick's third-party perspective rather than the subjective perspectives of Ike and Lucas.

Like his predecessor Ike McCaslin in *Go Down, Moses* who attempts to come to terms with his heritage when confronted with Lucas Beauchamp, Chick's understanding of marriage and the domestic space is also brought into focus by his encounter with Lucas Beauchamp. Ike watches Lucas establish his manhood by claiming his inheritance and participating in a banking transaction on his twenty-first

birthday after which he marries and establishes a household, securing his position as the “man” of his house. But unlike Ike who is already a grown man by this point and who watches Lucas take on a role of masculinity that he, himself, rejected, Chick is a twelve-year old boy who finds Lucas, however reluctantly, a model of masculinity who contrasts vividly with both his own father and his bachelor Uncle Gavin, his mother’s twin. Chick offers an in-depth portrayal of the domestic space of Lucas’s home and Lucas and Molly’s marriage as he interprets it. Similarly, Chick observes his parents’ white middle-class marriage within the domestic space of his own home, and he narrates their interactions in detail. Unlike his parents’ marriage, which, as I will demonstrate, is a less than model relationship because it renders his father, Charles Mallison, ineffectual within the marriage, Chick witnesses in the Beauchamp home a strong patriarchal relationship that emphasizes Lucas’s masculinity.

Chick rejects both his father’s model of impotent domestic and Lucas’s strong patriarchal masculinity located within both men’s marriage in favor of his uncle’s model of bachelorhood. Because of his comparison of his parents’ marriage and Lucas’s marriage, Chick recognizes that both marriages rely upon the oppression of one of the individuals in order to establish the dominance of the other. In Lucas’s marriage, Molly is objectified as Lucas’s possession whose presence upholds Lucas’s masculinity; in his parents’ marriage, his father is blotted out and rendered impotent and irrelevant in his own home by Maggie Mallison’s assertive and independent personality and her alignment with her twin brother. Both of these marriages highlight the issue of mastery and dominance that Gavin refers to in his sermon on

marriage. In contrast to Gavin's statement that man is only able to master an automobile, Chick recognizes a competitive need for mastery in the two marriages he observes.

This competition within the marriages is highlighted by Chick's attempt to assert his own fledgling masculinity over Lucas. When Chick encounters Lucas Beauchamp, he has just fallen into a creek, "something a girl might have been expected and even excused for doing but nobody else" (5). It is at this most vulnerable moment that Lucas fishes him out of the water and takes him home. Because Lucas is black, however, Chick attempts to declare his superiority by paying for his hospitality. While Molly, Lucas's wife, may have taken the money, Lucas refuses it. As the coins fall to the floor, so does Chick's masculinity. From that point forward, Chick refers to himself as "impotent" [sic] (18) and repeatedly seeks not only to repay Lucas's kindness and generosity but to liberate himself from the model of domestic masculinity by demonstrating his superiority to Lucas, an attempt that Lucas foils.

Like Ike McCaslin who is obsessed with "freedom" in *Go Down, Moses*, Chick finds himself consumed by the desire to escape his attachment to Lucas until he meets Lucas in town one afternoon and Lucas fails to recognize him. At this point Chick finally declares himself "free, the man who for three years had obsessed his life waking and sleeping too had walked out of it" (26). Chick's freedom ends, however, when he learns that Lucas did not acknowledge him in town because he was grieving over Molly's death, a grief that recalls Rider's grief for Mannie in *Go Down, Moses*:

“*She had just died then. That was why he didn’t see me. That was why he didn’t have the toothpick: thinking with a kind of amazement: He was grieving. You dont have to not be a nigger in order to grieve*” (ID 25). Chick initially senses relief, therefore, at learning that Lucas has committed a crime that is “going to make a nigger out of him once in his life anyway” (31), granting Chick and the rest of the white male community freedom from Lucas’s threatening masculinity. But, at the same time, Chick’s admiration for and bond to Lucas motivates him to act on Lucas’s behalf and dig up the Gowrie grave in order to demonstrate Lucas’s innocence of the crime of which he is accused.

This journey, of course, is usually interpreted as a successful *Bildungsroman* because Chick is changed by this life-altering experience of saving Lucas’s life. Through his *bildung*, Chick does develop an understanding of the individual humanity that transcends race, class and gender. He recognizes the grief felt by Lucas when Molly dies, he identifies Ned Gowrie’s grief for his dead son, and he also acknowledges and respects his mother and Miss Habersham who are willing to act outside their prescribed roles as women. Nevertheless, Chick is not positioned to successfully integrate into his community in terms of domesticity. While marriage is a way into the community, Chick is only a teenage boy who is not yet in a position to marry. Nevertheless, at the end of the novel and contrary to his rejection of his uncle’s position, Chick is ambiguously positioned still as a child, aligned with his uncle and looking down on the community as an outsider to marriage, which is not

inappropriate because of his age. But in subsequent portraits of Chick in Faulkner's later Yoknapatawpha fiction Chick continues to remain an adolescent outsider.

CHARLES AND MAGGIE MALLISON'S MARRIAGE

Critical readings of Chick's upbringing in *Intruder in the Dust* is overwhelmingly positive, and most critics attribute it to his parents and the positive environment their marriage creates for him.¹ In her examination of Charles and Maggie Mallison's marriage in *The Town*, Anne Colclough Little argues that while Maggie and Charles Mallison's marriage appears to be one of the most positive portrayals of marriage in Faulkner's oeuvre, under closer examination, "the Mallison marriage comes to resemble a far less model relationship" (463). Specifically demonstrating the triadic relationship of Maggie, Charles, Gavin, Little argues that the

Mallison marriage is not an example of 'mature sexual love,' and Maggie is not the family's 'cohesive center.' Through subtle hints that reveal basic flaws in the marriage, incestuous overtones in the attachment for the wife for her brother, and the husband's jealousy and retaliation, Faulkner shows yet another example of a distorted male-female relationship in a Waste Land world. (477)

Little limits her argument to a discussion of *The Town* though and does not examine the Mallison marriage in *Intruder in the Dust*.

Little's argument about the Mallison marriage can be extended to *Intruder in the Dust*. For the most part in *Intruder in the Dust*, Charles (referred to as both

“Charley” and “Charlie” in the text) Mallison is absent and unaware of his son’s actions. There are only two scenes that involve both Chick’s parents: at dinner the night before Chick’s first trip to the Gowrie grave and the following morning at the breakfast table. In the first, Charles is completely silent. Chick states his intention to go to the picture show, and his mother, fearful of the atmosphere in town due to Lucas’s arrest, doesn’t want him to go:

“I dont want him to go to town tonight. I don’t want—” and then at last one wail one cry to the supreme: his father himself: out of that nighttraddled dragonregion of fears and terrors in which women—mothers anyway—seemed from choice almost to dwell: “Charlie—” until his uncle put his napkin down and rose too and said:

‘Then here’s your chance to wean him.’ (32)

While Chick’s father is obviously at the table and being appealed to by Maggie to back her decision, her brother, rather than her husband, interjects himself into Maggie’s conversation, dismissing her fears, and overriding her decision. Despite Chick’s ironic use of “the supreme” in reference to his father, Charles never responds to his wife’s concern. Instead, Charles is blotted out and replaced by Maggie’s brother.

Similarly, the next morning, Gavin mediates the reactions to Chick’s overnight adventure. When Chick returns home seeking help, he significantly goes not to his father, but to his uncle’s room. While this may appear a logical choice because of his uncle’s position as County Attorney and Chick needs help seeking help

from the local sheriff, it is one more example of Chick's acknowledged "blind and absolute attachment to his mother's only brother which he had never tried to reason about" (21). When his mother, awake and waiting for Chick, demands an explanation for his whereabouts, his uncle, asks "Now Maggie, do you want to wake Charley?" (104) as though waking Charles will only cause more problems. Gavin's question succeeds in quieting Maggie and gaining her consent for Chick to accompany Gavin to the sheriff's home. The second interaction between Maggie and Charles takes place later that morning after Chick and Gavin return home after visiting the sheriff. Upon walking in the door, they meet not Maggie, but "his father already roaring who came out of the diningroom and still at it even with his uncle yelling back almost into his face" (122). Maggie insinuates herself into the instantaneous and volatile argument between Charles and Gavin, reprimanding Charles as if he were a child: "Charley. Go back and finish your breakfast. Paralee isn't feeling well this morning and she doesn't want to be all day getting dinner ready" (123). Maggie's dismissal of Charles's anger and his banishment to the breakfast table sounds remarkably similar to her later comment to Chick: "'Dry your face and comb your hair,' she said. 'Then come on down and drink your coffee'" (124). Her calmness in the face of the argument between Gavin and Charles also implies a repetition, as if this is only one more argument in a long line of such arguments, one more demonstration of a continued hostility between the two men rather than a specific occurrence. She treats both Charles and Chick, therefore, like children.

In both of these scenes, there are distinct tensions within the marriage. In the first scene, Charles is silent. We only know he is present because of Maggie's plea. Chick notes that he was "sitting down at the familiar table in the familiar room among the bright linen and silver and the water glasses and the bowl of narcissus and gladioli and a few roses in it too and his uncle said [...]" (31). Among all the "familiarity," there is absolutely no mention of his father. Instead, it is Gavin who interrupts Chick's thoughts and responds to his mother's concern by dismissing it. In the second scene, there is also a lack of clear communication between Charles and Maggie. Chick does not report the dialogue of the argument between Charles and Gavin but he does report Maggie's specific interjection and reprimand to Charles. Her interjection and reprimand demonstrates Maggie's alignment not with her husband, but with her brother as she blatantly dismisses her husband's concerns. Maggie's reference to Paralee, moreover, indicates again that Charles is more of an impediment to the household than an integral part of the family operations and certainly not the patriarch of the household.

This latter scene causes Chick to flashback to other familial scenes that denote a pattern of similar tensions between Charles and Maggie. The first flashback concerns Chick and his horse, Highboy, which Gavin bought for him and Charles's concerns about Chick jumping Highboy over the watertrough:

when his father came home and found him jumping Highboy over the concrete watertrough in the lot, his mother leaning on the fence watching and his father's fury of relief and anger and his mother's

calm voice this time: “Why not? The trough isn’t near as tall as that flimsy fence-thing you bought him that isn’t even nailed together.

(124)

Here Charles is again full of blustering anger at Chick’s actions, but Chick once again fails to report the specific wording of his father’s complaints. In contrast, Maggie’s words are recounted as she not only dismisses his concern but also insults Charles’s judgment and parenting responsibilities, referring to his contribution as the “flimsy fence-thing” that “isn’t even nailed together.” The overriding implication in Maggie’s response to Charles’s outburst is that her husband is somehow failing to provide for his family.

Charles Mallison’s “roaring” brings Chick again back to the present. His father’s demand—presumably to Chick, ““Dammit, why didn’t you tell me last night? Dont you ever again—”” (124)—is interrupted, answered, and dismissed by Gavin. When, at his mother’s request, Paralee serves Chick coffee, his father again loudly demands, this time of his mother,

“Coffee? What the devil is this? I thought the agreement was when you finally consented for Gavin to buy that horse that he would neither ask for nor even accept a spoonful of coffee until he was eighteen years old:” and his mother not even listening, with the same hand and in the same manner half shoving and half popping the cream pitcher then the sugar bowl into his reach and already turning back toward the kitchen. (125)

His father's blustering rage is treated much the same way here as it is in each interaction both in the present day and in flashbacks: it is dismissed and ignored as though by habit by Maggie. She responds to him about Chick's coffee the same way as she responded to Charles's concern about Chick jumping the horsetrough and his anger at being the last to find out about Chick's escapades the night before. Charles's specificity, moreover, in his frustrated rebuke about the coffee is that Maggie is failing to live up to an agreement reached about coffee in return for her acquiescence for Gavin to buy the horse. Charles's irritation does not seem to be with the fact that Chick is drinking coffee but appears symptomatic of larger issues within their marriage. His anger also reflects his continued frustration at not being listened to or consulted within the marriage by anyone and Maggie's continued alliance with her brother. His concern about Chick's coffee drinking receives the same response as his statement, "He's got to go to school" (126). No one listens. Indeed, Chick's observation concerning this last statement, "But even his uncle didn't listen" (126), implies, moreover, that Gavin responds more often to Charles's complaints than Maggie.

Chick's narration of his parents' interactions reveals a consistency and pattern. The tension emanating from his father toward his mother and brother is as familiar as the table and room that Chick describes. Like the dinner-table scenes that Little examines in *The Town*, during these dining room scenes in *Intruder in the Dust*, "Maggie's behavior increasingly suggests that the twinship between brother and sister is an abnormally close one which could intensify the jealousy and exacerbate other

marital weaknesses” (Little 470). Indeed, Maggie’s behavior certainly suggests that she is the domineering force within her marriage and, as Vanderwerken observes, she “seem[s] more important in the boy’s mind than the father” (*Faulkner’s* 106).

Maggie’s strong maternal nature also dominates her interactions with her husband. Rather than Maggie and Charles working together to direct Chicks’ development, she and Gavin do so. Many of the tensions that may be considered “normal” between a husband and a wife concerning the raising of their child emanate from the relationship of Gavin and Maggie rather than that between Charles and Maggie. For instance, the agreement forged regarding Chick’s coffee drinking refers back to a disagreement between Maggie and Gavin about Chick’s horse. Similarly, it is Gavin who refers to “weaning” Chick rather than his father. Even Chick’s discussion of his horse, Highboy, he accentuates that Highboy is his uncle’s gift to him, a gift that moves him one step farther away from childhood: “his uncle had given him the Shetland pony someone had taught to take eighteen- and twenty-four-inch jumps and [...] his father had given him the first actual powder-shooting gun” (123). While Chick also mentions his father’s gift to him of the gun, Chick’s emphasis and dependence on Highboy throughout the novel highlights the importance of the horse to his development into manhood rather than the gun. While the gun may be a traditional phallic symbol that represents an acknowledgement by a father of his son’s emerging masculinity, the one hunting expedition that Chick discusses in his narration occurs when he goes rabbit hunting on the Edmonds plantation and falls into the creek and meets Lucas Beauchamp for the first time after which he describes

himself full of “inpotent [sic] fury” that imitates his father’s blustering rage and is unable to shoot (18). While his experience with the gun, his father’s gift, results in embarrassment, it is his uncle’s gift that appears to enable his excursion into manhood.

At no time does Chick report a positive interaction between his parents. As Little notes of the Mallison marriage in *The Town*, “The relationship of Maggie and Charles Mallison fails to offer the positive, healthy, loving relationship” (476) suggested by critics. His father, when not roaring and raging as Chick reports in these scenes or in the description of his father’s reaction to Ephraim’s information as to where to find his mother’s ring (“And he remembered his father’s not rage so much as outrage, his almost furious repudiation, his transference of the whole thing [his mother’s ring] into the realm of assailed embattled moral principle” [70]), Charles Mallison appears in the home as a “crackle of the paper” and the smell of “the cigar burning in the ashtray” only (80-81). His father’s constant rage that Chick describes reveals an underlying tension within in his family home and specifically within the Mallison marriage. Chick’s portraits of his father raging and roaring indicate that Charles is not only disturbed by his inability to be heard, but is so used to it that he must rage in order to be heard, and even then he is ignored by all with little respect from anyone least of all his wife or his wife’s brother. Chick too seems to have little respect for or interaction with his father, one reason for which may be explained by his father’s response to his adventure. In a unique scene in which Chick narrates a “conversation” between himself and his father without his mother and uncle’s

presence, his father reveals seething sarcasm and racist ideologies in his questions to Chick:

his father flung a little back in his chair looking at him and talking, asking him just how scared Aleck Sander was and if he wasn't even scarer than Aleck Sander only his vanity wouldn't allow him to show it before a darky and to tell the truth now, neither of them would have touched the grave in the dark even enough to lift the flowers off of it if Miss Habersham hadn't driven them at it. (126)

His uncle, however, returns to the room in the middle of Charles's questioning, interrupting without even acknowledging Charles, saving Chick from answering his father and commencing his own line of germane questions. Commenting upon this scene, Masami Sugimori states that "Mr. Mallison [is] saturated with the sense of hierarchy between white adults, white children, and 'darkies,' trivializes Chick's potentially disruptive enterprise by 'reducing it to the terms of a kind of kindergarten witchhunt' and by facetiously asking the son if each grave-robber acted out his/her ideologically assigned role" (70). Certainly in this line of questioning, Chick's father offers no model of masculinity outside that of the white Southern ideology. To him Chick is a child and his attempts to save Lucas's life are irrelevant. In his final parting shot to Maggie, Chick and Gavin, Charles makes one final attempt to assert his own "ideologically assigned role" as the family patriarch:

his father more or less plunged up from the table, clattering his chairlegs back across the floor, saying:

“Maybe I better go to work. Somebody’ll have to earn a little bread around here while the rest of you are playing cops and robbers:” and went out and apparently the coffee had done something to what he called his thinking processes or anyway the processes of what people called thinking because now he knew the why for his father too—the rage which was relief after the event which had to express itself some way and chose anger not because he would have forbidden him to go but because he had no chance to, the pseudo-scornful humorous impugment of his and Aleck Sander’s courage which blinked not even as much at a rifled grave in the dark as it did at Miss Habersham’s will,—in fact the whole heavy-handed aspiration of the whole thing by reducing it to the terms of a kindergarten witchhunt: which was probably merely the masculine form of refusing also to believe that he was what his uncle called big enough to button his pants and so he dismissed his father. (130)

Charles’s mention of earning “a little bread” sounds remarkably like Jason Compson’s complaints in *The Sound and the Fury* in which Jason protests against his lack of respect as head of his household. Unheard by all, Charles impotently attempts to invoke his ideological role of “breadwinner” as a means of gaining respect—a role that Maggie undermines with her accusation about the “flimsy fence thing” he purchased for his son. Charles’s masculinity is therefore found only outside the home and in his role as “breadwinner;” there is no acknowledgement of his masculinity

within the home. Similarly, Chick attempts to dismiss his father's comments as a refusal to recognize Chick's developing masculinity, but Chick also admits that he deprived his father of the opportunity to forbid him to go. Aware of his father's presence in the library the night before, he knows his father "would have their car keys in his pocket until he would remember when he undressed to leave them where his mother could find them tomorrow morning." He imagines himself approaching his father requesting the keys to make his midnight errand: "*Let me have the keys, Pop. I want to run out to the country and dig up a grave*" (81). Chick does not approach his father, though, and the one interaction between the two at the breakfast table, perhaps demonstrative of their relationship overall, explains why. His father's rage is his single "masculine" response to Chick's maturation and therefore earns only Chick's dismissive attitude for the remainder of the novel.

GAVIN STEVENS' INTERFERENCE IN THE MALLISON MARRIAGE

Gavin functions throughout Chick's narration more as a "husband" to Maggie and father to Chick than does Charles. Indeed, the traditional roles of Gavin and Charles are reversed. Charles appears to come and go from the house unshackled from his responsibilities to the rest of the family in a manner that echoes Ike's fear of domination in *Go Down, Moses*. Charles is a modern reincarnation of the white patriarchy of *Go Down, Moses*, who, fearful of bondage and entrapment in the home, has abandoned his role as head of the household, leaving the space available for Maggie herself to fill. Maggie's dominance is challenged only by her twin brother, who, himself lacking a household, takes over and fills the role of family patriarch of

the Stevens family as represented by his inheritance of the “rolltop desk” and “the heavy swivel roller chair which had been [Chick’s] grandfather’s before his uncle’s” (29). But neither is Gavin the leading voice of authority within his brother-in-law’s household as he also is unable to control Maggie and ultimately appeals to Charlie to control her behavior (“‘Maggie!’ his uncle said. ‘You cant! Charley—’”), an appeal that Charles ignores and Maggie herself quashes (125). Nevertheless, as Little states of the Mallison marriage in *The Town*, Chick’s narration in *Intruder in the Dust* “reveals a close brother-sister relationship, creating a [...] jealous triangle” (475). Charles’s roaring and raging may come across as humorous upon first reading, but it reveals an undercurrent of jealousy and frustration on Charles’s part as a reaction to his wife’s continued alignment with her twin brother and his own ineffectuality within the marriage. Gavin’s continued interference within the marriage is troubling despite its apparent “normalcy” as perceived by Chick who is abnormally close to his uncle. Chick admirably describes his uncle as “a bachelor of fifty thirty-five years free of woman’s dominion” (120), but Chick’s own narration of events contradicts his assessment. Gavin is not free of “women’s dominion” since he is so closely involved in his sister’s marriage.² Gavin’s involvement in his sister’s family models Snyder’s description of the “bachelor’s vexed ‘relation to married society,’ and to conventional familial and domestic life more generally” (18-19). Howard P. Chudacoff similarly discusses the bachelor’s ambiguous relationship to family and domestic life:

Like other people with kinfolk, unmarried adult males held membership in the family into which they were born, their family of

orientation, whether that family was distant or nearby. [...] They attended family gatherings, visited and corresponded with siblings and parents, and sometimes exchanged money or services with their close relatives. But like rogue elephants, bachelors also roamed freely, moving freely, moving about their environment unshackled from responsibility to anyone except themselves, and, as rogues are wont to do, they occasionally stirred up trouble for the rest of the population.

(21)

Gavin does more than “hold membership” in his sister’s family, and is not “unshackled from responsibility” because he holds a position of responsibility within the family network. Gavin, moreover, does not appear to “roam freely” because he not only participates in the family dynamic but literally lives in his married sister’s household. Instead it is Charles who roams freely and is unshackled from his responsibilities. When Chick returns home from his adventure, he is met by his mother, “her hair loose and in her nightdress,” and goes to his “uncle’s door” (103). Similarly, when Chick tells the circumstances of being invited to Carothers Edmonds’ plantation to go hunting, he is very specific about the circumstances:

Edmonds was a friend of his uncle; they had been in school at the same time at the State University, where his uncle had gone after he came back from Harvard and Heidelberg to learn enough law to get himself chosen County Attorney, and the day before Edmonds had come in to town to see his uncle on some county business and had

stayed the night with them and at supper that evening Edmonds had said to him:

“Come out home with me tomorrow and go rabbit hunting.”
and then to his mother: “I’ll send him back in tomorrow afternoon. I’ll send a boy along with him while he’s out with his gun.” and then to him again: “He’s got a good dog.”

“He’s got a boy,” his uncle said and Edmonds said:

“Does his boy run rabbits too?” and his uncle said:

“We’ll promise he wont interfere with yours.” (4)

I quote this extended passage to demonstrate the continued pattern of Gavin and Maggie’s alignment in making decisions for Chick as well as Charles’s silence or absence. It also demonstrates Chick’s knowledge of his uncle’s past (we learn nothing correspondingly about his father’s past) and the circumstances of Edmonds’ visit in which he stayed the night with “them.” While Edmonds is certainly Gavin’s guest rather than the guest of either his mother or father, Chick describes the circumstances of extending hospitality to a friend of Gavin’s in his brother-in-law’s home as completely “normal.” According to Snyder, however, the “bachelor,” in addition to his predominant feature of “diverging from the admittedly conflicting norms of bourgeois manhood” (28), does not reside within the same residence as a family in order to reinforce his “individual autonomy,” “personal freedom,” and “anti-domestic” persona. Bachelors instead resided outside the boundaries of domesticity like Edmonds and the stereotypical Yoknapatawpha bachelors who come

to town only on Saturday nights for drunken debauchery: “Bachelors were thus represented as a danger against which other multi-unit dwellers, single and married, male and female, had to gird themselves” (Snyder 38). The threats posed by the “bachelor,” both real and imagined, are many including seducing married men into masculine excesses, “the improper absence or permeability of boundaries between male and female spaces,” and, most importantly to the discussion of Gavin, “the bachelor intruder breaches the security of proper domesticity, adding to the profusion of ways in which a bachelor may be in, yet not fully of, the home” (Snyder 39). Thus, the context of the bachelor is defined by a specific “set of relations—the private sphere, the family, marriage—from which bachelors themselves were nominally excluded” (Snyder 20). While the bachelor is not married, he is defined specifically by his excluded relationship to marriage and the home: “Although home and marriage were not literally synonymous, their ideologies were so intrinsically interwoven that they were virtually interchangeable” (Snyder 21). The bachelor’s relationship to bourgeois domesticity is thus normally one of “spectatorship” because he stands on the “domestic threshold,” but cannot enter.

Gavin fails to meet much of the criteria for a “bachelor” despite his unmarried status. Unlike Uncle Buck and Uncle Buddy in *Go Down, Moses*, who are “free of woman’s dominion,” Gavin lives within his sister’s household, functions not as a “spectator” but instead is an intrinsically-involved and active participant in domestic relationships within that household. His involvement does, however, constitute more than a “threat” and does more than “breach” the security of the “normal domesticity”

of Maggie and Charlie's marriage. Gavin is an interloper in his sister's marriage, undermining his brother-in-law's position as husband and father, the "nominal head of his household," and breaches the "inviolable privacy of the family" (Snyder 37). The one interaction Chick reports concerning jumping highboy over the watertrough, which takes place solely between his parents without Gavin's interference, demonstrates Maggie's repudiation of her husband's objections and contempt for his provisions for his family. In all other interactions, Gavin's interference appears to trigger much of the hostility within the marriage. This meddling undermines any overall understandings of the Mallison marriage as either "healthy" or "normal" as critics have argued. While Chick's home may not carry the negative weight of the "dark houses" that Polk discusses in which violence dominates, Chick's home certainly burdens Chick with "emotional and psychic baggage that [dark houses] create for the children to carry with them for the rest of their lives" ("Children" 31). Chick's home thus fails to provide him with a sanctuary, and, despite its familiarity, his narration exposes a constant tension within his home; it is instead his Uncle's office to which he escapes when he needs a reprieve, a space that is marked by bachelor domesticity:

Unlocking the door with his key then locking it with the thumbblatch behind him and crossed to the heavy swivel roller chair which had been his grandfather's before his uncle's and sat down behind the littered table which his uncle used in place of the rolltop desk of his grandfather's old time [...] the last of the sun coming through the

mulberry tree then the window behind him onto the table the stacked untidy papers the inkwell the tray of paperclips and fouled rusted penpoints and the pipecleaners and the overturned corn cob pipe in the spill of ash beside the stained unwashed coffee cup and saucer and the colored mug from the Heidelberg *stübe* filled with twisted spills of newspaper to light the pipes with like the vase sitting on Lucas' mantel that day and before he even knew he had thought of it he rose taking up the cup and saucer and crossed the room picking up the coffee pot and the kettle too in passing and in the lavatory emptied the grounds and rinsed the pot and cup and filled the kettle and set it and the pot the cup and saucer back on the shelf and returned to the chair and sat down again after really no absence at all, still in plenty of time to watch the table and all its familiar untidy clutter all fading toward one anonymity of night as the sunlight died. (29)

Unlike the neat and tidy dining room of his home, the cluttered and messy office highlights his uncle's masculinity in a way that his home never reflects his father's presence. Gavin's presence within the home certainly expands the family network available to Chick and provides emotional support just as his office provides Chick with an alternative model of masculine domesticity embedded in fraternal understanding. Gavin's competition with Charles for dominance within the home, however, fails to provide Chick with a cohesive understandings of a man's

responsibilities to a marriage. It also demonstrates Maggie's independence of male mastery; instead it is she who is the domineering force in her household.

LUCAS AND MOLLY BEAUCHAMP'S MARRIAGE

Chick sees a very alternative model of marriage in Lucas Beauchamp's black patriarchal marriage. When Chick first encounters Lucas, he sees "gum boots [...] and then the legs, the overalls rising out of them and he [...] saw a Negro man with an axe on his shoulder, in a heavy sheep-lined coat and a broad pale felt hat such as his grandfather had used to wear, looking at him and that was when he saw Lucas Beauchamp for the first that he remembered or rather for the first time because you didn't forget Lucas Beauchamp" (6). Although first Chick sees a "Negro man," his comparison of Lucas to his grandfather, a man whom he obviously respected, undermines Chick's understanding of his first observation. Chick's narration, moreover, reveals his instant and continuous awareness of Lucas's masculinity: while he describes Lucas as a Negro once, he consistently refers to Lucas as "the man" at least five times before Lucas even speaks to Chick. At Lucas's command, "Come on to my house" (7), Chick attempts to refuse but, unlike his interactions with either his father or uncle, he is forced to comply simply because Lucas does not acknowledge or allow Chick's refusal.

Chick's remarkably detailed and specific descriptions of Lucas's home emphasize its masculinity. Chick's descriptions of the Beauchamp home, in fact, contradict Yaeger's assertion that "What is missing from Faulkner's epic fiction but present in writers such as Walker or Welty is a sense of the ways race functions in the

nonepic everyday” (xv). Chick’s narrative highlights the ways that race is encapsulated in the domestic “everyday” experience of Lucas and Molly’s home. For a young man of twelve, Chick is remarkably observant (and remembers vividly at sixteen) details: “the paintless wooden house, the paintless picket fence [with the] paintless latchless gate” (8) and the yard that he imagines would be

grassless even in summer; [...] completely bare, no weed no sprig of anything, the dust each morning swept by some of Lucas’ womenfolks with a broom made of willow switches bound together, into an intricate series of whorls and overlapping loops which as the day advanced would be gradually and slowly defaced by the droppings and the cryptic three-toed prints of chickens. (9)

As Fowler notes of this description, “the same words used repeatedly to describe Lucas, ‘independent and intractable,’ also describe his house. We note as well that the house is repeatedly and emphatically characterized as ‘paintless.’ [...] Like his house, which is ‘independent of and intractable to paint,’ his is proof against culture’s exclusive either-or oppositions, like man or ‘nigger’” (“Beyond” 802). These descriptions highlight Chick’s attempts to both racialize and gender the home as Lucas’s domain. While Chick’s descriptions also describe the feminine imprint on the yard—the dust swept by Lucas’s “womenfolks”—these feminine features are subordinate to its masculine representation. Chick’s racialized descriptions, however, begin to collapse almost immediately. While first the yard is bare, Chick imagines what the yard would look like after Lucas’s womenfolk sweep it each morning. This

description gives way to reluctant admiration of the patterns and whorls and loops that would be brushed into the dirt each day. Likewise, he also notices and describes in detail Molly's flowers outside lining the path up to and around the house:

the footpacked strip running plumblin straight between two borders of tin cans and empty bottles and shards of china and earthenware set into the ground, up to the paintless steps and the paintless gallery along whose edge sat more cans but larger—empty gallon buckets which had once contained molasses or perhaps paint and wornout water or milk pails and one five-gallon can for kerosene with its top cut off and half of what had once been somebody's [...] kitchen hot water tank sliced longways like a banana—out of which flowers had grown last summer and from which the dead stalks and the dried and brittle tendrils still leaned and drooped. (9)

Here, again, Chick focuses on the containers that hold the flowers—those things that have been discarded as useless by white society—but that have been used by Molly to beautify the home and hold her flowers. These markers of the feminine around the home, however, do nothing to lessen the impact and understanding of the home as the center of Chick's vision and a representation of Lucas, the man.

Inside Lucas's home, Chick continues to emphasize Lucas's presence despite the domestic apparatuses that are usually associated with the feminine. The bedroom with "a bare worn quite clean paintless rugless floor, in one corner and spread with a bright patchwork quilt a vast shadowy tester bed [...] and a battered cheap Grand

Rapids dresser” (10). On the “cluttered mantel,” unlike the “bowl of narcissus and gladioli and a few roses” that adorns Chick’s parents’ dining room, Molly has a “vase filled with spills of twisted newspaper” that Lucas uses to light his pipe (10). Similarly, his description of Molly’s kitchen is vastly different from the “familiar table in the familiar room among the bright linen and silver and the water glasses” (31) of his home: “an oilcloth-covered table set in the bright sunny square of a southern window where [... he] sat down and ate in his turn of what obviously was supposed to be Lucas’ dinner—collard greens, a slice of sidemeat fried in flour, big flat pale heavy half-cooked biscuits, a glass of buttermilk: nigger food” (13). The contrast between Chick’s family’s diningroom and the diningroom/ kitchen of Lucas’s home is stark. Unlike the familiarity of his family’s diningroom in which there is “bright linen and silver,” Molly’s kitchen, like Gavin’s office, is brightened simply by the naturalness of the sunlight, and, even though Lucas is not in the room, Chick refers to the food on the table as Lucas’s rather than emphasizing Molly’s preparation of it. Of importance, however, while Chick goes into the “nonepic everyday” descriptions of the food he eats here, calling it “nigger food,” there are no such descriptions of the food served at his own home, which undermines his racial description through its lack of comparison. While most of Chick’s family’s interactions take place in the dining room (no other descriptions of his parents’ home are given), the substance of the meals is never described.³ While it is prepared by Paralee, the family’s black servant, Chick never describes the food he eats at home.

While the descriptions of the yard, home, and food all display evidence of Chick's vehement—but awkward—attempts to emphasize Lucas's racial difference from himself, these same descriptions also break down under closer examination. The food is not unlike the food he ate with Paralee as a child, Lucas is much like his grandfather, and even the items in and outside Lucas's home were once used or owned by whites: the “tester bed which had probably come out of old Carothers McCaslin's house” (10), the “kitchen hot water tank” that holds Molly's flowers outside he speculates was “Edmonds' without doubt” (9), the gold toothpick that Lucas constantly has in his mouth is much like the one “his own grandfather had used” (12), and Lucas's hat is similarly described as the expensive one worn by his grandfather: “the hat was worn handmade beaver such as his grandfather had paid thirty and forty dollars apiece for” (12-13).

Chick's narration so strongly emphasizes Lucas's dominance in the home that Molly's presence fades as though she too is one of Lucas's possessions. Walking in the door, Chick notices beside the hearth “something which he thought was a child until he saw the face [...]—a tiny old almost doll-sized woman much darker than the man, in a shawl and an apron, her head bound in an immaculate white cloth on top of which sat a painted straw hat bearing some kind of ornament” (10). Molly as “something” and “doll-sized” emphasize Chick's immediate understanding of Molly as a thing, a possession needed by Lucas to demonstrate his masculinity in much the same way as his gold toothpick and expensive beaver hat function in the story. As Davis argues of the disappearing feminine bodies in *Go Down, Moses*, Molly's body

is “submerged in the personality of her husband” (142). The house becomes so representative of Lucas that Chick overlooks the feminine imprint of the household and the traditionally feminine symbols of the home and body.

Inherent within Chick’s description of Molly, moreover, is the stereotypical configuration of the black domestic mammy with her shawl, apron and headrag. In *Go Down, Moses*, Molly is developed into a fully realized character who voices her individuality and agency by asking Roth Edmonds for a divorce: Diane Roberts argues that Molly’s position as a Mammy is “refigured” (53). But in Chick’s narration, Molly slips back into “the inexorable racial and historical context that circumscribe her” (Roberts 53).⁴ Molly feeds him, wraps him in the warm quilt, and dries his clothes. While Molly’s actions may conform to the understanding of the Mammy, her physical appearance proves troubling and marks her more as a domestic servant than as a Mammy with her apron and “her head bound in an immaculate white cloth.”⁵ Chick reveals his unconscious understanding of Molly as a domestic servant of Lucas, “the man,” rather than as his wife much in the same way that Paralee is a permanent fixture in his own home. He reinforces this understanding when he attempts to pay for his hospitality.

The headwrap reiterates Chick’s understanding of Molly as Lucas’s possession. So when Chick stoops down to examine the “gold-framed portrait-group on its gold easel,” he ceases to recognize her:

It had been retouched obviously; from behind the round faintly prismatic glass dome as out of the seer’s crystal ball there looked back

at him again the calm intolerant face beneath the swaggering rake of the hat, a tieless starched collar clipped to a white starched shirt with a collarbutton shaped like a snake's head and almost as large, the watchchain looped now across a broadcloth vest inside a broadcloth coat and only the toothpick missing, and beside him the tiny doll-like woman in another painted straw hat and a shawl; that is it must have been the woman though it looked like nobody he had ever seen before and then he realized it was more than that: there was something ghastly, almost intolerably wrong about it or her. (14)

The representation of Lucas in the portrait as "the man" correlates to the image Chick has been building for himself since meeting Lucas, but Molly's representation is "ghastly" and "wrong." What is wrong, of course, is that in the wedding portrait Molly becomes more than a stereotype of the servant and Mammy; she becomes Lucas's wife. While Chick finds it easy to dismiss her simply as another possession, he is unable to do so when he sees her in the portrait because her apron and headrag have been removed in the wedding portrait. When Molly speaks to him, moreover, Chick fails to comprehend her meaning: "That's some more of Lucas' doings." Instead, after Lucas's translates the feelings Molly has about the portrait, his description of Molly is reduced to that of an "embalmed corpse" in which the body can easily be objectified as a thing that completely lacks feeling and sensitivity. Lucas interprets Molly's statement saying, "Molly dont like it because the man that made it took her headrag off" (14). Rather than directing his question about why the

photographer took the headrag off to Molly, Chick directs his question to Lucas. In response to Chick's query, Lucas states, "I told him to [...] I didn't want no field nigger picture in the house" (15).

At first glance, this is not a positive interaction that Chick witnesses in Lucas's home nor does it create a positive profile of the Beauchamp marriage for him. Lucas's comment also proves troubling for critics who interpret this "headrag scene" as representative of Lucas's own racist attitudes toward black people.⁶ Lucas is very aware of the "symbols" of manhood by which he is judged, so I find it impossible to agree with Sandra Milloy's assertion that Lucas is "completely blind to the social implications of" Molly's headrag. Just as we see in *Go Down, Moses*, Lucas is aware of the fire and the hearth that represent his masculinity located within his marriage. His attachment to the beaver felt hat, toothpick, home, marriage, and Molly are likewise representative of his masculinity in *Intruder in the Dust*. Chick is correct in his understanding that Molly's presence is directly tied to Lucas's masculinity: Molly represents Lucas's ability to make choices. By asking or demanding that Molly remove her headrag, Lucas acknowledges that judgments will be made about Molly because of her appearance—of which Chick's own narration is an example—as a domestic in his home or in a white man's home (recalling Molly's position in Zach's home in *Go Down, Moses*) rather than his wife.⁷ Thus, Lucas resents and rejects the institutions and social customs that turn black women into servants or "field niggers," while simultaneously demonstrating his mastery over her. By demanding that Molly show her hair in their wedding portrait, he allows her the

freedom to demonstrate her sexuality.⁸ Unlike Janie Starks in *Their Eyes Were Watching God* whose hair functions as a symbol of her husband, Joe's, possessiveness and must therefore be covered, Lucas's acceptance and pride in Molly's hair in turn reflects his firm understanding of his masculinity; he is not threatened by Molly's hair. Because Lucas does not consider himself a "nigger," it makes sense that Lucas would not want Molly to wear any clothing that would mark her as a servant. The wedding portrait is thus Lucas's idealized image of their marriage, and Lucas would not want a portrait in his home that bears the indelible mark of slavery and servitude.

Lucas is the patriarch or head of his household, and there is a firm reliance on traditional gender roles within the marriage. Lucas relies on Molly and their marriage to sustain his masculinity that she, like Chick's father within his marriage, ceases to be a three-dimensional character. Instead, she is a caricature of a wife much like his father is in his own home. Not only does Lucas not have the toothpick when Chick sees him in town after Molly's death, the symbol that most comes to represent Lucas's manhood, but he also seems unmanned by Chick's account. Molly's death seems to somehow minimize Lucas's masculinity. Chick therefore internalizes an understanding that Lucas's masculinity is represented by his mastery of a woman in marriage.

CHICK'S ATTEMPT TO PURCHASE HIS FREEDOM

The competition for dominance that Chick witnesses in both his parents' marriage and the Beauchamps' marriage parallels Chick's attempts to assert his

mastery over Lucas. Like Bayard Sartoris and Ike McCaslin, Chick becomes obsessed with “freedom” after he observes Lucas’s marriage and home. Chick’s desire for “freedom” is much different from the concepts of freedom for his two predecessors though. Bayard is terrified by the dissolution of the household that “frees” him from social constructions of masculinity; Ike desires the very freedom that Bayard fears, and, as a consequence, rejects his household. Chick wants to divorce himself from the patriarchal model of marriage that he witnessed in Lucas’s home. The domesticity that he experiences in the Beauchamp home offers Chick an opportunity to understand domesticity and marriage outside of his white middle-class experience, but he rejects the opening by attempting to purchase his hospitality. Upon entering, Lucas orders him to strip off his wet clothing. His futile attempt to argue is again met with Lucas’s order to “Strip off” (11), to which Chick complies. In front of the “bright and swirling fire,” a fire that continually holds Chick’s attention presumably because he is cold and wet, Chick is “enveloped in the quilt like a cocoon, enclosed completely now in that unmistakable odor of Negroes” (11). Chick’s attention to the fire in the home vividly recalls the fire that was started on Lucas and Molly’s wedding night that burns in the hearth of their home in *Go Down, Moses*. Molly’s act of swaddling Chick in the quilt after his dunking in the creek, which Fowler identifies as a “symbolic birthing scene” (“Beyond” 799), represents an “induction into a social order” (“Beyond” 800). But unlike a caterpillar that emerges from its cocoon changed into a butterfly, Chick’s metamorphosis fails. Rather than being reborn into an understanding of the collapse of the racist distinctions of

domesticity he evokes in his narration, “a part of his inescapable past, it was a rich part of his heritage as a Southerner” (12), Chick attempts to pay for the hospitality afforded to him by extending “the dime and the two nickels—all he had” to Molly. Because of his shame at having been called out by Lucas’s statement “What’s that for?” (15), Chick “watched his palm turn over not flinging the coins but spurning them downward ringing onto the bare floor, bouncing and one of the nickels even rolling away in a long swooping curve with a dry minute sound” (15). But rather than obey Lucas’s command to pick up the money, Chick is handed the money by Aleck Sander and “Edmonds’ boy” who rush to obey Lucas’s order.

Lucas’s rejection of Chick’s payment for the hospitality offered and bestowed by him begins a gift-exchange between Chick and Lucas as Chick attempts to establish his masculinity and domination over Lucas. Dussere asserts that the act of “gift-giving” is representative of superiority: only those who are superior can give a gift to someone beneath them (“Debts” 46). For Chick, therefore, the gift of hospitality must be matched and surpassed in order to retain the superiority inherent in his whiteness. Until Chick can repay Lucas and discharge the “debt of honor,” he and Lucas are bound together.⁹ In his attempts to divorce himself from Lucas, Chick threatens Lucas’s masculinity and marriage when he ventures outside the realm of the appropriate and purchases the imitation silk dress for Molly. Chick’s description and understanding of Molly’s attire when he visited her home—“in a shawl and an apron, her head bound in an immaculate white cloth on top of which sat a painted straw hat bearing some kind of ornament”—is completely out of character with the “flowered

imitation silk dress,” for which Chick works three months and saves his money to purchase for her. Chick’s gift is not only out of character with the persona he describes for her, but it also functions in much the same way that Molly’s hair strikes Chick as “ghastly” and “intolerably wrong.” The gift highlights Molly’s body and sexuality through its unrealistic, inappropriate, and useless extravagance even more than the photographer who made Molly remove her headrag. Given that Lucas’s masculinity is directly tied to Molly’s sexuality (even as an old woman), the gift must be matched. If, as we saw in *Go Down, Moses*, Molly’s body is the contested site of the struggle between Lucas and Zach, the black female body represents the power struggle between black and white men for mastery and masculinity. Chick’s gift—not to Lucas—but to Molly highlights Molly’s body with the purchase of clothing in a way that recalls the incident between Zach and Lucas. While Chick as a young boy is no threat to either Lucas’s marriage or to Molly’s sexuality, Lucas’s intention is still to be “the man” of his house. While neither Chick nor his mother, who helps him pick out the gift, may perceive the gift in this way, this is one way in which differences between black and white masculinity are demonstrated in the novel. Chick’s gift to Lucas’s wife is a gift—just as is his attempt to “pay” Molly for the hospitality Lucas himself extended—that not only must be acknowledged, but must be matched; hence, Lucas sends a white boy to deliver the molasses to Chick. Lucas’s corresponding gift, moreover, highlights Chick’s position as a “boy” rather than a man because, as Lucas states in response to Chick’s thanks in town the following year, “When I was

making um I remembered how a boy's always got a sweet tooth for good molasses" (24).

While in *Go Down, Moses*, the fear of bondage is related to white men's fear of marriage, in *Intruder in the Dust*, Chick's fear of bondage is tied to Lucas Beauchamp and the inherent masculinity that he represents. Chick's freedom, therefore, is represented not in terms of escaping a woman but in terms of escaping the bonds of his perceived indebtedness to Lucas for the domestic hospitality afforded to him. When Lucas thus fails to acknowledge Chick after Molly's death, four years later, Chick finally becomes "free" (23, 26, 27, 28, 30, 31). Chick's continued meditation on his freedom, however, is marred at learning that Lucas's grief over Molly's death is the reason that he did not acknowledge him or have his gold toothpick, the symbol of his manhood. Chick's indebtedness and freedom to Lucas is, therefore, again mediated by Molly and her marriage to Lucas.

CHICK'S *BILDUNG*

Chick's severance of relations between himself and Lucas demonstrates his ultimate alignment with his uncle following Gavin's discussion of marriage that began this chapter. Directly after the conversation between Gavin and Chick about marriage, Gavin and Chick look down into the square and see Lucas: "And that was when they saw Lucas crossing the Square, probably at the same time—the cocked hat and the thin fierce glint of the tilted gold toothpick" (234). The immediate juxtaposition between Chick's rejection of his uncle's pessimistic understanding of marriage and Lucas's presence suggests that Chick's *bildung* in relation to

domesticity may indeed be successful. He may have learned that there is more emotion inherent in marriage than Gavin's assembly-line descriptions allow. But Chick's ultimate alignment with his uncle in this scene demonstrates instead that he ultimately rejects both models of domestic masculinity offered by his father and Lucas Beauchamp. While Chick certainly seems to have grown and matured throughout his adventure in terms of his recognition—and perhaps rejection—of ideological imperatives inherent in classism and racism, he is not in a position to be, as Vanderwerken argues, a leader of his community any more than is his uncle.

While Chick's adventure might have allowed him opportunities to develop into a productive citizen and even a leader of his community, Chick's narrative of maturation regresses. Even if Chick considers himself discharged from Lucas's model of domestic masculinity as Dussere suggests,¹⁰ he ultimately aligns himself with his uncle's at the end of the novel. As Fowler states, the opportunities for Chick's transformation in the novel are so promising, that its end is very disappointing:

Former transgressions of a repressive social order are swept aside, and the status quo is restored. This sign of the restoration is a change in Chick, who in the final scene seems almost to metamorphose into his uncle. The novel has always been the story of Chick's induction into manhood and the social order, a rite of passage that he navigates with the two father figures, Uncle Gavin Stevens, the spokesperson for the alienating difference, and Lucas Beauchamp, a father who revises an

exclusionary model of identity. In the end, Chick must choose between them, and he chooses whiteness secured by rejection of another, as we expected he would, since, even when he retrieved buried meanings, he was never able to overcome his fear of a loss of difference. (“Beyond” 811-12)

While I believe Chick ultimately has three models of domestic masculinity in the novel, I agree with Fowler that Chick chooses Gavin, who is not only the “spokesperson” for “alienating difference” in terms of marriage, but he also models it. Despite Chick’s voiced disagreement with his uncle on the subject of marriage, his viewpoint and gaze do “metamorphose” into his uncle and they unify into a what Fowler describes as a “shared perspective” as they gaze down onto the street and watch Lucas cross the square (“Beyond” 812), but in a way different that Fowler suggests. Through his turn inward, Chick is much more aware of the mastery inherent in both models of marriage. His understanding of the institution has been changed by his interactions with Lucas. Chick does not simply digress to the “status quo” that his uncle represents; instead, he rejects mastery altogether in favor of self ownership through bachelorhood.

Chick rejects both his father’s model of impotent masculinity and Lucas’s patriarchal masculinity model in favor of his uncle’s model of “alienating difference” located in his figure as a bachelor in the novel. Just as Ike McCaslin idealizes the “freedom” of bachelorhood modeled by Sam Fathers in *Go Down, Moses*, Chick accepts his Uncle Gavin’s understanding of bachelorhood. But unlike Ike who is left

to his own devices in order to interpret the figure of bachelorhood, Gavin attempts to justify his position to Chick. Gavin's theory on marriage that began this chapter, therefore, may just as well be Gavin's justification for bachelorhood, and his discussion, which seems to tangential to the rest of the text, may best be explained by his position as a bachelor uncle to Chick as explained by Snyder. Gavin's position as a bachelor uncle conforms to what Snyder describes as a prevalent stock character in "popular and literary writings of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries" (172): "In fictional plots of inheritance and education, adoption and guardianship, illegitimate fatherhood and incest, the figure of the bachelor uncle registers the boundaries of normative bourgeois familial and sexual relations, as well as the permeability of those boundaries. The function of the bachelor uncle as a threshold figure who marks by crossing the boundaries of the familial and sexual normativity is evident" (172). As part of Snyder's evidence for her argument, she analyzes an exchange between a bachelor uncle and his niece in a 1908 *Putnam's Magazine* piece entitled "The Necessary Melancholy of Bachelors." This article is framed by an exchange between the bachelor and his niece in which the uncle "manifestly denies the possibility of adequate alternatives to marriage, that is, of styles of domesticity that are equal to yet different from married life" (173). In her analysis of this scene, Snyder argues that it is the "familial and quasi familial affiliations" between the bachelor and his niece that sustains the bachelor emotionally and relationally:

Their domestic partnership is characterized by indulgences and renunciations, intimacies and distances, happy endings and

melancholy moods. Their alliance, moreover, familial but not nuclear; domestic but not marital; conducted between adults but not intragenerational; eroticized but not explicitly sexual. [...] In short, the bachelor may accept certain substitutions for wife and marriage, but he must also reconcile himself to lack. (174)

Despite the “domestic partnership” of the bachelor with his niece, the bachelor’s “lack” manifests itself in a “modernist melancholia”: “a self-defining sense of pervasive loss coupled with the refusal to recognize that loss, different from the experience of grief and acceptance associated with normal mourning” (174).

The conversation between Gavin and Chick parallels the situation of the bachelor and his niece that is the subject of Snyder’s analysis. Gavin’s words to Chick express the “lack” and “loss” existing in male-female relationships. While Gavin’s “domestic partnership” is not with Chick but with Chick’s mother, Gavin’s twin sister, it explains Gavin’s melancholia and attitude toward marriage. But unlike the bachelor in Snyder’s example “who distinguishes the lot of the married man from that of the bachelor” (173) and thus expresses a melancholia and/or grief for what is denied to him and must be unsatisfactorily substituted for with his niece, Gavin instead attempts to justify his existence as a bachelor by comparing rather than distinguishing between marriage and bachelorhood. For Gavin, marriage does not equate with love or sex. Instead, it is a static identifier that secures and tethers one’s position within the community.¹¹ A man’s relationship with an automobile, however, allows him both freedom of movement and mastery. Gavin’s “experience,” which he

describes as “fumbling beneath skirts” rather than justifying his position as bachelor, instead highlights the reason for it by suggesting his inability to consummate relationships—either physically or emotionally—with women. Gavin’s explanations, therefore, are best described by Snyder as “articulations of melancholic longing for non-abjected manhood”:

The narrators and their narratives are melancholic, first, because the non-abjected, or heroic, manhood that they interminably lament never existed in the first place and hence can never come again.

Melancholia is also their lot because their imaginary attempts to exalt an idealized manhood are confounded by their ambivalent repudiation of the other men whom they interminably mourn. Their ambivalence toward these other men is organized around the sentimentality they attribute to their lost male objects, a sentimentality that is at once the imaginary source and, paradoxically, the comprising affront to the whole and non-abjected manhood. The sentimental nostalgia of these narrators reveals their melancholic incorporation of their sentimental other men, an imaginary relation to these male figures which spurs their melancholic dreams of a return home and yet ensures these bachelor narrators ‘transcendental homelessness.’ (190)

Snyder’s description also holds true for Chick. While Chick disagrees with Gavin’s understanding of marriage, Chick’s idealized model of manhood is shaped by both his grandfather and Lucas Beauchamp. Gavin’s projection of melancholia is passed on to

Chick who projects onto Lucas the “sentimental nostalgia,” a figure of domestic masculinity that he found so appealing when he visited Lucas and Molly’s home and a figure with whom he consistently identifies with his dead grandfather.¹² But this is a model of masculinity no longer viable in the New South. Maggie Mallison is not one to fade into the corner of her husband’s home as Molly does; she and Miss Habersham instead sit in prominent view of the entire community in front of the courthouse to protect Lucas.

We are thus left with an image of Chick at the end of the novel that is not at all dissimilar from that of Quentin Compson, Bayard Sartoris, or Ike McCaslin. As Polk points out, “Charles—Chick—Mallison is one of Faulkner’s later children, the only male child in the fiction whom we see grow from childhood to adulthood over the course of Yoknapatawpha’s history” (“Children” 94). Chick’s maturation in *The Town* (1957) and *The Mansion* (1959) never develops more than we see in *Intruder in the Dust* though. Chick never fully integrates himself into the community in either novel; he remains an outsider and observer of the community rather than a leader as Vanderwerken wants him to be. After going off to college, Chick returns to Yoknapatawpha to inherit the role of bachelor lawyer after Gavin marries Melisandre Backus in *Knight’s Gambit* (1949) and *The Mansion*. Chick, in contrast, fumbles and flirts with domesticity in the same vein as his uncle with Linda Snopes Kohl. But like his uncle’s interactions with both Eula Snopes and Linda, Chick never acts on the impulse. Chick remains, therefore, a threshold figure who can look in and observe, but never fully enter into the home. Chick’s identification, moreover, with his uncle

is found not within the home, but in his uncle's law office, the final location in which we see him, a place he finds comfortable and secure unlike either his own home or Lucas's. In much the fashion that we would expect of his bachelor uncle, it is in his uncle's law office that Chick is most secure and his domesticity most apparent.

NOTES

¹Critical understandings of *Intruder in the Dust* agree that the novel is a traditional and successful *Bildungsroman* because of Chick's upbringing and family. Brooks, for example, states of Chick's experience, that "we are apparently intended to see [...] a progressive initiation into manhood" (218). "The progress of Charles's initiation," argues Brooks, "is chartered very largely in terms of his rejection of his original motives, which derived in large measure from the racial difference between Lucas and himself, in favor of a positive and even passionate awareness of the need to preserve human dignity and avert the shame of mob-violence" (220). Similarly, Vanderwerken argues that *Intruder* is a "fairly traditional and straightforward *Bildungsromane*," written "in the twilight of Faulkner's career" (*Faulkner's* 21). In contrast to the anti-*Bildungsroman* of Faulkner's earlier career such as *Absalom, Absalom!* and *Go Down, Moses*—or the protagonists Quentin Compson and Ike McCaslin (he fails to discuss *The Unvanquished* or Bayard Sartoris at all)—Vanderwerken concludes that Chick Mallison "struggle[s] successfully for identity, go[es] through maturation processes that work, and find[s] secure roles in wider communities" (*Faulkner's* 21). The reason that Vanderwerken, like Brooks before

him, argues for Chick's successful location of his personal identity through his adventure and ultimate integration into the community is because of his family environment: "Unlike Joe Christmas, Quentin Compson, Thomas Sutpen, and Isaac McCaslin, Chick Mallison [...] grow[s] up in [a] stable, loving, and nurturing extended famil[y], a scarce commodity in Faulkner's world" (106). The "family" that Vanderwerken defines for Chick is quite large:

Chick Mallison, an only child, enters adolescence surrounded by caring parents, Charles and Margaret, a doting resident uncle, Gavin Stevens, Maggie's twin brother, as well as the black servant family, the Sanders, consisting of young Aleck, his mother Paralee, and her father, old Ephraim. Chick also has fond memories of his deceased Grandfather Stevens, whom Chick will identify with Lucas Beauchamp. (*Faulkner's* 106)

Based on his upbringing, and his "harrowing experiences that will accelerate [his] maturation, [his] moral and intellectual growth, and prepare [him] for productive citizenship in [his] community," Vanderwerken argues that Chick will "likely become [a] leader" (*Faulkner's* 104). Like Vanderwerken, Polk implies a positive upbringing for Chick, specifically due to his parents' influence: "Maggie may be Faulkner's sanest, least neurotic woman, and her marriage with Chick's father is the most normal, the healthiest, marriage in Faulkner's fiction. [...] Chick clearly does not grow up in a dark house" ("Children" 94). Tebbetts, too, also examines Chick's

upbringing and finds it “adequate” as his parents manage to “both shape and free” him (“Adequate” 74).

²Chick’s own narration indicates the differences in Gavin’s status as bachelor with other bachelors in the novel. For instance, Chick calls Roth Edmonds a bachelor too but notes an important difference between Edmonds and his uncle: “Edmonds was a bachelor and there were no women in the house” (8). While both men are unmarried, Edmonds conforms to a more traditional understanding of bachelor because he lives away from women, a distinction that Snyder notes is much more usual than Gavin’s domestic relationship. Similarly, Chick describes the typical Yoknapatawpha bachelors quite differently than his uncle:

the men the young bachelors who since last Monday at daylight had braced into the shearing earth the lurch and heave of plows behind straining and surging mules then at noon Saturday had washed and shaved and put on the clean Sunday shirts and pants and all Saturday night had walked the dusty roads and all day Sunday and all Sunday night would still walk them until barely time to reach home and change back into the overalls and the brogans and catch and gear up the mules and forty-eight hours even bedless save for the brief time there was a woman in it be back in the field again the plow’s point set into the new furrow when Monday’s sun rose. (94)

Not only are there specific class distinctions between Gavin’s profession as a Harvard and Heidelberg-educated lawyer and the field-working men in this description, but

these men are much courser in their socializing. They come to town once a week by foot presumably to engage in drinking, carousing, and visiting prostitutes. Their interactions with women are specifically sexual in nature, whereas Gavin is domestically aligned instead with his sister. Although Gavin states his experience of “fumbling beneath skirts,” there is very little credibility in Gavin’s experience.

³While Chick never describes the food at his own home, he does give very detailed descriptions of the atmosphere and food that Sheriff Hampton is cooking and serves to his early-morning guests, Chick, Gavin, Miss Habersham, and Aleck Sander: “Then his uncle opened the door and at once they smelled the coffee and the frying hogmeat, walking on linoleum toward a faint light at the rear of the hall then across a linoleum-floored diningroom in rented Grand Rapids mission into the kitchen, into the hard cheerful blast of a woodstove where the sheriff stood over a sputtering skillet in his undershirt and pants and socks” (106). Furnished with “Grand Rapid mission” similar to Lucas’s own cheap “Grand Rapids” dresser, the binary begins to break down in Chick’s racialized descriptions. Similarly, the “hogmeat” frying is not dissimilar from the “sidemeat” fried in flour and served to Chick alone in the kitchen of Lucas’s home, and the “big flat pale heavy half-cooked biscuits” (13) are a direct correlation to the toast-like biscuits served by the sheriff (112). The description of the breakfast itself, however, does denote racialized connotations but only insofar as where it is eaten: “They left Aleck Sander with his breakfast at the kitchen table and carried theirs into the diningroom, he and his uncle and Miss Habersham carrying the platter of fried eggs and meat and the pan of biscuits baked

last night and warmed again in the oven until they were almost like toast and the coffeepot in which the unstrained grounds and the water had been boiling together until the sheriff had thought to remove the pot from the hot part of the stove” (112). Aleck Sander’s solitary meal in the sheriff’s kitchen mirrors Chick’s solitary meal in Lucas’s home. Later, however, we learn that Lucas is being protected in Sheriff Hampton’s house, and “into the kitchen and there was Hampton’s cook sitting on one side of the table and Lucas on the other eating greens and cornbread not from a plate but out of the two-gallon pot itself” (219). The greens and cornbread here in Hampton’s kitchen do not have the same racialized connotations that Chick attributed to the similar food served in Lucas’s kitchen.

⁴ The stereotype of the Mammy is, as Kimberly Wallace-Stevens demonstrates, a complicated figure. She is stereotypically configured by her appearance and actions: “she is usually extremely overweight, very tall, broad-shouldered; her skin is nearly black. [...] first as slave, then as a free woman, the mammy is largely associated with the care of white children or depicted with noticeable attachment to white children. [...] Her clothes are typical of a domestic: headscarf and apron, but she is especially attracted to brightly colored, elaborately tied scarves” (6).

⁵ While Wallace-Stevens emphasizes that a headscarf and apron are markers of domestic servitude, she also highlights the Mammy’s attachment to “brightly colored, elaborately tied scarves.” The difference between Molly’s pure white cloth and the brightly colored scarves is best explained by Helen Bradley Foster in her

historical discussion of the headrag or what she prefers to call the “headwrap.” The headwrap, Foster explains “was exclusive to Black Americans. [...] Over time, however, the form gradually became a type of hair covering worn only by Black women” (272). The reason for the headwrap becoming specific to black women, and specifically black women enslaved or in positions of servitude vary from health and sanitary reasons (“It is possible that that enslaved African women were forced to wear headwraps as a way to prevent infestations of lice in the inadequate African slave-holding pens, and later, in ship holds during the trans-Atlantic voyage” [280]) to markers of subservience (“The women taken into bondage during the slave trade may have been forced or induced to cover their heads as a gesture to mark them as subservient” [280]). Regardless of its historical purpose, Foster does conclude that “Southern dress codes indicate that the headwrap at times served as a badge of servitude and as a way to differentiate the Black female from her white counterpart” (287). Specifically, during “the eighteenth century, [...] headwraps specifically became legislated badges of servitude and poverty for Black women. A portion of the 1786 dress code issued by the governor of Louisiana (then a Spanish colony) forbade ‘females of color . . . to wear plumes or jewelry;’ this law specifically required ‘their hair bound in a kerchief” (273). Forced to wear headwraps, African American women employed brightly colored and ornate wraps that not only linked them with their African heritage but also became a “‘uniform of rebellion’ that encoded resistance” (Foster 293). The headwrap, therefore, takes on a paradoxical function: “For the enslaved women, the headwrap acquired significance as a form of

self- and communal identity and as a badge of resistance against the servitude imposed by whites. This represents a paradox in so far as the whites misunderstood the self-empowering and defiant intent and saw the headwrap only as a stereotypical ‘Aunt Jemima’ image of the Black woman as a domestic servant” (312).

⁶ For instance, Sandra D. Milloy argues, “His statement reveals how contemptuous he is of a certain group of black people. Such an attitude is one of the unfortunate results of slavery. Slavery created a caste system within the black race: town blacks held country blacks in contempt; blacks of mixed blood felt superior to ‘pure’ blacks; black house servants despised black field hands. Lucas is inevitably affected by this social institution. [...] As far as Lucas is concerned, Molly can be a ‘nigger,’ a town or a house ‘nigger.’ She simply cannot be a country or a field ‘nigger’ because Lucas is superior to these people. He sees no reason why a ‘field nigger’ should not wear a garment on her head because he is completely blind to the social implications of the ‘immaculate white cloth.’ He has Molly remove it for the wrong reason” (401-02). Similarly, Neil Schmitz argues, “A racism mars this wedding portrait” (257). It is not “Chick’s innocent racism” at not recognizing Molly, Schmitz states, but Chick’s apparent confusion “stirs up in the observing Molly ancient race-caused griefs in her marriage, causes her to speak, to distance herself from the falsified person in the portrait, and brings Lucas necessarily into the discussion” (258). Schmitz ultimately dismisses Chick’s culpability for his misunderstanding of the wedding portrait—“Chick [is] just a boy and obviously disconcerted, shaken” (258)—and places the onus on Lucas. Schmitz’s disavowal of

any agency within Chick's narration is unmerited. First were Chick narrating the events in the present, one could perhaps cut him some slack for his naivety. While he was twelve at the time of the actual events, his narration occurs by his own admission four years later (4, 7, 9). Chick has had four years to ruminate on the events and structure his narration accordingly. Nevertheless, Chick's presence, argues Schmitz, is a "forced intrusion" by Lucas, and the "present tense situation" exacerbated by Chick's presence is merely symptomatic of their marriage and of "Lucas's inappropriate, possibly mean, transgression of racial codes": "More of his doings, this grand hospitality that catches Molly unprepared, without enough food in the house to feed the guests. It is Lucas's worst moment in the section, his sexist disdain of Molly. He has to justify the act, and first fibs, displaces responsibility, says the photographer made Molly take her headrag off. He must say it finally, admit his own racism, his own derogation of Molly" (258). Again I disagree with Schmitz. To call Lucas's hospitality "grand" implies that Lucas offers Chick hospitality solely in an effort to establish his superiority over Chick, which is in no way constituted by the text. Lucas's response to Chick seems no more a gesture because he is white than if Lucas had encountered a young black boy who had fallen into a creek in the middle of January and were in need of warmth while his clothes were drying.

⁷ Lucas's apparent demand that Molly remove her headrag directly contrasts with the battle within the marriage between Joe and Janie Starks in Hurston's *Their Eyes Were Watching God* published in 1937. When Joe Starks meets Janie, Janie's long plentiful hair attracts Joe and represents Janie's sexuality: "Kiss me and shake

yo' head. When you do dat, yo' plentiful har breaks lak day" (30). While Janie's hair first attracts Joe's attention, after their marriage he forces Janie to wear a headrag when he sees another man "standing behind Janie and brushing the back of his hand back and forth across the loose end of her braid ever so lightly as if to enjoy the feel of it without Jane knowing what he was doing" (55). Joe never explains to Janie why her "hair was NOT going to show in the store" (55), but the issue of the "head-rag irked her endlessly" (55). While the men in town have some inkling of the reason Janie wears a head-rag to cover her hair ("Maybe he make her do it. Maybe he skeered some de rest of us mens might touch it round the store" [50]), Janie's freedom from Joe is marked by her releasing her hair, a visible marker of not only her physical body, her sexuality, but also her freedom of choice. Janie displays her change in status from one of Joe's possessions into her own woman by destroying the headrags and proudly displaying her hair: "Before she slept that night she burnt up every one of her head rags and went about the house next morning with her hair in one thick braid swinging well below her waist" (89).

⁸ Schmidt's interpretation of Lucas's statement that "the man who made it took her headrag off" is a "fib" is problematic. Given that Lucas's understanding of his masculinity is directly tied to his ability, as we saw in *Go Down, Moses*, to be "the man of the house," I find it quite plausible that Lucas's statement to Chick is an attempt to reaffirm his position as "the man" in his marriage. Rather than allowing Chick to believe that he would allow a white man to have control over his wife, his

clarification that the man removed her headrag at his order more firmly establishes himself as the one in control of Molly's body and her sexuality.

⁹Lucas, Dussere argues, refuses to acquiesce to Chick's superiority: "in a particularly hostile version of a potlatch economy each 'gift' he has sent has been answered with a gift from Lucas" ("Debts" 45). Dussere's argument ignores vital components of Chick's narration, however, that complicate and challenge his argument. His argument states that debts of honor are incurred between men of "equal standing" ("Debts" 38, my emphasis), which is overlooked in Dussere's argument. The contest of wills is between Lucas, a black man, and Chick, a young boy. As Dussere points out, because of Chick's youth, he "would never consider himself an equal worthy of participating in a gift-exchange with a white gentleman" ("Debts" 46). Dussere, however, sees Lucas locked in a struggle with Chick to retain superiority as illustrated by his matching each gift Chick sends him. The problem with this interpretation is that Lucas does acknowledge the equality of himself and Chick because they are both beneath the status of white manhood because Lucas accepts and *does not* match the first gift Chick sends him at Christmas. When Chick sends "four two-for-a-quarter cigars for Lucas and the tumbler of snuff for his wife" to Lucas by way of Edmonds at Christmas (*ID* 22), Lucas does not respond. For Lucas the debt has been repaid, ties between them severed, and equality re-established. It is Chick's follow-up gift—"the flowered imitation silk dress and sent it by mail to Molly Beauchamp" (*ID* 22)—that causes Lucas to respond by sending Chick "a gallon bucket of fresh homemade sorghum molasses" by way of a white

messenger (*ID* 23). Dussere notes Lucas's preoccupation with the gift exchange, but it is Chick's attempt to establish superiority rather than debt repayment that is at issue. While Dussere is correct that Lucas is preoccupied with "*business* debt and repayment" ("Debts" 53), what Dussere fails to acknowledge and what Chick fails to comprehend is that by sending a personal gift to Molly, not only has Chick tried to outdo Lucas but he has taken the exchange outside the realm of business into the personal. Just as Lucas's extension of hospitality was domestic rather than business and thus Lucas rejects Chick's proffered coins, Chick's personal gift to Molly takes the exchange outside the business atmosphere. While Lucas is aware of business transactions—the banking transactions and even his transaction with Gavin at the end of the novel in which he asks for a receipt—much of Lucas's masculinity is established in the domestic sphere. Chick's first gifts to Molly and Lucas would be considered an appropriate response to their hospitality offered within the home. The cigars and snuff are gifts for *both* Lucas and Molly at Christmastime, an appropriate time for a gift exchange.

¹⁰ The last interaction that Chick describes in the novel is between Lucas and Gavin as they discuss the financial affairs between them. Gavin, because of his own understandings of Lucas and his understanding of the stereotype of "Sambo," refuses to allow Lucas to pay for his services because by his own acknowledgement, Lucas's freedom is due to Chick's actions and not his own: "That boy there is the reason you're walking around today" (238). When Lucas, therefore, turns to Chick and offers to pay him instead, Gavin interjects himself between them and mediates the

interaction just as he does between Chick and his parents. “And I’ll have you both arrested,” Gavin tells Lucas, “you for corrupting a minor and him for practising law without a license” (238). Gavin’s words cast Chick back into the role of a “boy,” and Chick complies as a child, merely watching the final scene play out as Lucas pays Gavin two dollars for the expense of his broken point of his fountain pen—fifty cents of it in pennies—and demands his receipt in return. Dussere reads this receipt as Lucas’s acknowledgement of the debt’s satisfaction and as a suggestion by Faulkner that freedom and equality for blacks might be possible through Northern capitalist models of repayment (“Debts” 54). But as I’ve demonstrated, Dussere’s misinterpretations of the gift exchanges lead to what I believe is an ultimate misreading of the receipt, which recognizes a transaction between Gavin and Lucas, not Chick and Lucas. Chick attempted to pay Molly for his hospitality, which Lucas refused. Yet, when it comes time for Lucas to pay his bill for services rendered, Gavin, despite acknowledging that it was Chick who rendered services for Lucas, refuses to allow Lucas to even attempt to pay Chick. Although Chick watches the transaction, he is not a participant. It is his understanding of debt that is in question, not Gavin’s, yet Gavin cuts him out of the transaction and disallows him an opportunity to refuse payment from Lucas, which would mirror his own attempt to pay Lucas and would cancel out the debt. Therefore, this scene cannot be read as an acknowledgement of the discharge and satisfaction of the debt Chick sees himself owing Lucas. Since Chick has no agency in the transaction, there is no evidence of his satisfaction or the severance of ties between Chick and Lucas. Instead, I argue

that this scene establishes a continuation rather than a satisfaction of the cycle because, since Lucas was allowed to pay, the services cannot be considered a repayment for Lucas's hospitality to Chick.

¹¹ Chick's references to and descriptions of marriage demonstrate his awareness that people act within the community based on their domestic associations—specifically marriage. For example, Miss Habersham's willingness to help Chick save Lucas stems from her relationship, through marriage, to Lucas. While the loyalty between Miss Habersham and Molly is demonstrated by Chick's acknowledgement of their close relationship, the relationship between Miss Habersham and Lucas is forged through Molly and Lucas's marriage: "born in the same week and both suckled at Molly's mother's breast and grown up together almost inextricably like sisters, like twins, sleeping in the same room, the white girl in the bed, the Negro girl on a cot at the foot of it almost until Molly and Lucas married" (86). While we see Miss Habersham's willingness to help Molly by raising funds to bring the body of Molly's grandson James Beauchamp home from Chicago after his execution in *Go Down, Moses*, her loyalty to Lucas is created through his marriage to Molly. Despite the fact that Molly is dead, Miss Habersham is bound to Lucas through familial ties to Lucas. Similarly, "a countryman who had moved to town a year ago and now owned a small shabby side street grocery whose customers were mostly Negroes" (46) uses his wife as an excuse for not waiting around in town to assist in Lucas's anticipated lynching: "My wife aint feeling good tonight and besides I dont want to stand around up there just looking at the front of that jail. But

tell um to holler if they need help” (47). Correspondingly, the jailer, Legate, uses his marriage as reasoning for his conflicted sense of duty concerning Lucas’s protection if the mob comes for him: “‘Dont mind me. I’m going to do the best I can; I taken an oath of office too.’ His voice rose a little, still calm, just louder: ‘But dont think nobody’s going to make me admit I like it. I got a wife and two children; what good am I going to be to them if I get myself killed protecting a goddamn stinking nigger?’” (53). While the countryman uses his wife as an excuse to the rest of the community for not doing something that may be considered a community “responsibility”—participating in Lucas’s lynching—Legate likewise juxtaposes his community responsibility with his personal responsibilities as breadwinner for his wife and family.

Chick also makes many observations about the Gowries and other Beat Four citizens and marriage that demonstrate his understanding of marriage and the way the institution forges communal ties. For example, Chick describes the way that Beat Four citizens had integrated themselves into the larger Yoknapatawpha community: “a Beat Four Ingrum come to town as the apostate sons of Beat Four occasionally did to marry a town girl and become barbers and bailiffs and nightwatchmen as petty Germanic princelings would come down out of their Brandenburg hills to marry the heiresses to European thrones” (133). Also, when Chick describes Forrest Gowrie, Chick describes him as a productive member of the community demonstrated specifically by and because of his marriage: “Forrest, the oldest who had not only wrenched himself free of his fiery tyrant of a father but *had even got married* and for

twenty years now had been manager of a delta cotton plantation above Vicksburg” (160-61, my emphasis). Finally, at its most basic level, odd relationships within the community can be explained by marital relationships such as the timber business between “old man Sudley Workitt who was Mrs Gowrie’s second or fourth cousin or uncle or something” and Vinson and Crawford Gowrie (217).

¹² While Chick’s consistent comparisons to his grandfather are quite straightforward in the text, I would also suggest that there is a doubling in the text of his grandmother, whom Chick never mentions in the text, and Molly. When Chick looks at the wedding portrait he states, that “it was like looking at an embalmed corpse through the hermetic glass lid of a coffin” (14-15). While certainly Molly’s tiny and decrepit body may resemble a corpse, this description of the wedding portrait while disturbing is quite consistent with the novel, which as Fowler points out is “a fiction about burial and retrieval” (“Beyond” 789). As Fowler demonstrates, the “symbols of burial and retrieval [...] refer, respectively, to repression and the return of the repressed” (“Beyond” 789). I would suggest that when Chick looks at the wedding portrait, which reflects a masculinity that so reminds him of his grandfather in Lucas, Chick also sees a repressed vision of his dead grandmother in a coffin. The wedding portrait—and Lucas and Molly’s marriage—is symbolically a dead, static, and nostalgic reflection of his grandparents’ marriage.

“I cant hang around white man’s kitchen,” Jesus said.
 “But white men can hang around mine. White man can
 come in my house, but I cant stop him. When white men
 want to come in my house, I aint got no house. I cant stop
 him, but he cant kick me outen it. He cant do that”
 ~“That Evening Sun”

Afterword

Jesus, although one of the more terrifying husbands in all of Faulkner’s fiction, underscores the heart of my project: the ways that white men in Yoknapatawpha assert, claim, and define their masculinity in relation to marriage and the domestic sphere. Black men too, as I have demonstrated, prove themselves men through marriage, establishing their own masculinity through self ownership and control not only of their own bodies but, more importantly, the bodies of black women. But white men also must display their masculinity by being superior to white women and to black men. In a tautological circle of reasoning, authority over black men means white men not only have equal access to everything that black men do, but it also means that white men have to control and access everything that establishes black masculinity, especially black women. This contest is mapped out in the space of the kitchen and house, spaces representative of feminine domesticity and the female body—both black and white. It is a contest for dominance and mastery. As Theresa Towner and James B. Carothers have pointed out, “Jesus’s anger at Nancy, which possibly culminates in his threat to kill her, also signifies the male determination to dominate the female, regardless of race” (153). Jesus’s statement, however, points out that black men have no control over their wives if white men try to usurp it. His words echo Lucas Beauchamp’s fears that Zach Edmonds has

exploited Molly in her role of housekeeper for Zack, leaving Lucas alone to tend to his home and hearth by himself. Lucas fears, moreover, that Zach has exploited Molly sexually because of his free access to her in the home. Zach's usurpation of Molly from her own home, husband, and child into his own home almost causes Lucas to react by putting out the fire and blaming Molly, both reactions that underscore his fears for his own masculinity. Unlike in Lucas's case in which the fears are only suspicions, in Jesus's case, his wife is exploited by Mr. Stovall, "the cashier in the bank and a deacon in the Baptist church" (CS 191). While Nancy is a prostitute, she is pregnant with a "watermelon" that may or may not have "come off [Jesus's] vine" and is not even paid for her services, for she is jailed when she tries to collect (CS 192). Lucas's anger and Jesus's threats demonstrate their fears masked by anger over their inability to control or have a home if white men choose to enter it or destroy it.

The home, therefore, becomes the formal architecture that represents marriage. Quentin, Bayard, Ike, and Chick construct racial boundaries that separate white from black through marriage. But these boundaries are permeable to the extent that white men can venture through the boundaries and enter the black man's home, but the crossing only works one way as the boundary is not permeable for black men. Through their narratives, they attempt to construct and build their houses and their masculinity by contemplating marriage. This metaphor of the "house" for the marriage, as Sundquist has pointed out, is divided by the threat of amalgamation. While black women like Nancy are supposed to be confined to the kitchen, we

consistently see them and their bodies showing up in bedrooms or in commissaries. Perhaps this is one reason that Yaeger states that we don't see the "everyday domestic" of race in Faulkner's fiction. But it is there; we have to search for it and hold it up to the magnifying glass.

The home or the house in each protagonist's narration takes on a life of its own becoming the Big House. As Polk has argued, "In Faulkner as in the Gothic tradition, the two meanings of the term "house" are combined: the building itself and the family that inhabits it are one" ("Children" 30). But, as I have shown, the Big House carries with it power structures that extend spatially, politically, and historically beyond the Big House itself. As Thavolia Glymph argues, the belief that "the household is a private space" is a misconception: "Once the public character of the household comes into full view, so, too, does its life as a 'controlling context of power'" (3). The centrality of the Big House in each of the novels I have discussed ripples beyond the narrator's control: the big house of Sutpen's design built by the French architect that eventually collapses in on itself; the big house on the Sartoris plantation that is burned and destroyed by war that John Sartoris rebuilds "only larger, much larger;" the big house on the McCaslin plantation where once slaves lived and which Ike rejects as his inheritance in favor of his "bungalow" holding not a fruitful love but a rotting and stagnant marriage; and Chick's home housing his parents' strife, which, like Ike's bungalow, contrasts so vividly with Lucas and Molly's hearth and home.

Each Big House is threatened by the collapse of the household that lies outside the narrator's control. Quentin recognizes that Sutpen's design collapses in on itself because of marriages that cannot be confined within the Big House. Bayard must acknowledge that his newly-inherited Big House is not strong enough to contain and control Drusilla so he banishes her to Denny's house instead. Ike attempts to restructure understandings ownership by rejecting the Big House and the incarceration it represents for him, but like his mother, he all but chases Roth's mulatta mistress from his hunting tent with the thought, "Maybe in a thousand years or two thousand years in America [...] But not now! Not now!" (*GDM* 344). And Chick rejects the binary oppositions of black and white marriages and homes, retreating to his domesticity in his uncle's law office that stands as his own perception of the Big House that his uncle inherited from his grandfather and which is passed on to Chick.

The understandings of the Big House resonate throughout Faulkner's fiction not just in these four novels on which I have focused. As Polk has noted,

Faulkner's fiction is a house-haunted landscape, a terrain marked by structures ranging from shotgun sharecropper shacks, ephemeral and poisonous as mushrooms, to antebellum mansions, both dilapidated (the Old Frenchman place) and pristine (Major de Spain's), secure as their long deep roots in Mississippi's historical and cultural power structures. They are a pervasive, symbolic presence too, inscribing on

Faulkner's North Mississippi landscape the class structure of the plantation system. ("Children" 25)

The Big House is the center of the antebellum Southern plantation, representative of the power structures in place to all who see it. The big house is enviable by black men and poor white men alike who cannot attain the status afforded those who live in the Big House. Lucas Beauchamp wants to be the man of his house like his white grandfather LQC McCaslin was before him. Similarly, Sarty Snopes looks at the de Spain mansion, and he thinks to himself, "Hit's big as a courthouse." "People whose lives are a part of this peace and dignity," Sarty believes, are safe and secure (CS 10). But as his father crudely but effectively points out about the "pretty and white" house, "That's sweat. Nigger sweat. Maybe it ain't white enough yet to suit him. Maybe he wants to mix some white sweat with it" (CS 12). Thus, Ab Snopes points out that the "pretty and white" Big House is built by black slaves and poor white men literally and metaphorically who can see the house, but who may not enter it except by the back door to the kitchen and then only with permission. Polk, discussing Flem Snopes's Big House, argues that "In *The Mansion*—and in the mansion—Flem confronts the emptiness of the American dream, which he has so masterfully succeeded in realizing. But its emptiness is necessarily lost on Yoknapatawpha's Have-not population, who live in economic bondage to those structures, and whose culture insists that they see the mansions not as symbols of oppression but, quite the contrary, as symbols of lives to which they might realistically aspire" ("Children" 26). But it is not just those who live outside the Big House who live in "bondage to

those structures.” It can also create bondage for those who live inside the Big House. Historians and literary critics have successfully documented the problematic relationships between white and black women within the house.¹ The continuing assumption is that the Big House and “the plantation household held freedom only for its ‘white head,’” as Glymph has acknowledged and disproved by demonstrating white women’s power within the household. My intent is not to contradict or undermine this important scholarship. My examination of Faulkner’s fiction in this dissertation demonstrates, however, that white men’s understanding of their relationship to the Big House cannot be painted with such broad strokes; it is much more complicated. The narrators’ inward turn and reflection on marriage and the Big House in their *Bildungsromane* indicates their conflicted relationships to these domestic power structures. The adventures that once might have defined these narrator’s masculinity in a traditional *Bildungsroman* are no longer sufficient; masculinity is more than the community’s acceptance of manhood, it must also be found inwardly and at home—in what might be thought of as a domestic narrative.

This dissertation only scratches the surface of the in-depth examination needed to better understand Faulkner’s male protagonists and their inward reflections on, motivations for, and craft of masculinity in domestic narratives. For instance, one might consider both Quentin and Jason’s relationship to the domestic in their individual narratives in *The Sound and the Fury*; Anse’s replacement of his dead wife Addie Bundren with the “duck-shaped” woman (*AILD* 260) in *As I Lay Dying*; Joe Christmas’s racially-charged understandings of marriage and the home in *Light in*

August; Jack Houston's failed attempt to escape marriage or Mink Snopes's marriage to a woman whom he meets in the prison camp in *The Hamlet*; or Flem Snopes's attempt to build a positive domestic narrative with the phallic headstone he buys for Eula after her suicide in *The Town* and *The Mansion*. The short stories that contain marriage material might also be mined for valuable insight, such as "Dry September," "Shingles for the Lord," "Centaur in Brass," "Ellie," "A Justice," "A Courtship," "Honor," "Fox Hunt," "Artist at Home," "The Broach," "Grandmother Millard," and "Miss Zelphia Gant."

Another approach, which I have intentionally avoided in this dissertation, is to take a biographical approach to the issue of marriage in Faulkner's fiction. As is commonly known, Faulkner's marriage was anything but a tranquil one. When her parents did not approve of her marriage to Faulkner, Estelle Oldham married Cornell Franklin in 1918 and went with him overseas to Hawaii and China only to return years later divorced with two children. Faulkner and Estelle married in 1929, within months of the publication of *The Sound and the Fury*. After their marriage and encouraged by his publishing successes and wanting "something grand" (Minter 121), Faulkner purchased a rundown antebellum place known as the Shegog Place, establishing his own Big House² and household.³ In 1930, Faulkner and Estelle moved into the home and Faulkner went to work restoring it to his former grandeur and named the home "Rowan Oak." Faulkner and Estelle's marriage was filled with arguments, drama, alcohol, and heartbreak due to the death of their nine-day old daughter, Alabama, in 1931. They later had another daughter, Jill Faulkner, in 1933.

Faulkner's three affairs with Meta Carpenter, Jean Stein, and Joan Williams are well known and documented. Regardless, Faulkner and Estelle were married for thirty-three years until Faulkner's death in 1962.⁴

The relationship between Faulkner's marriage and his fiction has been analyzed by critics Judith L. Sensibar and James G. Watson. Faulkner's "greatest novels," Sensibar states in "Drowning Maidenhead Symbol's Self": Faulkner and the Fictions of Love" (1987), "are about families, generations of Mississippi families, and—perhaps most of all—they are about marriage. In current critical terms we would say that the politics of desire are central to Faulkner's imaginative vision" ("Drowning" 126). Stating that, "We have no sense of the relation of Faulkner the Southerner, the son, lover, husband, or parent to the tortured marriages and love affairs in his fiction" ("Drowning" 127), Sensibar highlights through her interviews with Faulkner's daughter and others ways in which the women in Faulkner's life influenced his fiction:

To say that Faulkner's marriage translated directly into his fiction (that it was an instance—to use Faulkner's words—of sublimating the actual to the apocryphal) is simplistic. But their daughter's observations on why her parents stayed married, despite much talk of divorce and desertion, give one a sense that it was a stimulating relationship for both partners. In many respects, Faulkner very consciously used the tension and theatre of his marriage—a theatre in

which Estelle was an adept player—for imaginative experimenting.

(“Drowsing” 144)

James Watson too in his chapter “Marriage Matters” in *Self-Presentation and Performance* (2000) through careful analysis illuminates how Faulkner’s marriage is presented and is fodder for his fiction: “Returning to marriage matters and weddings in novels from *The Sound and the Fury* to *Absalom, Absalom!*, Faulkner found in such reading as well as his own writings an accretive means of expression for very personal matters in his life” (102). Watson specifically focuses on the connections between the novel *Sanctuary* and Faulkner’s relationship with Estelle:

The marriage matter of *Sanctuary* derives in large part from Faulkner’s long relationship with Estelle and its irregular movement toward this situation. [...] The Faulkner-Estelle chronology details the ebb and flow of an ongoing relationship in which their lives periodically veered apart and came together again without either party being overwhelmed by or entirely losing interest in the other. *Sanctuary* was written following the second climax of that relationship, Estelle’s separation and divorce, which resulted in their marriage. (76)

Inherent, although not explicit, in both Sensibar’s and Watson’s studies of the biographic relationship between Faulkner and his fiction is the way in which Faulkner, like the Quentin, Bayard, Ike, and Chick attempts to come to an understanding of his own masculinity by writing about marriage and the domestic space. For example, analyzing a letter Faulkner sent to his editor Hal Smith in 1929

asking for a \$500 advance for his marriage, Watson states, “Ostensibly it portrays him facing up to his responsibilities as a man—but only ostensibly” (75). In her just published book-length study, *Faulkner and Love: The Women Who Shaped His Art* (2009), Sensibar intimates that Faulkner’s masculine identity was always at risk because of his desire to be an artist. As a young man, mimicking his grandfather J.W.T. Falkner, in both dress and drinking habits, Faulkner developed a “masculine surface to convince his father and grandfather to cut him the slack he needed to pursue his real but socially unacceptable desires and identity—to become an artist. Or perhaps he did it to convince himself that despite his passion to be an artist, he really was a man” (188). After Estelle’s marriage, Faulkner moved to New Orleans where he created “intense relationships” with other artists such as Bill Spratling and William Odiorne, both of whom he lived with off and on (244). Faulkner also had a relationship with Helen Baird, to whom he proposed marriage in 1925, which Sensibar argues was a way of distancing himself emotionally from Estelle (461). Ultimately, Sensibar concludes, Faulkner developed into a mature writer and “came into possession of his vision [...] once he knew Estelle would be free” (469). But the question remains whether Faulkner’s development into a “mature writer” as a result of his relationship with Estelle—or any other woman—was sufficient for Faulkner to consider himself “a man.”

Whether Faulkner’s marriage or his establishment of a household in the Big House of Rowan Oak was important to Faulkner’s masculine identity is certainly open to more critical analysis. As is the possible argument that Faulkner was

searching for his own understanding of domestic masculinity through his male narrators, for we can certainly find parallels between Faulkner's life and his art when we search for them as critics have demonstrated. We can also find parallels in Faulkner's attempt to understand the masculinity of the past inherent in marriage and domestic relationships. For instance, Faulkner revered his grandfather, Colonel William C. Falkner who, like Thomas Sutpen and Charles Bon, had a "shadow family" with his "very white" mulatta mistress Emeline. As Williamson suggests, Faulkner "never recognized his mulatto kin" (384), but perhaps he did recognize the irony that Emeline was the "only Mrs. Falkner in the cemetery where [his grandfather's] marble self rises above all" (70). Through Quentin's reconstruction of the Sutpen family, perhaps Faulkner too attempts to understand his grandfather's relationship. Obviously, the parallels can go on and on between Faulkner's life, history, and community and his art.

What is apparent is that Faulkner's interest in marriage stems from a 1925 letter on the subject written in response to a contest run by a New Orleans newspaper, *The Item-Tribune*. The contest asked "What's the Matter with Marriage" and offered a ten dollar award for winning entries. Faulkner, single and living in New Orleans at the time, submitted a response attacking not the institution but pointedly the persons involved: "I do not think there is anything the matter with marriage. The trouble is with the parties thereto" ("Letter" 337). Both parties, he continues, "must keep clearly in mind that thing which they want to create, to attain, and so work for it together" ("Letter" 338). Finally, he concludes, "There is nothing wrong with

marriage. If there were, man would have invented something else to take its place” (“Letter” 338). Although the letter may very well have been written tongue-in-cheek for its potential monetary award, it documents Faulkner’s early interest in the subject. This interest extends throughout his career to his final novel *The Reivers* (1962) in which child-like Boon Hogganbeck marries former prostitute Everbe Corinthia, formally entering the Yoknapatawpha community and fathering a son. “Man invariably gains unhappiness when he goes into a thing for the sole purpose of getting something,” Faulkner wrote in his 1925 letter. My argument has demonstrated the disappointment that stems from the male narrators’ use of marriage for the purpose of obtaining masculinity or mastery. Yet Faulkner’s narrators’ attempt within the claustrophobic locality of the evolving South to find a place for themselves in which they may call themselves men because of its reliance upon gender roles and reinforced notions of the Victorian order. In his aesthetic crafting of Yoknapatawpha, Faulkner proves marriage malleable to the cultural affections of slavery, race, and the search for masculinity.

NOTES

¹ See, for example, Clinton (1982), Fox-Genovese (1988), Gwin (1985), and Glymph (2008).

²According to Williamson, “Falkner men had a history of unusual houses. William C. Falkner had belatedly turned his modest house in Ripley into a replica of an Italian villa. In the 1890s J.W.T. Falkner had built the Big Place on South Street

in Oxford” (228). But due to problematic family fortunes, the Big Place was turned into a boarding house and then taken over by Faulkner’s uncle John who turned it into apartments. “But now again,” states Williamson, “in 1930 with Rowan Oak, someone born with the Falkner name had a ‘mansion.’ Interestingly, the deed was made out to William Falkner without a ‘u’” (229). Williamson’s commentary, therefore, seems to substantiate my claims that Faulkner attempted to prove his masculinity by creating a Big House and household that would have proven his aristocratic ancestors proud.

³ From its genesis, Faulkner’s household was large. Immediately it included Estelle and her two children from her first marriage, Victoria and Malcolm, and then their daughter Jill who was born in 1932. His household also included African-Americans Caroline Barr, Faulkner’s childhood mammy who now looked after his own child, and Ned Barnett a tenant and butler. His household quickly expanded to include his mother, sister-in-law, and niece. After his father’s death in 1932, Faulkner took on responsibility for his mother, Maud. After his brother Dean’s death in 1935 while flying a plane Faulkner had given to him, Faulkner also took financial responsibility for Dean’s wife Louise and baby daughter, Dean, with whom Louise was pregnant when Dean crashed.

⁴ For detailed discussions of Faulkner’s biography see Blotner (1974, 1984), Oates (1987), Karl (1989), Minter (1991), Williamson (1993), Gray (1994), Parini (2004), and Sensibar (2009).

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