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MATRICES OF DISORDER: CLASS, RACE, AND THE POLICING OF NORMATIVE
SOUTHERN FEMININITY IN WILLIAM FAULKNER'S *THE SOUND AND THE FURY*, *AS I
LAY DYING*, *SANCTUARY*, AND *REQUIEM FOR A NUN*

A Dissertation
presented in partial fulfillment of requirements
for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy
in the Department of English
The University of Mississippi

By

CLAIRE BROOKS MISCHKER

May 2013

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ABSTRACT

In this project, I apply Judith Butler's late twentieth century theory of gender performance, outlined in her book *Gender Trouble*, to three major novels from William Faulkner's early career, *The Sound and the Fury*, *As I Lay Dying*, and *Sanctuary*, and to one novel from his later period, *Requiem for a Nun*. This project examines the main female characters of these novels: Caddy Compson, Addie and Dewey Dell Bundren, Temple Drake, and Nancy Mannigoe, respectively, to reveal how race and class are indelible to the performance of gender in the literature of the early twentieth century South. The focus of this project will be to discover how the intelligibility of the femininity of these characters is affected when they disrupt the normative performance of their conventional gender roles, especially in maternal contexts.

Chapter One lays the historical and theoretical groundwork for the novels discussed. Chapter Two considers Caddy Compson from *The Sound and the Fury* in the context of her performance as Southern Belle and how the influence of her brothers affects that role. Chapter Three addresses Addie and Dewey Dell Bundren from *As I Lay Dying*, focusing on how class differences affect their gender performances as rural women. Chapter Four deals with Temple Drake in *Sanctuary* and how she adapts her gender performance to survive the abuses to which she is subjected. Chapter Five examines the gender performances of both Temple (Drake) Stevens and Nancy Mannigoe regarding matters of race as they inform the intelligibility of the latter's normative femininity within the context of white elite society.

Whereas Butler's theories tend to suggest constructive potential in the disruptions of normative gender performances, applying them to Faulkner's works, wherein social contexts often foreclose such opportunities, proves less optimistic. However, there is the possibility for the interruption of repetition with the daughters of the main female characters in the novels examined here.

DEDICATION

This dissertation is dedicated to my many friends and gracious family who have supported me through the highs and lows of this process. In particular, it is dedicated to Sean Ennis, my partner and willing sounding board, and my son Liam Ennis, who helped me remember my inspiration daily. I would also like to specifically remember Kathryn Olsen, Gabriel Scala, and Beth Seaman as some of the best and brightest friends and scholars a doctoral student can have.

Finally, I have to mention Dr. Peter Nicolaisen, without whose class and guidance, I would never become so obsessed with Addie Bundren and the fiction of William Faulkner.

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I. GENDER BORDER PATROL

“Gender is a project which has cultural survival as its end.”—Judith Butler

At the 39th annual Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha Conference on the University of Mississippi campus, where the theme was “50 Years After Faulkner,” Deborah Clarke gave a paper entitled “Considering the Unthinkable: The Risks and Rewards of Decanonizing Faulkner” in which she discussed both the valorization and challenge of Faulkner’s “greatness.”¹ Centering on the example of Caddy Compson, Clarke noted that many critics have translated female silence in Faulkner as strength and created presence out of female absences in the text. However, in questioning the validity of those interpretations, Clarke wondered if instead of the power with which critics attempt to imbue them, those silences and absence are simply mistakes, evidence of an inability on the author’s part to portray complex femininity. What this project aims to establish is that Faulkner’s early female characters are portrayed through silence, absence, and controversy specifically *because* women are so complex. It is inevitable that their performances in Faulkner’s fiction be riddled with contradictions and disruptions precisely because such conflicts arise out of the complexities of femininity.

The women of William Faulkner’s Yoknapatawpha County have never been strangers to controversy, and the female characters of his early popular novels are no exception. Between

¹ July, 2012.

1929 and 1931, a period Andre Bleikasten, in *The Ink of Melancholy*, claims “touches indeed on the miraculous,” Faulkner published three relatively successful, popular novels: *The Sound and the Fury*, *As I Lay Dying*, and the “pot-boiler” *Sanctuary* (xi).² The author himself seemed to consider these three novels a trifecta when he wrote in the introduction to the 1932 edition of *Sanctuary* that he tried “to make out of it something which would not shame *The Sound and the Fury* and *As I Lay Dying* too much” (viii). Furthermore, Bleikasten asserts that “*The Sound and the Fury* marked the beginning of a period of strenuous work and stunning inventiveness,” which includes *As I Lay Dying* and *Sanctuary* immediately following it (xi); and *As I Lay Dying* is continuously referred to as a tour de force.³ For these reasons, these three novels, and the women around which they revolve—Caddy Compson, Addie Bundren, and Temple Drake, respectively—especially tend to attract prolific attention among critics and readers of Faulkner. Of writing *Sanctuary*, Faulkner said of the novel, “I took a little time out, and speculated what a person in Mississippi would believe to be current trends [...] and invented the most horrific tale I could imagine” (*Sanctuary*, 1932, viii). As if he could not abandon the woman he’d subjected to the horrific, it was also to the character Temple Drake that Faulkner returned twenty years later in *Requiem for a Nun*, in which he also reacquaints us with Nancy Mannigoe, a character from the short story “That Evening Sun” that is contemporary with the earlier novels. The women central to these novels, Caddy Compson, Addie and Dewey Dell Bundren, Temple Drake and Nancy Mannigoe, stir up controversy as they run the gamut of gender roles available to women, from belle to mother to corpse and beyond. They are a group plagued by

² Although the novels were published in this order, *The Sound and the Fury* in 1929, *As I Lay Dying* in 1930, and *Sanctuary* in 1931, Bleikasten (among others) notes that *Sanctuary* was actually *written* between the earlier two, but publication was delayed for revision.

³ From Faulkner himself to Bleikasten to Wesley and Barbara Morris.

contradiction and conflict, reflecting the gender crises born of Faulkner's contemporary South still recovering from the Civil War and Reconstruction.⁴

Gender crises as a focus of scholarship on Faulkner's work saw its heyday in the nineteen-eighties and nineties, as evidenced by the popularity of Clarke's own 1994 *Robbing the Mother: Women in Faulkner*. Cheryl Minnick, in her annotated bibliography of 1982-1994 gender-related Faulkner criticism, traces the onset of such a focus on gender and sexuality to a 1982 article by Judith Bryant Wittenberg entitled "William Faulkner: A Feminist Consideration." In the article, Wittenberg summarizes the work of "literary critics in the late 1960s and 1970s who wished to refute the charge of Faulkner-as-misogynist and re-envision Faulkner's women characters as something other than stereotypes, archetypes, goddesses or cows" (Minnick 523). Minnick asserts that Wittenberg's article "presaged a major shift in Faulkner scholarship when [Wittenberg] noted that Faulkner tended to assign similar traits to both male and female characters, making it difficult to 'read any [consistent] gender-based 'message' into presentation'" (qtd. 524). However, Minnick goes on to argue that "regarding gender as 'permeable' is a mode of current [nineteen-nineties] critical inquiry that may have exceeded Wittenberg's expectations," which Minnick attributes to the developing work of theorists such as Judith Butler, Eve Sedgwick, Marjorie Garber, and Donna Haraway (524).

⁴ The early twentieth century in the South saw the region reeling from the social, industrial and governmental changes brought about by the loss of the Civil War and subsequent reforms. George B. Tindall, in *The Emergence of the New South*, warns that "any serious effort to understand Southern politics in the 1920's [sic] must begin with a recognition that the progressive urge did not disappear but was transformed" in such a way that "the impulse for reform somehow turned into a drive for moral righteousness and conformity" (219). In *The Paradox of Southern Progressivism*, William A. Link defines this period as "between about 1900-1930," where "bureaucratic intervention in education, public health, child welfare, and public morality replaced traditional governance, which had relied on voluntarism and community control" (xi). Link also remarks that "in no region was there a sharper conflict between traditional and modernizing governance...than in the South," and that "Southern progressivism should be understood as a clash between radically divergent views of the social contract" (xi). In this regional context of political paradox, Faulkner's early novels of social strife and contradiction were nonetheless recognized by critics for their innovative style and modern techniques while appeasing the reading public's craving for "meretricious sensationalism" (Langford 4). Tindall cites Random, Warren and O'Donnell as praising Faulkner's work.

Using various theoretical approaches, critics such as Deborah Clarke, Susan Donaldson, John Duvall, Doreen Fowler, Minrose Gwin, and Diane Roberts have delved into the gender issues of Faulkner's fiction in innovative ways. Duvall uses deconstructive, structuralist, and psychoanalytic thinking to examine the social ideologies at work in several of Faulkner's novels. Donaldson explores new ways to interpret masculinity in Faulkner's works while Fowler's book gives us a Lacanian interpretation of Faulkner. Engaging feminist approaches, Gwin and Clarke utilize the French feminists H el ene Cixous and Julia Kristeva to examine femininity and maternity in Faulkner's novels. Roberts is primarily concerned with relating several of Faulkner's main female characters to cultural and historical icons, such as "Confederate Woman" with "Mammy" and "New Belle" with "Night Sister," to show how Faulkner's contemporary culture attempted to maintain control of femininity through binary models. However, with the exception of a 1994 article by Jay Watson, wherein he uses Judith Butler's theories to examine the "gender guard" of *Light in August* in the policing of Joe Christmas's *hyper*masculinity, very little practical application of Butler has been applied to Faulkner's works. Deborah Clarke, in *Robbing the Mother*, mentions Butler only once, although Butler's critique of Kristeva's emphasis on motherhood is directly relevant to Clarke's own analysis of Faulkner's mothers.

Despite the theoretical sophistication and historical framework of many of these 1990s studies, focusing on psychoanalysis, on the characters' particular roles as wife or mother, or on iconic images such as belle or mammy does not allow us to investigate the unintelligibility that makes Faulkner's characters so controversial. In much of the psychoanalytic scholarship on Faulkner and gender, gender is evaluated as the expression of an interior identity; however in her 1990 book *Gender Trouble*, Judith Butler posits that all expressions of gender are

performative, “instituted in an exterior space through a *stylized repetition of acts*” (179). Therefore these repetitions “constitut[e] the identity it [gender] is purported to be; gender is always a doing, though not a doing by a subject who might be said to preexist the deed” (33). The difference between expression and performance is “crucial” for Butler’s theories, as it distinguishes that “if gender attributes and acts...are performative, then there is no preexisting identity by which an act of attribute might be measured” (180). Critics such as Fowler and Duvall use Lacanian and Freudian theories to analyze gender in Faulkner’s works psychoanalytically, and by doing so, they attempt to create, for some of the characters, an interiority that is not necessarily represented in the texts, which is problematic considering Butler’s own assertions about the discursiveness of gender. Lacan’s theories function within assumptions of the compulsory heterosexuality that Butler’s own theories attempt to subvert. But perhaps Butler’s biggest contention against Lacanian psychoanalysis is the backlash it invoked from feminist critics. Because Lacan’s theories focus on the Law of the Father, feminists responded with philosophy on “maternal identification” that Butler ultimately believes only “tends to reinforce precisely the binary, heterosexist framework that carves up genders into masculine and feminine” (84). Quite simply, not only does Butler find Lacan’s theories limiting, but she also finds the theories that developed in opposition to him equaling limited by binary definitions of gender and sex.

Furthermore, by delineating specific roles and archetypes for the characters to fulfill, critics such as Clarke and Roberts impose expectations on gender roles that shape the expressions of them, so that the question becomes what kind of mother or sister or belle each character may be instead of allowing for and analyzing more individually specific performances. Using gender roles to examine a female character suggests she is, as Butler would argue, a

“substantive person who is the bearer of various essential and nonessential attributes” (14). But such narrow classification prevents us from examining how that character might enact subversion through her gender performance. If we imagine any identity category as fixed and rigid, as *essential*, any agency a character might have outside the standards of that gender role is foreclosed, be it wife, mother, perhaps even woman. However, the concept of femininity can be shaped by a hundred influences that hold different meanings for every individual, especially depending on socio-economic and ethnic identities. Therefore, these characters are not necessarily *just* sisters or wives or mothers, but women who succeed in disrupting the social expectations of their respective gender performances. At the moment or locus of such disruption, Butler anticipates the possibility, or opportunity, for cultural change, progress, or just difference. That difference can eventuate agency, but only through the “reconceptualization of identity as an *effect*,” which “opens up possibilities of ‘agency’ that are insidiously foreclosed by positions that take identity categories as foundational and fixed” (Butler 187).

Butler’s theories allow for subversion through unintelligibility. It is precisely “because certain kinds of ‘gender identities’ fail to conform to...norms of cultural intelligibility,” Butler asserts, that “their persistence and proliferation...provide critical opportunities to expose the limits and regulatory aims of that domain of intelligibility...to open up within the very terms of that matrix...rival and subversive matrices of gender disorder” (24). It is the possibility of these “matrices of disorder” that I suggest Faulkner’s controversial female characters present in these novels. Butler argues that the critical task is to “locate strategies of subversive repetition...to affirm the local possibilities of intervention through participating in precisely those practices of repetition that constitute identity” and thus present the “immanent possibility of contesting them” (188). So the critical aim becomes not to evaluate the possible interiority of a character

but instead to understand how she might use her performance to subvert normative repetitions of gender.

However, these female characters are not allowed to perform their genders without policing, which is enforced by the members of the various communities of Faulkner's fiction. Butler argues that the gendered body "has no ontological status apart from the various acts which constitute its reality," therefore

If that reality is fabricated as an interior essence, that very interiority is an effect and function of a decidedly public and social discourse, the public regulation of fantasy through the surface politics of the body, the *gender border control* that differentiates inner from outer, and so institutes the "integrity" of the subject.

(My emphasis 173)

The fantasy Butler refers to here is the existence of a uniform, normative subject identity that requires that one be feminine or masculine. Rather than such a subject, Butler proposes that the intelligibility of any given gender role is rendered by socially established, repetitive regulatory practices, of which heterosexual gender performance is the "ritualized form of their legitimization" (Butler 178). Thus, Butler describes how intelligibility is rendered and interpreted through normative and non-normative gender performances, the degree of normativity based on a "heterosexual matrix" wherein heterosexuality is compulsory. Within this matrix, men are expected to *act* masculine and be attracted to women who *act* feminine, and vice versa. Through the performance of such patterns, we recognize someone as either masculine or feminine.

However, women are not solely defined by their gender because, as Butler notes, "if one 'is' a woman, that is surely not all one is" (6). Neither is gender determined solely by biology

because assumptions of gender depend on both historical and social situation. Sociological identifiers, such as race and class, determine differences in gender performance, but generalizations about women cannot accurately be based on such qualifiers. We cannot assume universalities about femininity but must instead acknowledge that disparities of gender performance are affected by race, class, and social context. As Butler argues, “the term [woman] fails to be exhaustive... because gender is not always constituted coherently or consistently in different historical contexts” (6). In this project, I contend that the central female characters of these texts are not exclusively defined by their designations as women but that their gender performances are further determined by their social and historical contexts since, according to Butler, “as a shifting and contextual phenomenon, gender does not denote a substantive being, but a relative point of convergence among culturally and historically specific sets of relations” (15). In Faulkner’s texts, those sets of relations are most specifically established and policed by the characters who adhere to conventional concepts of femininity based on historical assumptions about race and class that function within their respective social contexts. I will use Butler’s theories of gender performance to examine how gender roles might be subverted through the major female characters in three of Faulkner’s major early novels, *The Sound and the Fury*, *As I Lay Dying* and *Sanctuary*, and one of his later novels, *Requiem for a Nun*. While my approach is informed by both historical and critical considerations of gender, I will apply Butler’s theories to the texts themselves to examine gender subversions and how they are policed by the characters of those texts in order to expand upon the narrow categories and gender binaries suggested by other disciplines. In *Gender Trouble*, Butler is mainly concerned with sexual orientation, and, while she acknowledges that race and class are social and historical influences on gender performance, she does not include specific examples. Faulkner’s novels

provide concrete yet complex female characters against which to practically apply Butler's premises in order to explore how aspects of normativity and intelligibility are mitigated by class and race within specific social contexts.

How Caddy, Addie, Dewey Dell, Temple, and Nancy portray the dominant gender roles they are expected to fulfill directs their respective plots; and the subsequent policing of those gender roles by the characters who surround these women indicate an atmosphere wherein the social mores of the South were caught in the struggle between the Lost Cause movement and the modernism and progressivism trying to change both literature and society. The complexities of southern womanhood were only further complicated by the emergence of the idea, emphasized by both Anne Goodwyn Jones, *Tomorrow is Another Day*, and Tara McPherson, in *Reconstructing Dixie*, that southern femininity became conflated with the region itself, which "has been at the heart of the ideology of the South, embodying the values by which Southerners have defined the region's character through Civil War, Reconstruction, New South and modernism" (A. Jones 8). In the aftermath of the South's defeat in the Civil War, the ideals of southern femininity were imposed on the region to such an extent that the South resorted to a "hyperfeminized figure of the southern woman as discursive symbol for the region, with the land itself being figured as feminine as well" (McPherson 19). McPherson asserts that the Southern Lady was the "key image around which the South constructed its postbellum image" (39).

Within the world Faulkner has created, the ideal of the Southern Lady—which the Southern Belle became upon marriage—is the most recognized identity category. This idealized version is elaborated in Anne Firor Scott's 1970 book *The Southern Lady*, which is a go-to reference for multiple literary critics, including several consulted for this project. Whether Scott

is to be used as a primary source or as an ideal with which to break traditions depends on the critic, but contemporary historians of southern womanhood, such as Elizabeth Fox-Genovese, in *Within the Plantation Household*, and Laura F. Edwards in *Scarlett Doesn't Live Here Anymore*, find Scott's valorization of the Southern Lady problematic in its overshadowing of other roles of southern femininity, *especially* those concerning race and class. The Southern Lady ideal had its genesis in the paternal, slavery-based society of the pre-Civil War American South. Nearly two decades after Scott's book's publication, Fox-Genovese points out the fact that "slaveholding ladies were massively outnumbered by nonslaveholding or small-slaveholding women challenges any easy assumptions about the relation between the ideal and reality but does not undermine the power of the ideal" (47). Just as there are numerous roles for women to fulfill outside the context of southern elite white society, so too are there different pockets of expectation within that society itself. Regarding the idolization of the Southern Lady, A. Jones asserts that "southern womanhood was born in the imaginations of white slaveholding men" with "profoundly held assumptions about sex with strongly felt class aspirations [and] beliefs about race" who "sought an image they could revere without sacrificing the gains of racial slavery" (8, 5). Fox-Genovese argues that "prevailing southern ideology emphasized the ideal of the southern lady as gracious, fragile, and deferential to the men upon whose protection she depended" (109). Edwards explains how in the aftermath of the Civil War, elite white women rebuilt their "racial and class identity around a particular kind of domesticity," which they installed as "the new standard of elite womanhood" (182). Fox-Genovese emphasizes that "the most prestigious models promoted the ideals of the southern lady" wherein she "was expected to manifest...all that was best in her society. Gracious and delicate, she was to devote herself to charm and nurture within the household" (196).

Reflective of the weight southern ideology affords the image of the Southern Lady, Fox-Genovese claims that “girlhoods were protected [so that southern girls] received little or no training to prepare them for the authority that would accrue to them as the mistress of a household” (110). She emphasizes that elite white girls of an appropriate age were most often educated by learning the daily routines and skills of their mothers, through which girls learned to “behave, to read, to write, to sew, to supervise the garden, to put up preserves” (111). Other than that, the daughters of elite society were expected to do such things as maintain proper appearance of their rooms and clothing and gather and arrange flowers to contribute to that appearance (Fox-Genovese 114). Scott accounts for an ideology wherein belles were highly revered, courted and wooed but then worked hard under heavy household responsibilities as new wives. She claims that newly married southern women, finding themselves suddenly removed from the myth of the Southern Belle, often wrote about “the shock of sudden transition from the life of a carefree, sought-after girl to one circumscribed by matronly responsibilities” (Scott 27).

Laying out the social expectations of the belle in her book *The Southern Belle in the Modern Novel*, Kathryn Seidel classifies her as “the young unmarried daughter of a landed (and thus aristocratic) family, who lives on a great plantation” and being “of marriageable age, ready to be courted” (3). Seidel’s book is significant because it illustrates how important and pervasive the image of the Southern Belle is in the literature of the American South, which is especially interesting considering that the term “Southern Belle” hardly even appears in the historical analyses of Edwards and Fox-Genovese. According to Seidel, the regulatory practices defining the belle include “a society that prefers its lovely women to be charming and flirtatious coquettes who never yield their purity,” which creates a situation of “impossible tension” for the

belle as “she is asked to exhibit herself as asexually desirable to the appropriate males, yet she must not respond sexually” (xvi). These are the boundaries, contradictory as they are, within which Caddy Compson (*The Sound and the Fury*) and Temple Drake (*Sanctuary*), specifically, are expected to behave. However, as Barbara Ladd claims in *Resisting History*, the first few decades of the twentieth century, “saw the emergence of restless, willful, desiring women in droves” (23). The industrialization of the South drove women to work, and new family roles emerged that allowed them more independence than the previous traditional housemistress Southern Lady. According to Ladd, “the modern woman was going to college, traveling, and postponing marriage in search of ‘a life of her own,’” examples of which we see throughout the Faulkner works considered here but most notably in Temple Drake (24). However, the white elite that so loftily upheld the ideal of the Southern Lady was loath to relinquish their nostalgia for southern femininity.

Edwards claims that “the myth of moonlight and magnolias still shapes our ideas about the lives of southern women before the Civil War” (10). It would seem, from accounts like Scott’s, that that myth is not limited to antebellum nostalgia but lived on far into the twentieth century.⁵ While the quality of life Scott portrays of elite southern women, a group Edwards and Fox-Genovese refer to as “the planter class” or slaveholding women, is similar among the three historians, the most significant departure between Scott and the two more recent scholars is the women’s active participation in the establishment and upkeep of their gender roles. Scott portrays a group of women whose gender roles are rigorously defined and maintained by the oppression of the men around them. While both Edwards and Fox-Genovese concede that southern women most certainly lived in a society “directed by white, propertied men,” as the

⁵ Arguably, the myth of the Southern belle/Lady exists in the standards of elite Southern femininity to this day.

twentieth century approached, and southern society dealt with the newly free black population, elite white women worked equally as hard as any man to uphold and idolize the image of the Southern Lady in efforts to enforce racial and classist differences (Edwards 1). At the end of the Civil War, planter class women found themselves somewhat unmoored by the end of slavery. Whatever their personal morality toward the institution, it had been “a key anchor in their social status [because] it distinguished them from poorer white southerners and from African Americans, ... a filter through which they understood their own place in the world” (Edwards 171). In this uncertain atmosphere, the South reeled socially *and* financially as many families experienced what Edwards calls “downward humility” as their plantations floundered without the support of the unpaid labor slaves had provided (177). Because, according to elite white women, “the world fell out in ranked order according to class,” being confused with women who “did their own housework, worked in the fields, wore clothes that allowed them to do such labor, and did not concern themselves with hair ribbons” was something they wanted to avoid “at all costs” (Edwards 180). In this atmosphere of the possible blurring of class lines but wherein “the color line was being drawn,” Edwards claims “elite white women worked to rehabilitate the Confederacy” through “The Cult of the Lost Cause,” of which they were among “the most active mythologizers” (181). Scott paints the picture of the Southern Lady as put upon a pedestal and glorified *only* by the southern men of the last half of the nineteenth century. Despite A. Jones’s argument that women didn’t participate “significantly in making the *ideology* of the South in which their own idealization played so persistent a part” (9), Edwards insists that “their influence on public perceptions of the period was profound [in how] they helped create the Old South of *Gone With the Wind*, with its mint juleps, fine houses, beautiful belles, kind masters and happy slaves” (181). These are stereotypes the South is still trying to outlive,

despite Edwards insistence that “most southern women” did not fit the “reigning image of the mythic Confederate woman, who patiently sat at home, willingly sacrificed all, and bravely cheered on ‘the cause’ to the bitter end” (66).

Fox-Genovese’s assessment that Southerners considered women especially “attuned to moral concerns and as especially suited for the early education of children” and expected them to “manifest piety, purity, chastity, and obedience and to cultivate their special calling for motherhood” suggests that there were (or *are*) universal expectations of southern femininity (202). However, the social and racial situations of southern women affect the nuances of any gender expectations, be it about piety, purity or motherhood. Edwards explains, in the South’s past, “family, kin, personal reputation, and social context all merged with gender, race, and class to shape what particular women could do in particular circumstances,” and multiple sets of social norms are delineated in Faulkner’s texts, from the Lost Cause attitude of *The Sound and the Fury*, to the rural family life of *As I Lay Dying*, to the town settings of the early and late thirties and the outlaw communities of *Sanctuary* and *Requiem for a Nun* (13). While there are certainly iconoclastic, immediately recognizable feminine roles such as Southern Lady and mammy, the female characters in this project span various gender roles concerning racial and social differences through which they can be rendered intelligible. There are examples of rural and black working class femininity among these women that fall outside the boundaries of elite social definitions for both white and black women. What I am most concerned with is how these female characters disrupt the conventions of their contextual roles and how that affects their intelligibility and agency within their respective societies and texts.

Despite the Lost Cause attitude toward social and racial change imposed by the conflation of southern femininity and the region, the women of the South began to change in the

era between the Civil War and when Faulkner began writing. Thus, by the time Faulkner was creating the landmark characters of Caddy Compson, Addie Bundren, Temple Drake, and Nancy Mannigoe, female gender performances themselves were evolving in the region. Nostalgia for the traditional plantation mistress role of the antebellum Southern Lady met in direct conflict with the women's rights movement of the early twentieth century as "the prospects of modernity," according to Ladd, "and especially the threat and promise of free women, left very clear traces in Faulkner" (17).⁶ In this climate of Old South versus New South, Faulkner's female characters become controversial. Through their non-normative behaviors, not only do they threaten the social stability of the characters around them but also, because the ideals of southern femininity had come to represent the heritage of the region itself, southern culture at large. Ladd points out how "the attention of traditionalists was...focused on moral reform on men and women in their private lives, and women, long seen as the icons of private life, were singled out to bear the brunt of efforts to halt what conservatives perceived as the breakdown of traditional values" (27). Disruptions of normative gender roles demand regulation by their surrounding community, and thus in every one of these novels, we encounter at least one character, if not a group, acting as what Judith Butler would call the "gender border control" in order to relegate these women back into their society's appropriate gender roles (*Gender Trouble* 173).

Because of the impulse to use the ideal of the Southern Lady to represent the South itself, such monumental changes in the southern landscape threatened the very ideology of southern femininity's regulatory patterns, and the question becomes "not whether to repeat, but

⁶ LeeAnn Whites, in *Gender Matters: Civil War, Reconstruction, and Making of the New South*, illustrates this issue by highlighting the political career of Rebecca Latimer Felton during the 1920s, in which one of Felton's challenges was "how to reconcile the old values of protection and seclusion with the new realities of independence and public status for women" (151).

how to...or, indeed, to repeat and through a radical proliferation of gender, to displace the very gender norms that enable repetition itself” (Butler 189). Indeed, the “abiding gendered self” might be constructed by “repeated acts that seek to approximate the ideal of substantial ground of identity, but which, in their occasional *discontinuity*, reveal the temporal and contingent groundlessness of this ‘ground’” (Butler 179). While manifestations of southern femininity have held sway in the American South for hundreds of years now, in the first few decades of the twentieth century, it seems even Faulkner had become aware of their possible “groundlessness”; and, thus, he created characters who attempt to *disrupt* the performances of such stereotypes.

Because the ideal of the Southern Lady is a monolith of race and class, we must recognize not only its historical misrepresentations but also the other social gender roles available to these female characters who may be unintelligible as Southern Ladies but who fulfill aspects of rural and/or black working class female roles. Race and class affect not only society’s expectations of a woman’s gender roles but also how she herself expects to accomplish those roles and how they might fulfill her. Furthermore, what becomes expressly clear when you apply Butler’s abstract theories to the diversely populated communities of Faulkner’s fiction is that normativity (however specifically it is defined within the framework of race and class) is a moral code that will be upheld to the greatest of extremes. While Butler admits that the point of her critical theory “was not to prescribe a new gendered way of life...[but to] open up the field of possibility for gender without dictating which kinds of possibilities ought to be realized,” specific racial and social spheres do not easily allow such subversions (viii). The inhabitants of those spheres, as represented by the multiple characters in these Faulkner novels who police the genders of the five women addressed in this project, will often go to calamitous lengths to

regulate transgressive femininity back to the normative, sometimes resorting to non-normativity themselves.

What becomes problematic about the difference between Scott and more modern historians of southern womanhood is that, in her analysis, Scott valorizes this ideal of the Southern Lady in a way that renders lower class and black women nearly invisible. Two important distinctions need to be made here: one is that the ideal of the Southern Lady was undeniably only concerned with *upper class white* southern femininity. The second distinction, then, becomes rather obvious, and that is that lower class and black southern women fell outside the scope of this particular ideal gender performance, especially as it is illustrated by Scott. So, where does that leave the “wives of mill workers or Negro maids” to whom Scott claims “definitions of what were ladylike” did not apply (xi)? For Scott, they seem almost unimportant: “the wives of small farmers and the slave women lived, bore children, worked hard, and died, leaving little trace for the historian coming after” (xi). Such invisibility suggests an issue of intersectionality wherein, according to LeeAnn Whites, “the problem with seeing gender was that it was so overlaid by both race and class” (3). These secondary citizens, due to race and/or class, of the southern community seem insignificant to the white elite in light of “the intertwined persistence of racial hierarchies and the intense postwar commitment to female invisibility” (Whites 7). Whites addresses the idea that race, especially, was alienated from social gender norms “particularly in the emergence of a ‘whites only’ movement for women’s rights” (7). It is nearly impossible for poor whites and blacks to be found intelligible in the context of the elite role of the Southern Lady, not because they are non-normative, but because they function within other communities wherein particular social codes were established to determine normativity.

Moreover, the image of the Southern Lady that Scott illustrates is qualified by nostalgia, so her own description is more normative ideal than reality.

We know that poor white and black women were *not* invisible, regardless of their class or race, from the very fact that Faulkner wrote about them. Cleanth Brooks, in *The Yoknapatawpha Country*, devotes an entire chapter to the sub-strata of Faulkner's fiction, "The Plain People," who Brooks defines as "descendents neither of the old ruling class nor of the slaves. They are white people, many of them poor, and most of them living on farms; but they are not to be put down necessarily as 'poor whites' and certainly not necessarily 'white trash'" (10). Incidentally, Brooks fears that "it is with characters such as these that the non-Southerner reader of Faulkner is likely to have most trouble," presumably because of assumptions about class in the South that don't allow for such sub-strata (10). Brooks suggests that the stereotypically imagined "poor whites" or "white trash" were represented "as being in general a shiftless, illiterate, and often vicious group of people" (11); which is not to say those characters *do not* exist in Faulkner's fiction, but that there is a group between them and the middle/upper classes, and it is among these "plain people" that we can place the Bundrens. In such a description, though, Brooks neglects gender himself, rendering this white sub-strata as "plain people" defined primarily by race and class. The reality is that poor white and working class women, especially in the early twentieth century, occupied much more space in the South than women attempting to maintain the holdover image of the Southern Lady, but they got much less attention. Historians like Edwards and Fox-Genovese remark on how they are nearly invisible in the late nineteenth century in the shadow of the Lost Cause mentality of the South. However, history and art, Faulkner's fiction included, show us that the lower class had established very definitive social contexts in the South, especially because of the division imposed between elite

whites and rural white and black working class women, represented by Addie and Dewey Dell Bundren and Nancy Mannigoe, respectively, in this project.

Recent historical studies by Melissa Walker, Lu Ann Jones and Rebecca Sharpless endeavor to show that the rural women of the South are less marginal than past studies or their absence from those studies have made them seem. L. Jones begins her book *Mama Learned Us to Work* by lamenting how “farmwomen disappear” from women’s history textbooks in the twentieth century, “only returning for a cameo appearance during the 1930s when their careworn faces evoke the suffering of the Great Depression” (1).⁷ Just as Fox-Genovese mentions stratification in the white elite themselves, the farmers of the South were also split into categories of sharecropper, tenant farmers (among whom there were also different classifications), and those who owned and operated their own farms. The Bundrens fall into that last category, part of what L. Jones calls the “middle of the tenure continuum” (5). Within this particular classification of rural folk, L. Jones claims that most were “as self-provisioning as possible [wherein] subsistence strategies persisted alongside an accommodation to the market, [and] women continued to be diversified farmers, growing and producing much of what their families ate”(5). The idea of families being as self-provisioning as possible immediately brings to mind the Bundrens’ insular dependence on only family, almost to a fault, and Anse’s constant insistence that they be “beholden” to no man. L. Jones describes rural women’s lives as tempered by the “combined duties of daughter, wife, mother, farmer, and friend” and “the most labor-intensive tasks...accomplished with hand tools” (7). In this atmosphere of intense manual labor, daughters took after their mothers, and one woman L. Jones interviewed provided the title of the book with her expression of “gratitude for a mother who had taught her the value and

⁷ While *As I Lay Dying* was published in 1930 and the lives of the Bundrens take place contemporarily with that publication date, perhaps a few years earlier, there is no mention of the Great Depression in the novel.

necessity of work”: “Mama learned us to work...that’s what she done” (10-11). Mainly a collection of personal interviews and oral histories, L. Jones’s book features women reminiscent of Addie and Dewey Dell Bundren, who have “fallen through the historical cracks [although] they belonged to a twentieth-century yeomanry—families who owned enough land or tools to control their own labor instead of working for someone else” (14). Melissa Walker, in *Southern Farmers and Their Stories*, lists as common experiences among this yeomanry “rural self-sufficiency, strong work ethic, persistence through hard times, neighborhood mutual aid, an attachment to the land, and a sense of relative socio-economic equality” (34). Incidentally, this list is also what “constituted a *good* country person” (Walker 78). The Bundrens certainly seem to benefit from the quality of “neighborhood mutual aid,” though they offer it very little themselves. However, Walker also purports that dependence, as in the opposite of self-sufficiency, was “anathema to farm people,” so once again we are reminded of Anse Bundren’s aversion to being beholden to any of his neighbors (82). One distinction that should be made, considering that the Bundrens are the only representatives of the farmer class in this project, is that Addie Bundren was not born into a rural community. Addie Bundren was from town, Jefferson, and, so not automatically inscribed with the practices of rural conventions as her daughter Dewey Dell may be. Since, as Walker claims, “southern farm people peppered their oral history narratives about life on the land with observations about how that life made them different from ‘town folk,’” Addie can be considered an outsider to the farm community she inhabits, despite having spent her entire adult life in the country seemingly devoted to her family and farm (5).

Ladd notes that although we know very little of Addie’s history, we know she is from Jefferson and, thus, “a town girl in this novel that makes so much of the difference between

town and country” (40). She is also differentiated from her rural community because she is a “former schoolteacher and therefore possessed of some education and with some work experience in the public sphere” (Ladd 40). However, despite these qualifications as an outsider, as well as the hostile vehemence of her monologue in the novel, Addie maintains a passing performance of the kinds of expectations of a rural wife and mother Rebecca Sharpless outlines in her book *Fertile Ground, Narrow Choices*.⁸ Most simply, Sharpless tells us that “most farmwomen in the United States before World War II married, had children, and spent most of their time feeding and clothing those children” (4). For what little we know about Addie’s life before her funereal journey—Cora says she bakes the best cakes—we can imagine Addie managed these tasks well enough. However, Sharpless goes on to describe how southern farmwomen usually “lived their entire lives among a network of kin, heavily influenced by the other women in their families. Most began life as daughters of farm people, taught by female relatives to carry out their duties,” which is a situation that does not apply to Addie (18). In fact, we know nothing of Addie’s parents except her father’s bitter saying—“the reason for living is to get ready to stay dead a long time—” and that he’s buried in Jefferson (*As I Lay Dying* 169). As far as the novel is concerned, Addie has had no maternal influence in her life and perhaps imparts very little to Dewey Dell herself. However, the fact that she does not discuss sexuality with her daughter seems to be more a quality of rural family life than Addie’s own reticence to share, since Sharpless notes that “few parents explained the cycle of human life to their daughters, even though they probably had ample opportunities to see animals reproducing on the farm” (41). This seems problematic in light of the rural social convention that “premarital sex for women was ostensibly forbidden,” since women in the rural community “bore the

⁸ Although this particular study is on the women of Texas cotton farms, the domestic conventions, as Sharpless argues herself, can be loosely applied to farmwomen across the Southeast.

burden of maintaining morality, and ‘nice’ girls did not engage in sexual relations outside of marriage” (Sharpless 24). And in fact, Sharpless relates that “sexually active, unmarried females brought great scorn to their families,” suggesting why Dewey Dell is so desperate to terminate her pregnancy in *As I Lay Dying*. In their aversion to explain sexual activity but simultaneously forbidding it outside of wedlock, the upper and lower classes had at least one thing in common, though the reality of hard work still immensely separated elite and rural social contexts.

Closer to the rural farming community than the elites, regarding class, were the southern working class black women suddenly in need of gainful employment in the wake of the abolition of slavery. However, a comparison of the characters of Addie Bundren and Nancy Mannigoe would show how race is possibly the most significant “marker of difference,” among southern women (McPherson 21).⁹ Economically, Addie and Nancy are similarly removed from the world of Caddy Compson and Temple Drake, but socially, Addie and Nancy themselves are worlds apart. Addie is a “town girl” who married a farmer and grew old providing for him and their family in the country; and Nancy is a black house servant who has a past as a prostitute and whom, in *Requiem for a Nun*, Temple characterizes as a dope-fiend whore. In the works considered here, Nancy only appears briefly as a prostitute, through accounts of the past, and as a domestic house servant in two different elite white homes, within the latter of which she resembles the stereotypical southern icon of the mammy. In *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow*, Jacqueline Jones claims that because of their “subordinate status as women and blacks within American society...black women were confined to two types of work that seemed ironically contradictory—the first was domestic and institutional service...[and] the other was manual

⁹ I categorize class and race as markers of difference, but McPherson is not specific when she claims that “femininity is a social and discursive construction, and thus its contours are always sketched in relation to other markers of difference” (21).

labor so physically arduous it was usually considered men's work" (4). What J. Jones fails to mention is that these two options were black women's only *legitimate* options for employment, since we know very well, from Nancy's own example, that there was a street economy in which black women could engage. J. Jones's book concentrates on the private lives of black women and how their work made demands on their ability to provide for the needs of their own families, especially as domestic workers in white homes.¹⁰ Despite the various roles within which we experience Nancy in Faulkner's works, we know nearly nothing about her private life, especially in her role as baby nurse in *Requiem for a Nun*.¹¹ J. Jones's book focuses mainly on northern urban settings for the workforce of black women, so there is no reference to black women working as mammies among her discussion of domestic positions. This is most likely due to the fact that the mammy is a specifically southern icon equivalent to the Southern Belle/Lady with regards to stereotyping.

It is no coincidence that these two roles exist very much in tandem in the ideals of southern society—according to Diane Roberts in *Faulkner and Southern Womanhood*, the “Mammy is twinned with the Confederate Woman”—especially considering that *Gone With the Wind*, arguably the most famous movie about the South, portrays the most archetypal Southern Belle/Lady in Scarlett O'Hara and the most recognizable mammy as immortalized by Hattie McDaniel (42). In *Mammy: a Century of Race, Gender, and Southern Memory*, Kimberly Wallace-Sanders claims the mammy served as “a symbol of reconciliation and redemption” even while she was “used to *reify* racial purity for white southerners” by making them “more

¹⁰ Interestingly, J. Jones finds that the “cultural distinctiveness of black community life and the attempt by black working women to subordinate the demands of their *employers* to the needs of their own families...reveal the inherent weakness of the ‘victimization’ perspective” (my emphasis 9).

¹¹ Incidentally, we see much more of an intensive look into Nancy's home life in the short story “This Evening Sun” than in the entire novel of *Requiem*.

genteel than their less affluent counterparts” (5).¹² The standard southern myth of the black mammy included everything from her dress to the sound of her voice; her stereotypical attributes include “her deeply sonorous and effortlessly soothing voice, her infinite patience, her raucous laugh, her self-deprecating wit, her implicit understanding and acceptance of her inferiority and her devotion to whites,” which “all point to a long-lasting and troubled marriage of racial and gender essentialism, mythology, and southern nostalgia” (2).¹³ Truly, Nancy hardly resembles any part of that description, but she is also functioning as a holdover of the ideal of mammy in the late nineteen-thirties, nearly a century after the role emerged from the plantation South. The fact that Faulkner portrays Nancy in such a stereotypical position suggests that her employer, Temple, personifies the racist southern essentialism wherein “African American women were thought to be innately superior in their abilities as caretakers of white children” (Wallace-Sanders 8). While the relationship between Temple and Nancy is complicated by similar sexual scandals in the two women’s pasts and Temple’s own lack of maternal devotion, Temple seems to install Nancy in the position of baby nurse—mammy—because it is one of the few intelligible gender roles through which Temple can understand her.

Wallace-Sanders relates how early twentieth century southern “local color” literature and monuments “honor[ed] the mammy as a type: the faithful black retainer,” and that is precisely how Temple seems to understand Nancy: as the stereotype of a domestic servant so revered in nostalgic southern lore that the act of violence Nancy commits is unthinkable (94). Temple seems to fall under the spell of what Wallace-Sanders criticizes as “the mammy image

¹² This juxtaposition is especially relevant to Temple as mistress of Nancy as “mammy,” considering how Temple’s reputation may have been tarnished in her community following her captivity in a Memphis brothel in *Sanctuary* before she became the privileged wife of an attorney.

¹³ Incidentally, “devotion to whites” is a quality several critics, including Roberts, assign to Nancy in order to try and explain why she murders Temple and Gowan’s infant in order to save their marriage.

as a symbol of ideal social relations between blacks and whites—one based on blacks’ innate ability to serve whites and their implied inferiority—[in which] *mammy* becomes a code word for appropriately subordinate black behavior” (105-106). Furthermore, Wallace-Sanders discusses a 1917 short story by Adeline F. Ries, called “Mammy, A Story” and published by W.E.B. Du Bois in *Crisis*, with definite echoes in *Requiem for a Nun*, wherein a mammy murders a white child. Wallace-Sanders points out that the story raises questions about the “validity of the mammy’s seemingly innocuous presence in the white household” (111). This idea is complicated even further in *Requiem for a Nun* because Nancy does not possess the mannerisms or demeanor of a stereotypical mammy. Furthermore the short story portrays a main issue of Nancy’s performance in *Requiem for a Nun*: “the unimaginable...mammy who is a brute” (111).

Interestingly, Wallace-Sanders goes on to discuss the role of mammy and how it is portrayed differently between the novels *Gone with the Wind* and *The Sound and the Fury*. She argues that in the latter, with both Dilsey’s failing health and her emotional distance from the Compsons by the end of the novel, “Faulkner sounds the death knell of the mammy as the most recognizable symbol of the mythic South” (125). What, then, do we make of Nancy, who also worked in a domestic capacity for the Compsons in the short story “That Evening Sun,” and her appearance two decades later in Temple Stevens’s employ, where Temple trusts Nancy, despite her complete lack of stereotypical qualities of the mammy, with the care of her child? We can only conclude that Temple is so influenced by socially ingrained gender roles that she missed that death knell of the mammy, since she imposes the expectations of the role onto Nancy.

Diane Roberts considers the binary of Confederate Woman and mammy to be one of the most important binaries of southern femininity.¹⁴ However, within Roberts's binary, the Confederate Woman is also "defined by not being the Mammy: one is white, distant, statuelike, and upper class, while the other is black, warm, physical, and subservient" (xiii). In other words, the Confederate Woman cannot be a mammy; and a mammy cannot be a Confederate Woman, although they cannot exist without each other. Roberts' Confederate Woman is a steel magnolia who made it through the Civil War with willpower, strength and gentility, a woman who "recreated herself to accommodate, even valorize, hardship" (3). However, while she gives birth to her children, no doubt with the same duty and tough-as-nails punch with which Roberts qualifies her as a steel magnolia, it is the mammy who "prepares food, bathes, comforts, and instructs the white child" (42). In fact, Roberts asserts that the mammy facilitates all the activities "the southern social order absolved its white ladies of, just as it absolved them of sexuality" (42). While Temple is very much the biological mother of her children, Nancy is the person in charge of their care, though we can hardly call her a mammy since we never see her perform as one and, most importantly, her main interaction with Temple's child to which we are privy is infanticide. However, Temple herself fails to uphold the social convention of devoted mother, since she plans to abandon at least one of her children to elope with her blackmailing lover Pete. Through Nancy and Temple, Faulkner renders the maternal unintelligible in *Requiem for a Nun* with a mother who seems not to care for her children and a mammy who murders a white child in an attempt to regulate that very lack of devotion. Besides race, class becomes a mitigating factor in the mistress/mammy pairing as well, since, especially in the novels addressed here, only elite white women employ mammies. Caddy and her brothers were

¹⁴ For all intents and purposes, Roberts's "Confederate Woman" is the same as what I've been referring to as the Southern Lady. Roberts claims she "combines the images of belle and warrior" (1).

essentially mammied by their family's black servant Dilsey, who also serves as the caretaker for Caddy's daughter Quentin when the child is left behind by her mother and hated by her uncle. The monetary and racial privileges of being elite white women allow Caddy and Temple to supplement their own motherhood with the racialized role of mammy, making such relationships the rare instances of integration in a segregated South.¹⁵ While motherhood may seem to be a gender role with the potential to transcend race and class, not only is that misleading, but, especially in southern culture, those two qualifiers often complicated motherhood.

To some degree, every one of these five characters is examined through the lens of maternity, and if any role is as socially significant in Yoknapatawpha County as the Southern Belle/Lady, it is that of mother. Whereas only a couple of the characters discussed here are intelligible as Southern Belles, they are all mothers to some degree. While we know Caddy, Addie and Temple to have living children, Dewey Dell and Nancy are only pregnant in their respective plots, although we learn in *Requiem for a Nun* that Nancy lost her baby after the events of "That Evening Sun."

Clarke, in *Robbing the Mother*, considers the mother a creative force in Faulkner's work. However, she enumerates a "tension between figurative and literal, language and maternity," qualifying the former as masculine and the latter as feminine in order to espouse how maternal authority "challenges the dominance of language" in Faulkner's fiction (5). To do this, she employs the psychoanalysis theories of both Lacan (language=masculine) and Kristeva (experience=feminine). Clarke claims that "feminist theory offers a framework to examine maternal power," and she goes on to investigate how "the mother has as much, if not more, to

¹⁵ Grace Elizabeth Hale, in *Making Whiteness*, makes this assertion about the antebellum plantation home, but since she also argues that the mammy is a holdover from before the civil war, the integrated relationship survives as well.

do with identity, order and language as the father” (7). Since Clarke uses Kristeva’s theories to investigate the mother’s role in the creation of “identity, order and language,” Butler’s own views on Kristeva seem pertinent. One of Butler’s main criticisms of Kristeva’s theory of the semiotic seems to be that it depends “upon the stability and reproduction of precisely the paternal law that [Kristeva] seeks to displace,” which proves “doubtful” the subversion that is Kristeva’s end goal (102). However another fault Butler interprets from Kristeva’s philosophy of the semiotic, filtered through Foucauldian framework, is the “maternal libidinal economy” that serves as a “reification that both extends and conceals the institution of motherhood as compulsory for women” (118). Butler uses Foucault’s warnings against a “fictitious category of sex that facilitates a reversal of causal relations” to conclude that “whereas Kristeva posits a maternal body prior to discourse, Foucault would doubtless argue that the discursive production of the maternal body as prediscursive is a tactic...of those specific power relations by which the trope of the maternal body is produced” (117). To use this framework compels us, according to Butler, “to redescribe the maternal libidinal economy as a product of an historically specific organization of sexuality” (118). Because Kristeva’s theories position the maternal as pre-paternal and pre-cultural, those designations become definitive of the state of maternity, and they achieve “permanent legitimation in the invariant structures of the female body” (118). Butler sees Kristeva’s reasoning as dangerous because that legitimation marks the female body with the paternal law “that sanctions and requires [it] to be characterized primarily in the terms of its reproductive function” as “the law of its natural necessity” (118). Butler claims that by trying to deny the paternal influence on maternity, Kristeva actually legitimizes it to the extent that her theories reinforce the idea that a woman’s sole *purpose*, especially in the heterosexual compulsory matrix, is to reproduce, to *be* a mother. For Butler, the threat of essentialism

Kristeva exposes is both realistic and dangerous to culture. Essentializing maternity suggests that only through motherhood is a woman's femininity legitimized, making motherhood a requisite for any valid performance of socially approved feminine gender roles.

Mena Mitrano, in "Judith Butler and the Images of Theory," argues that Butler considers Kristeva a "guardian of an old immobility" that "participates in the reproduction...of the subject before the law" (63). This practice is one Butler counters with the implication that "the female body that is freed from the shackles of the paternal law may well prove to be another incarnation of that law, posing as subversive but operating in the service of that law's self-amplification and proliferation" (119). Butler, however, as emphasized by Mitrano, "is interested neither in the 'natural' past of the body nor in its original pleasures but in 'an open future of cultural possibilities'" (63). Butler's critique continues as a "second problem emerges when Kristeva argues that this libidinal source of subversion [constituted by the multiple drives that characterize the semiotic] cannot be maintained within the terms of culture" (102). Interpreting Kristeva's description of the maternal body as "prior to culture itself," Butler questions "whether what Kristeva claims to discover in the prediscursive maternal body is itself a production of a given historical discourse, an *effect* of culture rather than its secret and primary cause" (103). Butler seems to identify in Kristeva's theories a paradox wherein the maternal body is both prior to language/culture but also inevitably defined by the discourse of its culture.

Whereas Clarke uses Kristeva in order to identify the positive and creative force of maternity in Faulkner by examining the relationship between maternal experience and paternal language, essentializing maternity makes it integral to Faulkner's characters in such a way that demands they be regulated by socially-approved sanctions of motherhood. If we were to evaluate the five characters considered here as good or bad mothers, based on generally

accepted maternal conventions, such as devotion and self-sacrifice, they would unilaterally be deemed “bad.” Perhaps several might have their good points—Caddy sending Quentin money, Addie’s stilted affection for Cash and Jewel, Temple’s post-infanticide concern over Bucky—but most of the time, these women are unintelligible as mothers because they function outside their contexts’ normative boundaries for motherhood. It is not so much a surprise that Temple would leave her husband for another, more exciting man, but what renders her incomprehensible to the other characters is that she would abandon her children so callously. Similarly, it is not Addie being upset over her multiple pregnancies that makes her unintelligible but more her refusal to acknowledge three of the children she gives birth to.

Amy Louise Wood, in “Feminine Rebellion and Mimicry in Faulkner’s *As I Lay Dying*” cites Margaret Hagood’s study of southern farmwomen in the 1930s, which recounts that “women regarded both heavy farm labor and childbirth as personal achievements, [and they] took pride in their suffering, from aching backs to the labor of childbirth” (105). But Wood goes on to note that women also “feared the dangers of pregnancy and the hard work of child rearing, [and that] pregnancy was referred to as ‘getting caught’” (105). The latter phrase may remind us of Dewey Dell as she picked on down the rows toward her tryst in the woods with Lefe that would lead to her eventual pregnancy, which is appropriate considering Wood is referencing both *As I Lay Dying* and the lower classes. While upper class mothers, like Caddy and Temple, may have had the resources to hire black women, like Nancy, to help them with child-rearing, poor mothers, like Addie and Dewey Dell, had years of work in both the field and in the home ahead of them. The dangers of compulsive motherhood may be more theoretical for Butler, but historical accounts and Faulkner’s fiction, especially Nancy’s miscarriage and Dewey Dell’s

attempts to abort her pregnancy, prove that the complications of motherhood were often very literal and traversed class and race within the southern culture.

Each of these five women is categorized by her story and literary history into recognizable gender roles. Of these, only two claim any intelligibility within the parameters of the ideal of the Southern Lady, whereas of the remaining three, two are excluded by class and one by race. Caddy and Temple are both belles, from upper class families who claim distinction through landed history—the Compsons—or political power—Temple’s father is a judge. Addie and Dewey Dell Bundren and Nancy Mannigoe function in relation to their *own* particular social norms. Addie Bundren is the infamous mother of Faulkner’s works; moreover, she is the mother whose dying wish sends her family on its most harrowing adventure and whose voice resounds posthumously through the novel *As I Lay Dying*. Her daughter, Dewey Dell, is the poor country girl; in fact, her performance at the end of the novel can be qualified as “country girl come to town.” And finally, the real “outsider” of the group is Nancy, perhaps because she’s portrayed the most various gender roles: she’s worked as a prostitute, a servant to the Compson family, then the caretaker for Temple Drake’s children, and she eventually ends up imprisoned for murder. While three of these five female characters have no relation to the Southern Lady ideal except to be outside of its boundaries, history provides us examples of normative roles for poor white and black women. Examining these female characters in proximity to each other proves that we cannot remove such “markers of difference” as class and race because they are inevitably fundamental to the conventions of femininity under which these characters perform (McPherson 21). Though Caddy is older than the other two, she and Temple and Dewey Dell are of a similar age when the defining events of their respective novels occur.¹⁶ But while Caddy

¹⁶ Actually, Caddy’s daughter Quentin is nearly, if not exactly, the same age as Temple and Dewey Dell.

and Temple occupy the strata of society wherein they are expected to uphold the traditions of the Southern Belle, those traditions do not apply to Dewey Dell because that distinction is only applicable to upper class white women; and while Dewey Dell is two of the three, it is not enough.¹⁷ We must examine Dewey Dell in the context of the social norms of rural femininity, as far removed as it is from the elite standards to which Caddy and Temple may be upheld. Faulkner seems to be experimenting with the contexts(s) within which gender can be performed by creating three very similar characters separated by social class, all three of whom experience their sexuality in ways oppositional to the norms of their respective classes.

Further complicating the matter, sexuality in Faulkner's fiction is often identified with race, specifically, the association of blackness with heightened sexuality: consider Quentin's connection between Caddy's outdoor trysts and blackness or the coding of Popeye as black because of his sexual predatoriness. If, as Roberts claims, "the very nature of sexuality in the South is denied as illicit and 'Negro,'" and "*evil* has been read as a Faulknerian code word for female sexuality," then it follows that black sexuality=evil, which is only a small step to black=evil (116, 124). If only black women are sexualized, and sex is "evil," the situation of any white sexual female character becomes both unintelligible, through race, and unsanctioned, through morality. How then do we factor racialized sexuality into white characters' performances? One way is to, as McPherson puts it, "decenter the 'race=black' binary" (24). The equation race=black connotes the ideology that white=normative and is therefore *not* racialized. But black is not the only race, and once we recognize that whiteness can be racialized in a similar manner, where its definitions are not merely normative but descriptive of all performance, opportunities for the consideration of the sexuality of both black and white women

¹⁷ It seems of note to point out that all three of these young women have at least three brothers (Temple has four), and that especially Caddy's and Temple's take active roles in the regulation of their gender performances.

emerge. Faulkner allows each woman considered herein her sexuality, no matter how it might contribute to her unintelligibility, as it does when Temple chooses to abandon her family for the gangster life with Pete.¹⁸

I have briefly highlighted the history of conventional gender roles of several different social groups in order to establish the context in which Faulkner created his early female characters. By the late 1920s, the holdover of the antebellum Southern Lady *should* have been losing ground exponentially but such was not necessarily true. Scott point outs that “the image of the lady was slow to die,” referencing a much-quoted 1920 tribute to “the Confederate woman” as proof of the lady’s longevity in society (221).¹⁹ Similarly, claiming that “as a period creation, the belle should by all logic have died out,” Shirley Abbott, in *Womenfolks*, admits that “yet the Southern belle has survived,” due, no doubt, at least in some part to the fact that women themselves were prolonging the stereotype (105). Much of the South had yet to recover from the “War of Northern Aggression,” and the atmosphere hovered about the region in which, according to McPherson “the Lost Cause ideology of southern nationalism conveniently fused the figure of the southern lady onto a celebration of the rebirth of a ‘nation’ defeated” (19). By 1896, when *Plessy v. Ferguson* implemented “separate but equal,” the South was, especially with regards to race, as antebellum as it could be without active slavery. In such an atmosphere,

¹⁸ Ladd notes that “during Faulkner’s youth and young manhood...new ideas about female sexuality suggested that white women might actually take a more active roll in seeking out sexual gratification, a possibility that forced comparisons rather than contrasts between black and white women” (25).

¹⁹ “The Confederate woman. Imagination cannot dwell too tenderly upon a theme so inspiring. Reverence cannot linger too fondly at so pure an altar. The historian’s pen...has not portrayed her superior, if, indeed, her equal: nor may we expect to find it in all the hidden future. It took the civilization of an Old South to produce her—a civilization whose exquisite but fallen fabric now belongs to the Dust of dreams. But we have not lost the blood royal of the ancient line; and in the veins of an infant Southland still ripples the heroic strain. The Confederate woman, in her silent influence, in her eternal vigil, still abides. Her gentle spirit is the priceless heritage of her daughters. The old queen passes, but the young queen lives; and radiant, like the morning, on her brow, is Dixie’s diadem.” Attributed to Lucian Lamar Knight from the Introduction to Mrs. Bryan Wells Collier’s *Biographies of Representative Women of the South*, quoted in both Scott’s *The Southern Lady*, 1970, 221-222 and Jones’s *Tomorrow is Another Day*, 1981, 3-4.

the myth of the Southern Lady was somewhat reinvigorated by those white elites who clung to her most, wanting to uphold the oldest values of purity, aristocracy and propriety for which they believed the war had been fought, and this included men *and* women. Despite the Southern Lady's survival as the icon of the nostalgia of the Lost Cause, Abbott also points out that "the literature of the South is piled high with the battered corpses of belles," and Faulkner's fiction is certainly no exception (107). Faulkner began creating some of his most famous female characters in an environment created by the tension between Lost Cause nostalgia and Progressivism. Caddy Compson, Addie and Dewey Dell Bundren, Temple Drake, and Nancy Mannigoe succeed in disrupting the status quo of their normative gender roles, and the other characters in the novels, especially those who function as the gender border control, seem very much aware of the danger these women pose.

William Link refers to historian Albert Bushnell Hart's warning that northern "tourists" to the South during Reconstruction might be misled into believing "stereotypes about widespread progress" if they only visited "boom towns, textile centers, mining and lumbering centers, and forges and foundries" (8).²⁰ However, Hart went on to share that were one to visit the "hinterlands," he or she might find a region still functioning the way it had for over a century and populated by "'stragglings' cities, 'small and often decaying towns,' and 'remote and isolated' rural communities" (Hart qtd. in Link 8). The latter is the South about which Faulkner wrote, and the same duality can be ascribed to the developing gender roles of southern women he penned in the early twentieth century. Sociologists writing about urban (and often Northern) feminist movements in the first couple decades of the twentieth century focus on progress.²¹ However, those are not the lives Faulkner portrays to us in his rural Southern Yoknapatawpha

²⁰ In Hart's 1910 "sociological guidebook for northern visitors, *The Southern South*" (Link 8).

²¹ I refer to such studies by James McGovern and Elise Freedman.

County. Faulkner's women may exhibit the desire for, or even spark of, the ideas of modernism or progressivism, but the social contexts within which they function do not allow for disruptive gender roles. When any of the female characters considered herein—Caddy Compson, Addie and Dewey Dell Bundren, Temple Drake and Nancy Mannigoe—perform non-normatively, the characters around them police their gender so severely as to hinder any potential agency that might be achieved. Furthermore, the social transgressions of these women provoke the members of their communities to operate outside of accepted gender norms in order to police their femininity back toward intelligibility.

For the sake of exploring the unintelligibility and any potential opportunity for gender performance disruption therein, this project proceeds chronologically through the novels and how the main female characters attempt to subvert the conventional gender roles of their social contexts. Chapter Two considers *The Sound and the Fury* and how Caddy subverts her performance of the Southern Belle in such a way that demands her brothers police her normativity to the point of alienating her from family and community. From a landed, formerly proud Southern family, Caddy Compson is the character of these five most strictly expected to adhere to the role of Southern Belle; thus, her “fall” mirrors her family's dwindling fortune as she spoils the virginal ideal her brothers expect her to maintain until her wedding day. Caddy is promiscuous and headstrong, and her sexual activity endangers her normativity in the eyes of her brothers to the extent that they attempt to police her despite their own non-normative gender performances. Caddy is expected to stay virginal, at least until marriage, and behave genteelly, displaying good manners and refined behavior, and she should seek out the company of society that conducts itself similarly. Because, as Fox-Genovese asserts, “brothers took a proprietary interest in the development and behavior of their sisters,” Quentin, Benjy, and Jason believe it is

their responsibility to shield Caddy from the dangers of the outside world, including those that pose threats to her purity (211). Therefore, Quentin's attempt to defend Caddy's besmirched reputation by challenging Dalton Ames to a fight can be seen as familial duty, despite his impotence against Ames. However, when Quentin and Benjy (in his own way) both object to Caddy's marriage because it signals the end of her virginity, they overstep the bounds of appropriate filial devotion. Quentin's objection to her marriage and Jason's eventual inhibition of her motherhood represent a perversion of normative gender policing; Caddy's brothers are unable to forgive her unconventional girlhood so that she may readopt traditional gender roles as a woman. Whereas they opposed her previous transgressions, Caddy's brothers reverse course and become the obstacles to Caddy achieving sanctioned status as wife or mother.

Chapter Three continues with a reading of *As I Lay Dying*, addressing how Addie publicly performs normatively in her rural community, but how, in private, she rages so vehemently against heteronormativity that she threatens her intelligibility as a wife and mother. Addie Bundren and, to some degree, her daughter Dewey Dell are regulated in those roles by their surrounding communities, wherein Cora Tull and MacGowan emerge as the primary gender police. However much Addie may resent Cora Tull's enforcement of their society's values, Addie polices her own gender disruptions when she retreats to her personal feminine essentialism, precluding any overt subversion or agency her non-normativity may have afforded her. This chapter also discusses Dewey Dell's directionless in regards to her own femininity as she submits to a kind of sexual determinism that neither Addie's private non-normativity nor regulation by her community can defeat, so that the maternal imperative her mother denounces so harshly in her monologue finds fruition in Dewey Dell's un-aborted pregnancy.

Whereas Caddy is upheld to the expectations of elite white society, Addie and Dewey Dell's lives are governed by simpler, yet just as rigid, rules of conduct. Often compared to Caddy Compson, because of their absences in their respective novels, Addie is remarkable not only amidst Faulkner's oeuvre but in literature at large because she speaks from beyond the grave in a monologue that, though brief, presents one of the most distinctive performances of all of Faulkner's characters. Caddy and Addie are also often related by critics because their respective families, and thus the novels in which they appear, revolve around them despite their relative absences. With no voice of her own, Caddy is arguably absent from *The Sound and the Fury*.²² Unlike Addie's post-mortem monologue affirming every instance of gender non-normativity she performed, Caddy's femininity is framed within the stifling patriarchy of her brothers, who very much want to maintain the sanctity of the ideal of the Southern Lady in their sister's gender performance, effectively eliding her character to the point where she is no longer intelligible in any gender role because she ceases to exist within the parameters of the rules of elite Southern etiquette and purity. Addie has one thing Caddy is denied: a voice. By writing her a first-person section—even if it is just one—Faulkner affords Addie a platform from which to perform her gender while we have to filter Caddy's gender performance through her brothers' points of view. Despite her decision to *take* Anse and settle down as a wife on a rural Mississippi farm, Addie was not born and raised rural, but instead took a teaching job outside the town of Jefferson she grew up in; thus, Addie was part of the Southern Progressive movement regarding education, however briefly. However, by forfeiting her social autonomy to marry Anse and start a farming family, Addie relinquishes her claim on progress so that despite

²² Although Minrose Gwin in *The Feminine and Faulkner*, noted extensively by Roberts, believes Caddy to be a speaking woman, using mainly the theories of Kristeva, through which women's "libidinal energies" can be expressed (35).

the defiant capacity of her monologue, any subversion of gender roles she accomplishes is limited to the private space between her and the reader until her dying wish sets her family in motion. But by making her family promise to return her to her hometown upon her death, Addie violates a tenant of the rural woman's code, and Cora Tull calls her out for it: a woman's place is with her family, in life *and* in death.

Dewey Dell, however, has been born in the rural context and presumably knows all its conventions about loyalty and devotion to family and land, even though she still breaks the solemn rule that a girl's purity is sacrosanct, making pregnancy outside of marriage a social taboo. Interestingly, this is a transgression both she and her mother commit, one of the few things that connects them, although it is not publicly known that Jewel is not Anse's son, just as Dewey Dell manages (for the most part) to keep her pregnancy a secret. Furthermore, the stifling values of marriage and family, as well as the fact that women were depended on so heavily to work the fields *and* manage the family, in the rural setting makes Anse's quick taking of another Mrs. Bundren less shocking, in context, and more practical.

Temple Drake's gender performance and its transformation present something of an anomaly in the pattern of foreclosed agency that Faulkner establishes in the previous two novels, and this disruption is the focus of Chapter Four. Until we experience Temple's monologue over halfway through the novel, she is presented to us through various glimpses of her awkwardly and miserably failing gender performances. Temple's incautious flirtation with Gowan proves dangerous, because she uses it to travel outside her usual social context, which sets the tone for how awfully Temple will be abused by those outside her standard society. From her first appearance in *Sanctuary*, Temple is pushing the appropriate boundaries for a girl in her situation away from home at University as she sneaks off campus to date town boys. The most

progressive and least oppressively regulated of these characters, Temple seems to be enjoying some of the newly found freedoms of young women in the thirties, including attending university and living apart from family, until Faulkner jerks her out of that environment, exposes her to the worst violation, and then situates her exactly where one would never expect to find a Southern Belle, in a brothel. Faulkner removes Temple from her usual context and dares us to watch and see what happens when the flirty coquetry, frenetic motion, and self-conscious primping that might endear her to young college or town boys no longer works outside that University town setting. In fact, the people Temple is surrounded by, such as Ruby, Lee and Popeye, upon removal from her standard social context perform so far outside the realm of her expected social norms that they are dangerous and unintelligible to her, just as she is unintelligible to them when the coy physicality and primping she usually resorts to prove ineffective in the brothel in Memphis where Popeye holds her captive. Therefore, she must adapt her gender performance to survive dire circumstances until she is reintroduced to her original social context at the end of the novel. Despite the traumatic abuses visited on her in *Sanctuary*, Temple is so free of overt gender policing during her time in Memphis that she adapts her gender performance in such a way that leads to a surprising, perverse bond between herself and her rapist, Popeye. Because Temple is essentially encouraged to perform non-normatively, through her disruptions of conventional gender roles she establishes agency that allows her to survive the abuses she experiences.

Finally, in Chapter Five, I emphasize how Temple's "sequel," *Requiem for a Nun*, and her relationship with Nancy Mannigoe therein, effectively shuts down any potential agency Temple might have achieved through her performance in *Sanctuary*. Perceiving Temple as a "transitional figure," Roberts writes extensively about Nancy and Temple's relationship in

Requiem for a Nun (218). She sees Nancy as a redeeming figure for Temple because Nancy functions as the “suppression of female sexuality” since she takes the fall, forcing Temple into “selfless maternal duty” (220). While Temple is rarely selfless, nor is her gender performance particularly maternal, Nancy does serve as a regulating force toward Temple in the novel, which proves problematic for the development of Nancy’s own gender performance. When we first meet Nancy in Faulkner’s oeuvre, she is a servant of the Compson family in “That Evening Sun,” years before the events of *Requiem for a Nun*.²³ It is no accident that Temple refers to an event from the short story in the novel and no coincidence that the episode she refers to concerns Nancy’s racialized sexuality as a prostitute. Temple herself was subject to non-normative codes of sexuality when she was held captive in the brothel in Memphis, and this link presents a connection between the two women. However, any relationship between the women is one tempered by race, and because Temple is the character privileged by Faulkner, Nancy’s gender performance is evaluated by white standards, through which she cannot gain intelligibility. However, much of Nancy’s unintelligibility also stems from her performance as mammy to Temple’s children, a role that intricately involves race, gender, and, to some extent, class. While the relationship in this novel between Temple and Nancy seems as if it may have the potential to disrupt traditionally segregated gender performances, any such possibilities are shut down when Nancy commits murder in a tragic non-normative attempt to regulate Temple back to her appropriate racial and social role of Southern Lady.

Butler argues that critics might consider characters who “fail to conform to gender norms of cultural intelligibility [as] ‘discontinuous’ gendered beings” (23). She seems to hope to discover, through the possibilities of interruption of normative gender performance, “critical

²³ The story, however, was published contemporarily with the earlier works, although its events take place before the events of *The Sound and the Fury*.

opportunities to expose the limits and regulatory aims of that domain of intelligibility” (24). However, through communities that will not allow such “critical opportunities,” Faulkner’s fiction exposes the limits of practical application of Butler’s theory of performativity, specifically with regard to how gender is mitigated by issues of race and class, and disruptive possibilities usually prove not to be positive or liberating in Faulkner so that any agency achieved is often destructive. Despite her concession that “because gender intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual, and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities...it becomes impossible to separate out ‘gender’ from the political and cultural intersection in which it is invariably produced and maintained,” Butler’s imprecise directions for evaluating gender performance do not allow for class and race (6). However, using Butlerian theory to read Faulkner allows us to expose intelligibility in these characters where before they have been interpreted as often incomprehensible. Understanding her brothers as the gender border control allows us to realize that instead of the unapologetic rebel, Caddy Compson wants very badly to fulfill the normative gender role of mother even if she did reject the role of belle. Addie Bundren, on the other hand, rejects every gender role, but only in a private space, so that the voice behind one of the most radical performances in Faulkner’s fiction seems to have no impact on her rural community. Using Butlerian theory to analyze Temple’s gender performance in *Sanctuary* shows how outside the parameters of victim or belle, Temple is able to find some affinity with her rapist and kidnapper. And finally, in *Requiem*, Butler allows us to look at how the relationship between Nancy and Temple might render performances outside the confines of race and class, but the novel itself shuts down any such progress.

As Butler’s theories tend to suggest constructive potential in the disruptions of gender performances, applying them to Faulkner’s fiction proves less optimistic. However, there is the

possibility for the interruption of repetition with daughters in the works examined here. We do not know definitively where Caddy's daughter Quentin is or what Addie's daughter Dewey Dell is going to do at ends of their respective novels, but we do know that they have not repeated their mothers' gender performances. The murder of Temple's infant daughter in *Requiem* violently prevents any repetition she might enact, suggesting a finality that does not weigh down the fates of Quentin and Dewey Dell. Such open-endedness suggests the opportunity for change, conceivably even reformatory change, in a way that allows Quentin and Dewey Dell to survive with some possible hope, both for themselves and perhaps the evolution of femininity in the South.

II. GOT TO MARRY SOMEBODY

“No sister no sister had no sister”—Quentin Compson

Noel Polk, in “‘The Dungeon Was Mother Herself’: William Faulkner: 1927-1931,” recognizes the pattern of a female archetype he calls a “significant character” in William Faulkner’s early works (1927-1931) as a woman who is “something of an epicenter”:

If she is not in fact at the center of every rumble in the fictional soil of Yoknapatawpha, she is nevertheless at the point just above the disturbance, the point from which the disturbance emanates. She is one, but she is also many: she is grandmother and mother, maiden and widowed aunt; she is often seen framed in windows looking out at the world passing by or at children playing in the yard.

(66)

Immediately trying to place those early female characters of Faulkner’s, I find myself asking “but where is Caddy?” That is precisely the question so many readers and critics ask of *The Sound and the Fury*. Caddy Compson, the “heart’s darling” of Faulkner’s oeuvre, is without a doubt a “significant character” in the novel; however we do not find her as a grandmother or a mother, a maiden or a widowed aunt. Nor is she “whining, self-centered, [or] repressive” like her mother, Caroline Compson, the one who makes the house a prison, while she is in fact, the “dungeon” (Polk 62). What space, then, does Caddy inhabit? In fact, for a character who functions *as* the epicenter of the novel, the “point from which the disturbance emanates,” Caddy

herself is absent as an active, vocal character in the text. Because, as Deborah Clarke asserts, *The Sound and the Fury* is “not a novel about Caddy...but about her brothers’ responses to her,” the only space Caddy takes up is in their obsessions with her (20). As readers, we experience Caddy secondhand, through the filter of her brothers, one an idiot, one plagued by the shadow of death, and one a blatant misogynist, as they construct her from their memories: an embodiment of a lost past which they seem to both mourn and resent.

Multiple critics have emphasized the paradox of absence/presence Caddy represents in the text. André Bleikasten, in *The Most Splendid Failure*, sees Caddy as a “fiction within a fiction,” “her presence [...] being rendered in such a way as to make her appear throughout as a pure figure of *absence*” (56). Other critics have attempted to *create* space for Caddy in the text in attempts to give her voice and presence, but this only serves to construct her as the feminine subject Butler argues does not exist. In *The Feminine and Faulkner*, Minrose Gwin considers Caddy a “speaking woman” whose voice will “float up to us muted but articulate out of the feminine space” of the novel (35). For Gwin, Caddy emerges as a creative force in the space between the author and the text, “with her own language of desires, loss, subversion, and, of course, creativity” (36). However, Gwin’s use of Kristeva to define Caddy’s feminine space, wherein she “becomes the discursiveness of that space which she *is* but which she also speaks out of,” alludes to a feminine subjectivity that Butler does not accept (35). If, as Butler claims, what we consider feminine is performed, there is no space for the “doer before the deed,” as Gwin seems to want to imagine Caddy (Butler 180). Diane Roberts contests that while Gwin “validates Caddy on her own terms,” the critic “comes close to valorizing the feminine as somehow more worthy than any other voice” (111). Such valorization is problematic because it suggests that Caddy manages to achieve a kind of progressive agency in the face of her

brothers' oppressive gender border control. However, because the brothers themselves reject and prevent Caddy's fulfillment of normative gender roles, she is denied any gender construction through "which agency is articulated and becomes culturally intelligible" (Butler 187).

Roberts claims, "she [Caddy] is...the opposite of all that the southern lady should be," which is a fact her brothers spend the majority of the novel bemoaning. By arguing that "if Caddy tells her own story, she will incriminate herself" as not adhering to the rules of Southern femininity, Roberts seems to suggest that Caddy's silence protects her (111). But whether or not Caddy tells her own story, her brothers, each in their own way, attempt to police her behavior, delineating the roles of virginal sister and devoted wife and mother they expect her to fulfill. However, even when Caddy attempts those conventional gender roles, her brothers contest that restoration, locking her performance into a contradictory untenability. As a prissy tomboy, a promiscuous belle, a pregnant bride, a mother-sister (to Benjy), a lover-sister (to Quentin), and an estranged mother to her own daughter, Caddy haunts the pages of the novel like an oxymoron of traditional feminine gender roles. Because their own performances are non-normative—in mental capability, sexual development, and opinions of women, respectively—Benjy, Quentin, and Jason's attempts to control Caddy result not only in inability, on their parts, to accept the evolution of her gender roles but also in their figuration as impediments to Caddy in the traditional positions of wife and mother befitting her social position.

Gender, and, subsequently, sexuality, is always a problematic thing in Faulkner's works, and analyzing Caddy proves problematic precisely because she is not available to us firsthand. Butler insists a woman is recognized as feminine because she performs established, normative iterations of regulatory practices, which for Caddy include prudence concerning purity and

decorum in the context of the Southern upper class in which she functions. If she disrupts those repetitions, her intelligibility *as a woman* is endangered because “as a strategy of survival within compulsory systems, gender is a performance with clearly punitive consequences,” especially a performance as complicated as Caddy’s (178). In “Overdoing Masculinity in *Light in August*; or, Joe Christmas and the Gender Guard,” Jay Watson argues that “the gender guard” of such “‘compulsory’ communities” “punishes *all* who don’t do their gender right” (149). And just as Watson argues that Joe “is punished for failing to do masculinity right,” Caddy is most definitely punished by her compulsory community for not performing femininity “right” (150). However, if perhaps Joe Christmas iterates his gender *too* much, Caddy’s transgression is that she exists as the *disruption* of traditional Southern patterns of femininity.

Vacillating from feminine to masculine and in-between, Caddy’s gender performance as a child allows for more fluidity than it does as she gets older; when she is young, Caddy is often allowed to act as she will, with very little supervision from her alcoholic father, hypochondriac mother, and ailing grandmother, so that when the conventions of a Southern funeral visitation dictate she wear a frilly dress, she resents the imposition (119). Quentin recalls from their childhood that “she never was a queen or a fairy she was always a king or a giant or a general” (173). Even at a young age, Caddy pushes the boundaries of her gender by being a tomboy among the boys, her brothers and servants’ children, climbing trees and muddying her clothes in the creek. But Caddy, whom Bleikasten calls a “turbulent little Eve, rash and defiant” (75), wanted to be the girl who climbed trees and bossed the boys, the one to “*break that place open and drag them out and [...] whip them good*” (173). Thus, from the moment we (chronologically) meet her, in the infamous “muddy bottom of her drawers” scene, Caddy establishes the active, willful patterns of masculine attributes (39). Kathryn Seidel, calling

Caddy a “Southern Rebel,” claims “the incident [of the muddy drawers] suggests that Caddy is not the repressed little girl her society has traditionally approved” and is “uninhibited by social expectations” (115). That very lack of inhibition will soon threaten her intelligibility as a Southern Belle because Caddy disrupts the traditional rules of elite feminine behavior when she pushes the boundaries too far past flirtation into promiscuity. By choosing to do something—climb the tree—she was explicitly told not to do presumably *because* of her “prissy dress,” Caddy sets a precedent for breaking the rules of socially-acceptable behavior that will become all the more problematic as she grows from a *girl* into a sexually active young woman.

Ironically, despite her rebellious youth, Caddy proves the *most* disruptive as an adult when she tries to retreat back to acceptable gender roles like wife and mother. What is considered by her community as scandalous sexual activity—her promiscuity, and subsequent pregnancy—is what makes her desperate “*to marry somebody*,” only to be jilted as a wife and vilified by her brothers when her pregnancy is discovered by her husband (115). Throughout the novel, Benjy, Quentin, and Jason attempt to police Caddy’s gender performance to determine the degree of “integrity” she does or does not possess in the context of southern femininity (Butler 173). However, Caddy will eventually be denied any normative role by her brothers, two of whom cannot tolerate *any* change in her gender performance, much less *between* the stages of gender roles. Benjy demands repetition without change from Caddy; he wants her to be a constant, unchanging presence, to *always* smell like she did when he was a toddler. While Quentin certainly objects to her indiscretions, he is obsessed with Caddy’s virginity to the extent that he cannot accept any aspect of her sexuality: for her to remain his sister, she must always be a virgin. And finally, as John T. Matthews notes in *Seeing Through the South*, Jason holds Caddy responsible for the “injuries to himself and his family that he attributes to Caddy’s

betrayal,” but he seems to believe that female sexuality is by nature deviant, so that when she tries to take on the role of mother, he denies her that performance (98). Regardless of Jason, whom Matthews claims was “never part of the inner circle” (100), temporality will determine Caddy’s gender struggles with her brothers because, as Butler argues, “gender is an identity tenuously constituted in time” (179). If Benjy wants Caddy to remain constantly in his present and Quentin yearns for the gender roles of their childhood, her temporality will always be in conflict with her brothers’ “over-valuation of their sister’s changelessness” (Matthews 100).

Benjy “registers events and sensations primitively” so that the world only exists immediately to him (Matthews 82). While he registers sights, sounds and smells, he cannot attach meaning to them because, as Matthews attests, “he lacks the ability to generalize about his circumstances or to manage the raw fluctuation of daily existence through rational abstraction and prediction” (82). Matthews also claims Benjy cannot qualify Caddy’s performance as gendered because he “doesn’t organize his world by social categories like race—or gender” (107).²⁴ Benjy cannot identify the patterns of normative versus non-normative, only whether a performance is repeated. For Benjy, Caddy’s performance consists of her presence in his life; therefore, what Benjy wants from her is constant consistent repetition and, thus, *no* change in her performance. When her presence, or performance, ends, Caddy ceases to exist for Benjy and essentially *becomes* an absence. Moreover, her marriage corresponds to that absence, so that an arguably heteronormative performance by Caddy, that of becoming wife (and eventually mother) and settling into a socially sanctioned gender role for a woman, means only loss to Benjy. Participating within the traditional parameters of Southern femininity

²⁴ Benjy *does* differentiate between gendered pronouns in his section, suggesting he has some concept of difference between male and female, but just because Benjy can recognize difference does not mean that he can understand it. Benjy also distinguishes difference in his castrated genitalia, but he cannot assign it meaning. He only knows he is different than he was before.

alienates Caddy from Benjy's perception in a direct contradiction to the disruption Butler suggests, wherein it is the discontinuity of tradition that results in unintelligibility.

Benjy demands of Caddy not just consistency in her actions, but even in her smell. Benjy's association of Caddy with the scent of the trees is a repetition of her consistency for him. In fact, Benjy mentions it the first time he interacts with Caddy in the novel, wherein she "smells like leaves...smelled like trees" (6).²⁵ However, the scene at the creek when Caddy muddies her drawers suggests that what Benjy might associate about her with the smell of trees is her refusal to adhere to elite gender rules. This scene is one where Caddy eschews femininity to play tomboy and also to push back on the authority of her older brother Quentin. She gets her "prissy dress" soaking wet, has one of the black boys unbutton it, takes it off, tussles and splashes with Quentin. Then, she threatens to run away, none of which imbues Caddy with the gentility of a proper little Southern girl, but after which Benjy notices she "smelled like trees in the rain" (19). Caddy smelling like trees coincides with her transgression of the proper feminine performance of a little girl in a prissy dress. Such an association suggests that the performance of her gender that Benjy finds comforting, normative to *him*, is one in which she refuses to follow the regulations of Southern femininity set to ensure she grows up to become a "proper" belle and is courted to become a "proper" wife. However, just as Benjy himself seems a three-year-old in a grown-man's body, his recognition of Caddy is trapped in temporality. Caddy must remain the constant performance of that rebellious little girl for her to always smell like trees. He wants the impossible from her: for her to never change, never mature, never become a *woman*.

²⁵ Matthews believes that Benjy can smell Caddy's "sexual adventuring in her perfume and the aroma of the trees where she makes her trysts" (86) While I agree about the perfume, I cannot concede Caddy's tree-scent as sexual since Benjy recognizes her by the smell long before her trysts in the trees. Furthermore, it is the displacement of the smell that disrupts Caddy's consistent performance for Benjy and upsets him so much.

Therefore, as they get older, Benjy's olfactory association of Caddy with trees seems to falter at specific moments of disruption in which he gets the most agitated, denoting instances when the consistent performance Benjy demands of Caddy is interrupted by her sexual activity. This also suggests that her gender performance is changing, a development Benjy can't comprehend or tolerate. The first instance Benjy becomes upset with Caddy's scent is when she offers her perfume for him to smell. Benjy wails at her proffered perfume, so Caddy gifts the bottle to Dilsey; but the incident is framed perfectly by the juxtaposition in the text of "Caddy smelled like trees" and "'We don't like perfume ourselves,' Caddy said" (42). Because to Benjy, Caddy smells like trees, she cannot smell like perfume, or else she becomes "not-Caddy" to him, just as she will become "not sister" to Quentin. That would suggest a change, or disruption, in Caddy's performative repetition, especially if we consider Matthew's suggestion that her perfume represents her sexual adventuring (86). The perfume also suggests significance to a relationship that transcends secret trysts in the woods, and such significance foreshadows the evolution of Caddy's sexuality and femininity that will eventually result in the pregnancy and marriage that will end her presence in Benjy's life. When she ceases to smell like trees, she might very well smell like perfume, which is a disruption in what Benjy has come to expect from Caddy. Because it functions as a definitive marker of Caddy, and an early one for Benjy, her smelling of trees is the only repetition he can tolerate from her. Much like the scene that ends the novel where Benjy loses control when the cart is driven the wrong way around the square, Benjy's perception of Caddy can only exist one way, can only function in repetition without change, in this instance, of scent.

While, as smaller children, Benjy may have associated Caddy smelling like trees with rambunctious rebellion, that association cannot survive Caddy's blossoming sexual activity. As

she “eventually obey[s] the dictates of her own maturation,” Caddy’s sexuality disrupts her presence in Benjy’s restricted reality (Matthews 85). When Benjy comes across Charlie and Caddy in the swing, presumably involved in some illicit behavior, he cries and pulls at Caddy’s dress so persistently that she abandons her sweetheart to take Benjy back into the house. Brother and sister are upset to the degree that they end up crying in each other’s arms, and Caddy tells him, “I wont [...] I wont ever anymore. Benjy” (48). Then she “took the kitchen soap and washed her mouth at the sink, hard,” at which point, she again “smelled like trees,” relegating her back to the only normative status Benjy recognizes in his limited realm of perception (48). When Caddy becomes a bride—when a woman is traditionally thought to “leave” her family and enter her husband’s—she again becomes lost to Benjy, not because he understands what marriage means, but because when she wears the “*flowers in her hair, and a long veil like shining wind,*” he “couldn’t smell trees anymore and [he] began to cry” (39, 40). What Benjy unknowingly wants from Caddy is for her to remain unmarried, and, thus, non-normative. Although Benjy himself cannot make such distinctions, we can imagine Caddy no longer smells like trees to Benjy because Caddy’s gender performance is maturing as she grows up. She has left behind the childish, willful, and eventually transgressive gender performances of her girlhood and teenage years, trading trysts in trees for a garland of flowers that signifies her entrance into adulthood and the heteronormative institute of marriage. Caddy’s progress from a non-normative to a normative gender role, a move that should meet with approval from the elite society of the Compsons—which is exactly why they married her off before her illegitimate pregnancy was discovered—is what makes her unintelligible to Benjy.

While Benjy’s loss of Caddy stems from his lack of constraint by linear time—and his inability to except change regarding gender roles—Quentin’s temporal challenges result from

his near paralysis by past tradition. Leigh Anne Duck, in *The Nation's Region*, claims that while James Joyce's characters are plagued by an "inability to transcend the past" that renders them "unable to negotiate [the] contemporary world," "Faulkner, in a sense, reverses this story" (157); and truly, Quentin Compson is a character so unable to negotiate the contemporary world that he retreats into the past in such a way that he cannot reconcile his understanding of his own sexuality with his sister's gender performances.

As with most issues involving gender, the inevitable crux of Quentin's difficulty interpreting Caddy's performance involves her sexuality, through the exercise of which she endangers the sanctity of her role as Southern Belle. For Roberts, Caddy "embodies the unstable binary of virgin/whore" (112), a situation Seidel qualifies as the "impossible tension" wherein the belle must be sexually desirable but not sexually overt (xvi). While this "impossible tension" is one Caddy fails to maintain precisely because she responds sexually, it often ironically results in men endowing the concept of female virginity with a more oppressive value than did the women to which it "belonged." Even Quentin and Caddy's own father tries to tell Quentin that virginity "means less to women [and that] men invented virginity not women" (78). Intrinsic to this traditional sense of southern prudence, both defended and resented by "southern gentlemen," is the idea that a woman's virginity was intended for her husband.

Quentin seems to accept the old-fashioned idea, espoused by Anne Firor Scott, that upper class white women were not expected to be sexual creatures, specifically because they were *upper class* and *white*: "the accepted belief was that only men and depraved women were sexual creatures and that pure women were incapable of erotic feeling" (54).²⁶ In the South, upper class white women were discouraged from overt sexual expression because their sexuality was

²⁶ Fox-Genovese claims that "there are no grounds for believing [slaveholding women] to have been especially prone to frigidity and want of passion" (240).

traditionally reserved only for the reproduction of more upper class white children. Thus, when a young upper class white woman like Caddy indiscreetly engages her sexuality, her intelligibility becomes problematic because she is not only transgressing the Southern Belle laws of purity but she is also subverting conventional ideas about the belle's class and race. Roberts claims, "the very nature of sexuality in the South is defined as illicit and 'Negro'" (116). While Roberts claims that Southern sexuality is coded as black, in *Race and White Identity in Southern Fiction*, John Duvall argues that "Faulkner's texts suggest that another coordinate of identity—sexuality—can also disqualify a claim to whiteness. Blackness in Faulkner is repeatedly associated with a kind of undisciplined libidinal energy producing a variety of nonheteronormative possibilities" (27). Relegating sexuality to "blackness" renders white sexuality unintelligible, and relegates Caddy's sexuality to the non-normative according to white elite standards. Therefore, as Roberts asserts, "the 'blackness' of sexuality becomes a metaphor for Caddy's life and subsequent fall from ladyhood and exile" (116).

It is explicitly this fall from grace that plagues Quentin about his sister's behavior, and he remarks on the perceived "blackness" of her sexual activity as well. Quentin is overly aware of the southern idealization of virginity, and, realizing that Caddy has relinquished that most revered of the white Southern Belle's qualities, Quentin codes Caddy's sexuality as black when he psychically admonishes her with the questions "*Why won't you bring him to the house, Caddy? Why must you do like nigger women do in the pasture the ditches the dark woods hot hidden furious in the dark woods?*" (92). Quentin's indication of Caddy's sexuality as *black*, in effect, racializes Caddy's gender performance. Incidentally, Duvall says of this passage that because the "behavior...[is] named through a simile," there is "no social misrecognition," and "telling...[Caddy she is]...behaving 'like niggers' merely polices the boundary of [her] white

femininity,” which is “behavior ... not [her] being, that is linked to racial otherness” (37).

However, Butler claims that there is no subject separate from gender performance; therefore, I would argue that because “gender is *always* a doing” “constituting the identity it is purported to be,” that “behavior” to which Duvall refers *is* their being (Butler 33). In a society as racially charged as the turn-of-the-century South, coding Caddy’s sexuality and gender as black effectively renders her performance unintelligible.

Few critics discuss *The Sound and the Fury* without addressing Quentin’s own confused sexuality. In *Faulkner and Welty in the Southern Literary Tradition*, Noel Polk proposes that “Quentin has sexual baggage” (23). Duvall believes Quentin’s “problems are largely psychosexual” (49). Duck asserts that Faulkner’s characters are often victims of “destructive pathology” and an “inability to function in their contemporary worlds,” and this is most certainly true for Quentin (159). Quentin cannot establish a “full contemporary existence” because he is plagued by an overwhelming sense of nostalgia in which the only acceptable performance from Caddy is as sister who remains a virgin, like a proper Southern Belle (Duck 159). Once Caddy becomes not-virgin, she is also not-*sister* to Quentin, a non-normative disruption he cannot abide. Thus, he wants to retreat to the premise of purity suggested by their childhood because through such nostalgia, Quentin can also retreat from his own looming virginity, the prolonging of which may suggest his own non-normativity—“in the South you are ashamed of being a virgin”—while also protecting Caddy’s virginity—“why couldn’t it have been me [Quentin] and not her [Caddy] who is unvirgin?” (78).²⁷ However, even in what Quentin perceives as the security of the past, Matthews notes, “gender roles [were] reversing; the brave little tomboy Caddy [was] the one climbing the tree and taking lovers, while the timid

²⁷ In his wishes to remain in the pre-virgin childhood state with Caddy, Quentin very much echoes Benjy’s own unwitting desires.

Quentin [wept] that he [was] still a virgin” (95). There are two sexual dynamics at work here: one in which Caddy’s virginity is sacrosanct and another in which Quentin’s sexuality is threatened because he is obsessed with his own virginity. Inevitably, it is the entanglement of the two that lead to Quentin’s alarming, but false, confession of incest and eventually his suicide.

The overwhelming direction of criticism, as well as the novel itself, suggests Quentin is homosexual, and Polk believes that “Quentin’s defense of Caddy’s maidenhead is at least in part a denial of his homosexuality” (26). Polk goes on to suggest that Quentin has a “crush on Dalton Ames that he cannot claim: and incest, horrible as it is, is more acceptable than homosexuality” (29). Poor Quentin lives in a society where he can neither accept his sister’s sexually active identity nor find himself a “sexual option to give him the identity that he so clearly craves” (Polk 29). What seems so tragic about Quentin is that he cannot navigate the complications of both his sister’s sexuality and his own. Regardless of how disturbing it is, his resort to incest is yet another attempt to control her gender performance but also to possibly normalize his own. Quentin’s claim to have had intercourse with his sister still qualifies him as heterosexual; despite its deviance, his insistence of committing incest with Caddy not only remedies his sense of shame over his prolonged virginity but it also isolates him from his potential homosexuality. Furthermore, Quentin’s relegation of Caddy’s sexuality to racial otherness suggests his own gender confusion with race because if Caddy is sexually coded as black, and he wants to or falsely admits to committing incest with her, it implicates him in the near-commission of miscegenation. Even with the social stigma it carries, miscegenation is less threatening to Quentin than the loss of his sister’s virginity and the burden of his own as a sign of possible homosexuality.

Quentin's section is one of the only places we experience Caddy's point of view in the novel, even filtered as it is through her brother, and she certainly seems to identify the scandal of her situation when, referring to her pregnancy, she tells Quentin repetitively, "*I'm sick*," but she is also obviously aware that she can resort to heteronormative parameters by marrying Herbert, when she explains "*after that it'll be all right it won't matter*" (112). Caddy has not been oblivious to the gender performance expected of her; she was just content not adhering to it. Just as she broke down when Benjy encountered her and Charlie, she identifies her disruption of the Southern Belle performance when she tells Quentin, "*There was something terrible in me sometimes at night I could see it grinning at me I could see it through them grinning at me through their faces it's gone now and I'm sick*" (112). As if she's internalized her society's discursive strategy for dealing with non-normative sexuality and gender, Caddy herself "could see [her non-normativity] through them." She has moralized her own performance and believes it to be "*something terrible*," just as society usually classifies sexual transgressions as, at least, negative and, at most, horrific. As "terrible" as it may be, Caddy recognizes the strategy of resorting to the normative institution of marriage for rescue. She tells Quentin, she has "got to marry somebody," but even her syntax, "*got to*," betrays the obligation required by her pregnancy. However, even if Caddy is resigned to resorting to marriage in the aftermath of her transgressive adolescence and episode as a sexually active Southern Belle, she still has one brother who will impede her attempt at normativity.

Caddy's brother Jason is the one she has the least consideration for, and he certainly harbors no special affection for her either. Jason is a blatant misogynist throughout the third section of the novel. He expects the worst of women and assumes they will disappoint or misunderstand him, which, in turn, assures that he is usually correct in those assumptions. As a

hater of women, nothing about them is intelligible to him; while he may recognize a normative feminine performance within his social context, non-normativity does not surprise him. He actually *expects* women to perform outside of the socially accepted standards of his society; to Jason, a woman performing as she's expected to is abnormal. Jason shows his warped view of what he considers "bad" female behavior when he reproaches Caddy for breaking her promise not to return home. While he is "not surprised" that Caddy would break her promise because she "don't give a dam about anybody," he fails to acknowledge that the reason for her return is to attend her father's funeral, an act of filial respect (202). On the other hand, he is surprised by Caddy's desire to be a mother to her daughter Quentin. However, Caddy is there precisely because she cares about her daughter, despite Jason's and Caroline's wishes to keep them apart. Jason changes his tune, though, when Caddy offers to pay for the opportunity to mother her daughter. Always eager to make a buck, Jason latches onto the idea with vehemence, egging Caddy on to get more money out of her and insisting she give it to him *before* seeing her daughter. By brokering between mother and daughter this way, Jason profits even as he impedes Caddy's performance as mother, and his spiteful dash by her on the street, holding Quentin up to the window of the hack, becomes all the more despicable.

There seems to be no love lost between Caddy and Jason long before we experience the latter's retelling of his final confrontations with his sister. As children, there is only contention between them. Caddy constantly goads Jason, calling him names like "knobknot," "cry baby," and "tattletale," while at the same time catering to Benjy's every whim (36, 26, 74). Jason seems to come by these taunts honestly, especially the last, as he revels in trying to get Caddy in trouble, telling on her climbing the tree and spying on Damuddy's funeral. Therefore, it comes as little surprise that Jason is so nasty toward Caddy in his section of the novel. Certainly,

childhood sibling squabbles don't necessarily lead to adult conflicts, but, as Roberts notes, "Jason lays at [Caddy's] feet the destruction of the Compson family; he blames her for not sustaining the marriage that will restore the family fortune." (112). It is safe to say he holds a grudge and believes Caddy *owes* him for the career she cost him. Jason's very section begins "once a bitch always a bitch," and while he seems to be referring to Caddy's daughter Quentin, it is no stretch to imagine he would include his sister in that blanket observation (180).

Jason's other interactions with women, namely with the whore Lorraine from Memphis, further suggest that he expects the least from them, as if he lives by the motto "if you don't have any expectations, you won't ever be disappointed." Of Lorraine, he declares, "I never promise a woman anything nor let her know what I'm going to give her. That's the only way to manage them. Always keep them guessing. If you cant think of any other way to surprise them, give them a bust in the jaw" (193). Jason is physically abusive toward Caddy's daughter, remarking on her behavior that "when people acts like niggers, no matter who they are the only thing to do is treat them like a nigger" (181). Presumably, Jason's treatment of "niggers" and, of women who act like them, includes physical and financial punishment as well as unacknowledged dependency since he expects Dilsey to help raise Quentin, and he keeps Quentin's money for himself when Caddy sends it. In fact, we witness Jason visiting what perhaps he thinks would have been appropriate treatment of Caddy on her daughter Quentin, an example of Matthews' claim that "Jason responds to a decline in masculine authority by beating up every woman in his life" (98). Just as he "pays" for Lorraine, proud of the forty dollars he gave her and the bar tab he paid for her, and he takes advantage of Caddy's attempts to financially provide for her daughter, Jason seems to expect Quentin's cooperation because he believes he finances her life, however thriftily he does so. Jason regulates performance by enforcing both rewards and

punishment, although to “keep them guessing,” he distributes them unevenly, which, with Quentin, results in her taking matters into her own hands when she “steals” her money back and flees her uncle. To Jason, women are financial investments. Jason has been making money off of Quentin for years, and he even seemed ready to sell her back to Caddy once for a thousand dollars if only he’d believed his sister had the money. Furthermore, he has a business arrangement with Lorraine for company and sex. It seems unfair, then, that he would begrudge Caddy the same economy when he accuses her of getting the money to *buy her daughter back* the “same way” she got Quentin, especially since he benefits so well from it (209). Jason’s insinuation that Caddy has prostituted herself is vicious and unsubstantiated and further illustrates his warped view of women. Furthermore, Jason’s hypocrisy is almost unbearable in the situation since he “keeps” a prostitute for himself but reveals outrage when he suspects his own sister of being one. While he tolerates Lorraine’s commodified sexuality, Jason seems to take offense to sexualized women in his own family.

That Jason takes advantage of Caddy’s attempts at normative maternal performance toward her daughter is what makes him the most contemptible character of the novel and only goes to prove that he recognizes the conventional roles expected of his sister; he just seems in no rush to enforce them, unless, of course, he can profit from it. To refer back to Watson’s term “gender guard,” or Butler’s “gender border control,” Jason Compson acts to ensure that the punitive consequences for not performing gender “right” are felt. Caddy is doing what she must to survive in a compulsory system from which she has been rejected because her brothers, and husband, won’t allow her marriage and motherhood within it. While Benjy is too mentally incapacitated to enforce punitive consequences, and Quentin seems to have visited them on himself instead of his sister, Jason is all too eager to take advantage of any attempt of Caddy’s

to perform conventionally as a mother from the periphery of their society. Jason commodifies Caddy's attempts at normative maternity by making her pay for access to her child. As the middleman for their relationship, Jason imposes himself as an obstacle to an orthodox mother/daughter relationship. In fact, were Caddy to be in the home with them performing customarily as Quentin's mother, Jason would not be in the lucrative position he is in, since Caddy would have no need to use him as middleman for her money. Nor might she even have any money. It is in Jason's best financial interests, since he is stealing from his niece, to keep Caddy at arm's length from a typical relationship with her daughter. However, it is not enough for him to extort money from her, thwart her traditional participation in their family, or cruelly imply she'd be better off dead, but he also conspires with Caroline to erase Caddy's very name from the household so that, as Roberts claims, she "becomes a nonbeing" (112). Jason increases Caddy's unintelligibility as he takes it upon himself to become the last obstacle to her fulfillment of the socially acceptable role of mother.

Caddy's performance as a mother is, not surprisingly, one of the most intriguing aspects of her gender performance. Butler's concerns with maternal essentialism in Kristeva's theories certainly seem to be at play in this novel. Deborah Clarke suggests that *The Sound and the Fury* is "robbed of the mother," because the mother is robbed of her voice: namely, Caddy as mother is robbed of any presence. Clarke also considers maternity a creative act; and the fact that the evidence of Caddy's "creative act," Quentin, "dominate[s] the text" means that "Caddy's presence makes itself known less through her voice than through her body and its literal replication" (21). While Clarke qualifies Caddy's "participation in this process" of mothering as "hardly presented within the book as a triumphant creative experience," I would emphasize that Caddy's experience is *non-normative* (21). Where Clarke sees failure, I interpret Caddy's

maternity as simply functioning outside the regulatory practices that might be expected of her, such as living in the home and providing for Quentin directly. Clarke notes that “Caddy has no maternal model, for her own mother has only indicated how to be a lady,” and Caddy has failed to follow that model as well (31). Perhaps Caddy’s absence from Quentin’s life is merely her repetition of the maternal performance she experienced with Caroline. However, Clarke, Gwin and Roberts remark on Caddy’s maternal performance toward her brothers, but most especially Benjy, before she is shunned by the family; thus, the fact that Caddy is not allowed to act as a traditional mother to her own daughter is probably due more to Jason’s policing of that gender role than any maternal inclination she may possess. Furthermore, Caroline actively prevents Caddy from the role of mother when, as Clarke argues, “Caroline...refuses to allow her home, and...will not permit her name to be spoken” (31). Caddy’s own mother, who neglects “all of her children, including her later favorite, Jason,” renders Caddy herself unintelligible because Caroline believes that if Caddy “is not a lady, she cannot be named” (Clarke 30, 31). Caddy at least takes financial responsibility for her daughter, but that allows Jason to regulate and monetize her maternal presence in her daughter’s life.

Another aspect that further complicates Caddy’s performance as mother is the long-established role of the mammy in upper class Southern households. Roberts claims how the “Confederate Woman” and mammy *seem* “fixed in their race and class positions” actually proves that “attempts to understand these characters for the New South involve destabilizing the binary, showing how the categories, the relentless definitions intended to wall off the white from the black, the upper class from the lower, the free from the slave, are actually precarious” (xii, xiii). However, because Roberts’s focus on the “decay of the perfect southern mother” in *The Sound and the Fury* is Caroline, she seems to overlook the role of Dilsey as mammy.

According to Clarke, it is Dilsey, as mammy, who “primarily mothers ungracious and unappreciative [Compson] children she did not give birth to” (22). Because Caddy was “mammied” instead of mothered, it stands to reason she has little example of mothering from her *actual* mother to attempt to perform. Furthermore, it is not unreasonable to imagine Caddy would expect Dilsey to play a part in raising Quentin. The normative regulatory practices of the South that allow for mammies as mother-surrogates actually contribute to Caddy’s own maternal non-normativity, namely allowing her absence, although Caddy’s absence is more overt than the absence of mothers who stay in the house but defer the care of their children to mammies. Specifically, the Compsons have the resources and servants that *allow* Caddy to abandon her daughter to the household. Caddy *is physically* able to take care of her daughter, although immediately after offering to pay to get Quentin back, she admits to Jason, “I’m insane. I can’t take her. Keep her. What am I thinking of” (209). Jason secretly approves of Caddy’s reticence to parent her daughter because he can continue to make a profit from Caddy’s absence, while still taking advantage of the role Dilsey provides as mammy.

What is expected of Caddy within her society’s heterosexual matrix is that she remains chaste until she marries and then bears sons for her husband. When Caddy does not perform that particular role normatively, there is a breakdown in how the Compsons, *and* Caddy, deal with the situation. Caddy tries to resort to marriage as a fix for her unplanned pregnancy *out* of wedlock, but when her husband discovers the child is not his, that attempt to restore convention is ruined. That the Compsons take it as a given that Caddy must have the baby suggests a degree of compulsoriness that Butler criticizes as dangerous about essentializing motherhood. We know that abortion is not a foreign concept to Faulkner’s South, especially considering Dewey Dell Bundren’s similar situation in *As I Lay Dying*. But whereas Dewey Dell’s class relegates

her to a set of social norms different from Caddy's, the social pressure to mother is one that affects both the lower and upper classes. However, Dewey Dell seems not to be bound by the same compulsion as Caddy since she seeks an abortion to end her pregnancy conceived out of wedlock. However, Caddy does not terminate her pregnancy but instead tries to provide a "normal" life for Quentin as her mother. However, once her marriage fails and she has been rejected by both her husband and her family, Caddy does the only thing available to her per the white elite context from which she came: she leaves Quentin to be raised by the same distance matriarch and black mammy who provided the models of femininity, and maternity, for Caddy herself. Caddy's surrender of her child to the family that has denied her, and especially to her brother's vehement misogyny, calls into question Caddy's commitment to conventional maternity. Despite motherhood being the only socially acceptable southern gender performance Caddy eventually has any access to, her family holds a grudge for her departure from properly performing as a Southern Belle. Caddy's previously deviant performance becomes the catalyst for the unintelligibility that renders her unacceptable and therefore unqualified to be a mother in her family's eyes.

In Faulkner's Yoknapatawpha County, like most of the Western world, normative gender performance equals success; conversely, non-normative gender performance suggests failure. While Butler's theories would allow for opportunity and growth, moments of epiphany and/or discovery at the disruption of normative iterations, *The Sound and the Fury* functions almost as a morality tale on the slippery slope of defining and trying to maintain normative behavior and the potential complications therein. Instead of opportunity, Caddy's attempts to restore herself to approved gender roles within elite white society are disrupted by the *non-*normativity of her brothers. Her *own* exclusion is ultimately emphasized in the appendix to the

novel, simply titled “Appendix Compson 1699-1945,” which was not included in the original printing and in which Thadious M. Davis believes Caddy is “still transgressing boundaries culturally mandated for females” (“Reading Faulkner’s Compson Appendix” 245). Even the status of the appendix seems to reflect Caddy’s expulsion from the family. Regardless, the pages immediately characterize Caddy as a woman who was “doomed and knew it, accepted the doom without either seeking or fleeing it” with a powerlessness that suggests the entire complex path of her gender performance will culminate in unavoidable unintelligibility (10). It describes her as

Two months pregnant with another man’s child which regardless of what its sex would be she had already named Quentin after the brother whom they both (she and her brother) knew was already the same as dead, when she married an extremely eligible young Indianian. (10-11)

Not only is Caddy doomed to become pregnant outside of marriage but Quentin (her brother) is equally doomed to early death just as much as Quentin (her daughter) is fated to carry the weight of that name and misfortune her entire life. However, this “doom” is just another function of society’s punishments for transgressions of compulsory norms.

Butler argues that “the rules that govern intelligible identity” are “partially structured along matrices of gender hierarchy and compulsory heterosexuality” and “operate through repetition” (185). Because Caddy interrupts the repetition of rules that have regulated the Southern Belle for generations, we could hope that she might exercise some of the “agency” that Butler believes to be “located within the possibility of a variation on...repetition” (185). However, Caddy’s attempts to re-inhabit the performances of wife and mother effectively forecloses any agency she may have exercised with her commitment of unconventional gender

performance and sexuality. Because Caddy disrupts those rules of “intelligible identity” but fails to achieve agency by doing so, it is inevitable that she is rendered her most unintelligible in the “Appendix.”

It seems remarkable that a librarian from the town Caddy has not been seen in for nearly two decades would recognize her in a photograph, but so the “Appendix” would have us believe. However, she only seems to be “recognized” in order to be denied and rendered entirely unintelligible. As the “Appendix” reports, “one day in 1943,” Melissa Meek of Jefferson, MS, found a picture and presented it to Jason Compson (11):²⁸

a photograph in color clipped obviously from a slick magazine—a picture filled with luxury and money and sunlight—a Cannebière backdrop of mountains and palms and cypresses and the sea, an open powerful expensive chromium-trimmed sports car, the woman’s face hatless between a rich scarf and a seal coat, ageless and beautiful, cold serene and damned; beside her a handsome lean man of middleage in the ribbons and tabs of a German staffgeneral—. (12-13)

And while Jason initially agrees that the woman in the picture is Caddy, once the librarian exclaims ““we must save her!,”” he denies it, derisively remarking that ““this bitch [in the photo] aint thirty yet. The other one’s fifty now” (14). Melissa implies that Caddy is in danger, but perhaps it is merely the danger that companionship with the Nazi general suggests. While Jason’s denial of Caddy just seems spiteful, perhaps it is *not* Caddy. Maybe when he calls the woman in the photo a bitch, it is just because by aligning herself with Nazism, she confirms his worst expectations of women, just as Caddy and Quentin did, since, for Jason, non-normativity *is* normal for women. For the same reason, if it *is* Caddy, he would call her a bitch nonetheless

²⁸ The events of the Appendix occur fifteen years after the events of Jason’s section of the novel: Caddy would be around 50 and her presumably long-forgotten daughter Quentin, 32.

since he would surely find his sister's company none too surprising. Jason's inability to allow his sister avenues for normative gender performance almost demands that he expect her to be someone who would cavort with an officer so hated by the rest of the world.

While Jason's refusal to recognize Caddy in the photo is hardly surprising, as he has only ever disregarded her performance in *any* gender role, Dilsey's refusal to acknowledge Caddy in the picture and, more so, Melissa's explanation for why she does so are troubling. Dilsey claims her eyes are too old for her to see the picture, effectively releasing her from any obligation she might have to identify and/or "rescue" Caddy. Even when Melissa begs her to let Frony look at it because Frony "will know her!," Dilsey declines, as if to protect herself from witnessing Caddy in yet another socially deviant performance (15). Melissa, however, believes that "*she [Dilsey] didn't want to see it know whether it was Caddy or not because she knows Caddy doesn't want to be saved hasn't anything anymore worth being saved for nothing worth being lost that she can lose*" (16). Caddy is unable to maintain her presence in the novel with her normativity or intelligibility intact; why would the appendix be any different? In the end, we are left to wonder if it *is* her on the slick page of the magazine, much as we must continue to wonder at the actual nature of Caddy's subjective performance that eludes us throughout the novel.

Early in *Gender Trouble*, Butler asks "if gender is constructed, could it be constructed differently, or does its constructedness imply some form of social determinism, foreclosing the possibility of agency and transformation" (11). As we see with Caddy's fluctuation from rebellious tomboy to promiscuous teenager to attempted traditional roles as wife and mother, even if gender *is* constructed differently, there is no guarantee that agency or even escape from "some form of social determinism" will be achieved. In *The Sound and the Fury*, we encounter

Caddy as regulated by her brothers, who occupy non-normative capacities in the novel. While Caddy runs the gamut of various gender roles, the “determinism” of the appendix seems to render her unintelligible, as well as shuts down any agency she might have achieved by thwarting the gender border control of her brothers. However, as an author of female characters, Faulkner decides “not *whether* to repeat but *how* to repeat” in order to “*displace* the very gender norms that enable the repetition itself” (Butler 189, 185). We experience in the characters of Addie and Dewey Dell Bundren, Temple Drake, and Nancy Mannigoe subversive gender performances that push the boundaries of race and class further than Caddy Compson could achieve through her retreat back to the normative and, thus, her forfeiture of agency.

Furthermore, Caddy’s daughter’s refuses to repeat the roles socially approved for herself and her mother. Whereas Caddy spent Quentin’s early life trying to restore herself to sanctioned gender roles, Quentin, in Caddy’s absence, rejects any semblance of the manners and gentility of the Southern Belle. When Quentin drives away with the man in the red tie, we have no idea where she is headed or what might become of her, and we don’t find out, even in the Appendix. Therefore, we know that she has at least broken free of the repetition of oppression within the Compson household. Caddy left her family as a bride; Quentin flees the same family as a wild young woman whom Jason, with his misogynistic attitude, might wish good riddance if it were not for all the money with which she absconds. Unlike her mother’s attempts to reenter the fold, it is not hard to imagine that Quentin will never look back. Perhaps her mother should have done the same since Caddy’s attempts to restore herself to traditional roles were impeded by her family, but at least Quentin’s break with convention is such a way that suggests the possibility of establishing her future gender roles outside the confines of elite southern femininity.

III: EVER A PRIVATE WOMAN

William Faulkner famously said of writing *As I Lay Dying* that he took Addie Bundren and her family and “subjected them to the two greatest catastrophes which man can suffer—flood and fire,” but Addie Bundren herself may be the largest catastrophe her family survives (*Faulkner in the University* 87). André Bleikasten, and Wesley and Barbara Morris, in *Reading Faulkner*, make the point that *As I Lay Dying* was considered, and called so by Faulkner himself, a tour de force, and certainly, much of the novel’s fame lies in the innovative style it exhibits for the time period.²⁹ It *is* a tour de force in its sheer amount of chapters, fifty-nine, narrated by no less than fifteen different narrators. Critics over the years have tended to focus on the modernism of the work, from its form to, more recently, the social issues highlighted by the struggles of the Bundrens themselves and their community. However, Addie inevitably emerges again and again among critics as the main draw to the novel, and the novelty of her character and how she is portrayed (and portrays herself) spans the spectrum of analysis from her roles as the center of a metonymic figuration, to an abject mother, to a “worn-out workhorse” in an allegory of “an American economic system facing an imminent but as yet uncertain death” (Atkinson 177).³⁰ Regardless of how we interpret Addie Bundren’s infamous character, she is

²⁹ However, while Bleikasten praises the novel, Morris and Morris argue that “to judge [the novel] a tour de force performance has specific negative implications: that the novel is marked by unjustifiable, inartistic authorial manipulation. Such a narrative is merely clever” (151). However, they also claim that such “cleverness...is important...to place the novel in the developmental sequence of Faulkner’s career” (151).

³⁰ Donald Kartiganer, Diana York Blaine, and Ted Atkinson (in *Faulkner and the Great Depression*), respectively.

undeniably the center around which *As I Lay Dying* revolves, or, as Bleikasten calls her in *Faulkner's As I Lay Dying*, “the nub of all the tensions generated within the family” (79). John T. Matthews, in his article on modernism and modernization in the novel, “*As I Lay Dying* in the Machine Age,” argues that “modernization is a part of a dialectic internal to the workings of the novel and of the history it reflects upon” (75). Critics and readers alike cannot deny the novel’s motif of disruption, the main shock of which, Matthews points out in *Seeing Through the South*, “lies in the sound of a dead woman talking” (150). Observing that “Addie’s section opens a space for her utterance as *The Sound and the Fury* does not for Caddy,” Matthews notices, along with other critics, a main difference between the matriarch’s posthumous voice of *As I Lay Dying* and the mute, central feminine presence of its predecessor (150).

If Caddy Compson is Faulkner’s most famous Southern Belle, then Addie Bundren is arguably his most famous matriarch. Diane Roberts has said that “*As I Lay Dying* can be read as the ‘poor white trash’ version of *The Sound and the Fury*,” and, while the similarities between the two novels are more nuanced than that, the comparison does bring up one of the most glaring differences—class (197). However, there are obvious similarities between Addie and Caddy: they are the women their respective novels revolve around; they both function as the centers of their mostly male families; and they are both wives and mothers, however briefly Caddy may fulfill those roles. Noel Polk enumerates some of their similarities in “‘The Dungeon Was Mother Herself,’” such as “the fact that their fathers have a lot in common,” where Addie’s father’s lesson about staying dead a long time is “a pithy summation of Jason Compson’s more discursive nihilism” (63). Furthermore, Polk points out that they both have

certain sadistic and masochistic tendencies (63).³¹ Therefore, we can connect them, to some extent, by how they perform non-normatively according to their respective heteronormative contexts. However, the list of their apparent differences is much longer and to such a degree that Addie actually seems to function as an “inverse” version of Caddy Compson, and all of the differences either seem to affect or *are* the effect of how they perform their gender roles according to class. Addie, despite her discontent with her situation, seems to have all the things Caddy *wants* so desperately, a husband and a family, without the privilege of the social status Caddy experiences. Addie achieves, and resents, the conventional gender roles Caddy strives for but ultimately fails to succeed. While it is Caddy’s family that impedes her roles as wife and mother, Addie experiences the opposite. It is specifically the expectations of the heterosexual matrix to marry and have children that Addie feels has not only tricked and betrayed her into being trapped by the gender roles within her community but also somehow seems to oblige her to confine her fervent antipathy toward those norms to the private, rather than public, realm.³²

Caddy Compson is allowed to perform non-normatively because of the privilege of her class; her elevated social status allows her fluidity of gender performance, especially in her youth. Addie and her daughter, Dewey Dell, are afforded no such luxuries. Whereas Caddy strives to negotiate the contradictory terrain of fulfilling the role of Southern Belle, Addie’s role as a poor farmer’s wife was inscribed onto her the minute she “took Anse,” and Dewey Dell, just a teenager, has no access to the standards of the genteel femininity demanded of a Southern Belle (171). However, she has no reason to; as the daughter of a farmer and a previous

³¹ Polk points out that Caddy wants to whip “shadow-bound prisoners”; and Addie enjoys whipping her students but claims that in doing so, “she is really whipping herself,” whereas Caddy feels “some deep dissatisfaction with herself... a desire to punish herself for something she herself cannot remember” (63).

³² Incidentally, this is in direct opposition to Caddy and Temple, whose transgressions (of gender normativity) occur in the public realm, simply meaning witnessed/observed by others. However, considering that Cora criticizes Addie’s mothering and affection distribution among her children, it is possible Addie did not always play the good wife/mother in her interactions with Cora.

schoolteacher, Dewey Dell is expected to help out with chores on the farm, marry a nice farmer herself, and start having children so *they* can grow up and help out on the farm. In fact, as Rebecca Sharpless notes, “many [rural] young people married while still in their teens,” so Dewey Dell is the perfect age to continue the cycle of the rural lifestyle had she not already disrupted it by becoming pregnant before marriage (20). Unlike her mother, Dewey Dell was born into this community and should know very well its boundaries. Addie is an outsider to the cycle of this community, and it is one she loathes almost immediately upon entering it. Caddy is an example of a woman allowed gender fluidity because of her social status, but Addie and Dewey Dell seem to have little choice because their economic and social status is so much lower than Caddy’s.

Examination of Addie’s point of view reveals a peculiar caveat to Butler’s theory of disruptive gender performance: no agency seems rendered unless that disruption is made public. Vehement as it may be, Addie’s private rejection of gender roles allows no opportunities for her *or* her daughter. Because Addie privately rejects the social conscription of her situation, Dewey Dell suffers from her mother’s privacy, falling victim to the very aspects of sex and motherhood that Addie claims tricked her. Dewey Dell tries to terminate her accidental pregnancy, but she ultimately fails due to lack of both financial and intellectual resources. What the novel, and Addie and Dewey Dell’s performances therein, tells us is that class not only dictates differences in gender norms but it also effects the public performance of femininity. Because of their lower-class status, the Bundren women seem almost unable to perform public transgressions of femininity in their established gender context, which suggests rural society might be more strictly regulated, or policed, by the community gender border control than the elite white society by which Caddy Compson and Temple Drake are regulated. The privilege experienced

by Caddy and Temple allows women of higher status more flexibility, *publicly*, when it comes to gender performance. In *Gender Trouble*, Butler's theories do not factor in class other than to note that it helps determine normative regulatory patterns of a social context. Other characters and how class connects or separates them in their respective novels must determine the normative status of Faulkner's women. Addie and Dewey Dell have relatively no access to the white elite social sphere of Caddy and Temple. Thus, the Bundrens' community must function as the gender border control in *As I Lay Dying* to establish the norms of their rural community with which to evaluate Addie and Dewey Dell's feminine normativity.

In *The Southern Lady*, Scott writes almost exclusively about the upper class wives of southern planters and aristocracy. Of rural, poor white women, she has little to say, which is telling of how far apart the worlds of the elite and poor whites are, While L. Jones agrees that farmwomen seem to have been left "outside of history," historians like herself, Sharpless, and Walker have extensively studied what trace rural women have left behind. Scott does report that "the poor white woman [...] worked much harder than her spouse, since someone had to keep the family alive" (28). In such an environment, "definitions of what was ladylike were reserved for the [white] elite," and "no one lectured them [wives of small farmers] on feminine delicacy or told them it was unladylike to work so long and hard" (Scott xi). Perhaps Scott is right, considering how we define "ladylike," but that does not mean farm communities did not have their own sets of gender regulations to follow. Amy Louise Wood, in "Feminine Rebellion and Mimicry in Faulkner's *As I Lay Dying*," cites Margaret Hagood's 1930s study of southern farmwomen wherein she claims "women regarded both heavy farm labor and childbirth as personal achievements" but that they "also feared the dangers of pregnancy and the hard work of child rearing" (105). What these sources seem to emphasize, though, is that the women who

became the wives and mothers of farmers expected lives of hard work and little reward, so perhaps Addie's revelations of betrayal and deception in her monologue can be attributed to the aspect that she enters the rural community from the outside.

One would think, given the degree of rage we learn Addie harbors for her marriage, husband, and maternity that she would strive to avoid such conscription. However, despite her somewhat independent stint as a schoolteacher, wherein Addie herself may have been expected to reinforce social mores in her pupils, she does not have the resources to choose whether, or perhaps *when*, to be a wife and mother—choices Caddy's privilege seems to afford her in *The Sound and the Fury*. In *Resisting History*, Barbara Ladd asserts that Addie would “have been hired in her late teens or early twenties [with the] assumption” that she would “teach for a year or two prior to marrying,” with “the overwhelming economic and social imperative toward marriage for women of her time and place making it hard for her to do anything else” (40-41). The fact remains though that the transition from “a town girl” and former schoolteacher to the hard-working wife of a rural farmer would not have been without complications (Ladd 40). Ladd makes the distinction that simply being a “town girl” is noteworthy; Addie is from Jefferson, not from the rural country she will end up farming for the majority of her adult life, so her expectations and familiarity of gender norms already differ from those she will fulfill as Mrs. Bundren. Because, outside of her monologue, we only have access to Addie through her family and neighbors, it is hard to imagine her acting as Hagood, in *Mothers of the South*, describes the wives of tenant farmers:

Cordial reception of a stranger, indicative of their welcome to a break in routine and isolation; in the explanation of the immediate situation in which they are engaged as a technique of hospitality and of supplying leads for conversation; in

their readiness to talk of their children, homes, work, and even more intimate matters if certain conventions are observed. (63-64)

It is difficult to reconcile the cold, distant woman we meet in Addie's chapter with the persona illustrated by Hagood. However, Addie may very well have not immediately fit the conventions of rural life, since, as an outsider, she would have been part of a very small percentage—only 10% of Hagood's study—who were not raised on farms similar to their husbands' (68). Hagood describes tenant farm families and women as possessing traits such as illiteracy, numbers of children in excess of 10, and problems that “never transcended the bounds of their daily lives either geographically or intellectually” (72). Compared with that list, it seems, as Matthews asserts, “the Bundrens do *not* represent simply the South's...natural relation to...universal rhythms” (74). Perhaps Addie's dissatisfaction with the gender roles inscribed upon her stems from her lack of familiarity with them as an outsider.

Even as a town girl, Addie's choices were already strictly limited by her low social status. In such a position, she could not move *up* socially, so she became a wife to a poor farmer; however, it's not entirely clear why she would choose Anse Bundren. Ladd supposes that

There is a practical acceptance of necessity on both their parts. Anse needs “womenfolk” presumably to give him children to help with the farm and to ensure his patriarchal legacy; Addie is chiefly interested in the fact that Anse has a farm and a house. Anse appeals initially to Addie because he owns his own land and is “forehanded.” (41)

Ladd paints a practical picture of Addie's initial interactions with Anse, and so Addie would *also* have us believe from the cold declarations of her monologue, but she tells us herself

that she “had been tricked by words older than Anse or love” (172). Addie first takes issue with the word “Love,” which she calls Anse’s word, perhaps because it does not seem to be part of her vocabulary as wife (172). Of her first impression of Anse, she relates an unflattering image of a man who needs a haircut and is “beginning to hump—a tall man and young—so that he looked already like a tall bird hunched in the cold weather, on the wagon seat” (170). Of her marriage to this humped man, she says, simply “and so I took Anse,” not even the verb “married” but “took,” which, while it suggests masculine agency, does not suggest an emotional investment. To Addie, marrying Anse is simply a part of her performance as a woman in their community, and it is certainly not an emotional decision for her. Addie finds no use for such words, so she “let[s] Anse use it, if he wants to” (172). She “had been used to words for a long time,” and “that word was like the others: just a shape to fill a lack,” just as she fills the wife-shaped lack in Anse’s life (172). Perhaps, as Ladd writes, Addie had been tricked into “hoping to find in her life as wife and mother . . . plentitude, presence, serenity: everything sentimental tradition tells us a woman should find there” (42).³³ Sadly, though, we know explicitly from Addie’s chapter that she does not find those things, perhaps because these are not emotional luxuries available in the hard lives of lower class southern white women. In the world of the novel, Addie’s neighbor Cora Tull establishes and “polices” the standards of life that are expected of such women.

Despite her striking posthumous monologue, Addie’s intelligibility as a woman is mainly filtered through other characters within her community who see fit to evaluate her, specifically Cora Tull, whom Roberts identifies as the “spokeswoman for the patriarchy” (198) who “speaks the Christian view of the family, the Law of the Father” (199). Cora, as Ladd

³³ While Ladd does not specify, perhaps growing up in town gave Addie access to such “sentimental traditions” through exposure to a broader culture of the arts and a more educated population.

explains, represents “the social expectations that govern the world in which she and the Bundrens reside” (22) despite the unreliability “in her assessments of individuals and their motivations” (21). She is “sensible and conventional,” her expectation of Addie’s gender performance “an accurate representation of the dimensions of wifehood and motherhood in the late Victorian and early modern periods in the United States” (Ladd 22). Similarly, Roberts sees Cora as “spout[ing] the party line,” demanding that “women find fulfillment in subsuming themselves in their husbands and children” (200). Culminating in her third, and what Roberts calls her “most important section,” Cora functions as the voice of the established practices of the community within which both she *and* Addie perform their gender roles (199). In her constant commentary and criticism of Addie, Cora functions as the gender police of the novel, clearly delineating what their society expects of women as wives and mothers.

When we first meet Cora, in the second section of the book—as if she would establish the heteronormative patterns of the novel as early as she can—she is baking: a stereotypically feminine domestic behavior. Cora is proud of her baking skills, but she is perhaps more proud of her ability to save her family money and resources through her careful calculations of her hens’ laying:

So when Miss Lawington told me about the cakes I thought that I could bake them and earn enough at one time to increase the net value of the flock the equivalent of two head. And that by saving the eggs out one at a time, even the eggs wouldn’t be costing anything. And that week they laid so well that I not only saved out enough eggs above what we had engaged to sell, to bake the cakes with, I had saved enough so that the flour and the sugar and the stove wood would not be costing anything. (7)

The depths to which Cora goes to explain the economics of her cake-baking suggest that money is always an object at the Tulls' social level and that one of her roles as wife is to be economical with all their resources and finances. As proud as she is of her own prudent baking, Cora also paints a portrait of Addie as the baker to be competed with: "not a woman in this section could ever bake with Addie Bundren." Cora claims her own cakes turned out "real nice [...] but not like the cakes Addie used to bake," as if baking is a competition of housewifery, and Addie is winning, despite, according to Cora, being "at the mercy and the ministrations of four men and a tom-boy girl" (8). However, we can read Cora's statements themselves as a kind of idiosyncratic performance, flattering Addie to seem gracious or modest about her own cakes. In a handful of paragraphs, Cora's "sensible and conventional" description of the feminine domestic act of baking cakes goes from the false modesty of her success at not losing money on them, to jealousy of Addie's baking skills, to judging how Addie's family takes care of her on her deathbed and how Dewey Dell is "near-naked" at her mother's funeral (24).

In her second, and penultimate section, it becomes clear that Cora is overtly critical of Addie; Cora functions as the "gender border patrol" of the small rural community in which the Bundrens and Tulls live, a community wherein, according to Cora, "a woman's place is with her husband and children, dead or alive" (23). Cora's insistence on how a proper woman contributes to her family suggests she believes herself to be an example of such a woman, and so she establishes herself as the normative base with which to compare Addie. An obvious dig at Addie's request to be buried in Jefferson upon extending beyond her death, Cora's assertion of "a woman's place" also insinuates a frightening demand: that a woman's duties are not limited to her life but also her death, perhaps even into eternity, in Cora's elaborate religious ideology. Cora's evaluation of Addie hardly ends with a statement of womanly duties; Cora goes so far as

to address *how* Addie fulfills those duties emotionally, judging her mothering even while Cora herself misperceives it. Cora, so concerned with critiquing Addie on the *proper* way to mother, misreads her neighbor's maternal affections completely. Cora believes that Addie and Darl have "natural affection" (21), while "with Jewel she has just been pretending" because Cora believes "that it was between her [Addie] and Darl that the understanding and the true love was" (24). However, Cora couldn't be *more* wrong, giving us our first glimpse at Addie's ability to perform her role as mother in such a convincing way as to belie the bitter feelings she harbors toward Darl that she will reveal in her monologue. While Cora may seem perceptive when she notices Addie does not love all her children equally (for which Cora judges her), Cora loses credibility because she misperceives with which children Addie's affections lie. Thus, ironically, it is Cora who considers Addie the "poor blind woman" who had committed the sin of "pretending" to be "partial to Jewel that never loved her... in preference to Darl that was touched by God Himself...and that did love her" (168). Cora thinks she values the performances of wife and mother more than Addie because she *believes* in them more, but Cora also believes she is a *better* mother because of her faith and morality, virtues she does not seem to think Addie possesses. But therein lies the slippery slope Butler's very theory of performativity allows us: if gender *is* merely a performance of socially sanctioned practices, Addie meets those requirements within their particular heterosexual matrix just as well as Cora *thinks* she herself does; Addie's rejection of traditional gender roles never occurs publicly in her community, and those transgressions are only related privately in her posthumous monologue.

Divorcing what her monologue reveals to us as readers, there are various instances where characters' remembrances are of Addie's *normative* gender performance. Early in the novel, Anse aptly remarks of Addie "she was ever a private woman," and it would seem she

was so “private” as to keep her non-normative femininity to herself (18). In fact, to hear the men around her tell it, Addie has performed *so* adequately her roles as wife and mother as to let them drive her to an early grave. Vernon Tull seems sympathetic to his neighbor, admitting that theirs is “a hard life on women, for a fact” (30), but he misreads the Bundrens’ situation as badly as Cora does when he observes that Addie “kept [Anse] at work for thirty-odd years. I reckon she is tired” (33). We know better that it was Addie and the children who kept up the work at the farm since Anse believed he would die if he allowed himself to sweat. However, it is clear that Vernon’s concern lies more with Anse and what he will do without Addie than with Addie’s hardships as Anse’s wife. More than Vernon, it is Peabody, her doctor, who, as Ladd points out, “has some sense of Addie as something other than a working body capable of filling a social position” (23). Ladd also notes that Peabody at least grants Addie “the status of subject” (23), when, before she dies, he notices “she watches me: I can feel her eyes. It’s like she was shoving at me with them. I have seen it before in women. Seen them drive from the room them coming with sympathy and pity” (*AILD* 45). Even on her deathbed, Addie seems to fight any kind of helpless femininity, and it comes as almost a surprise that the doctor notices it. Peabody at least recognizes the harsh reality of life for a rural farmer’s wife when his first reaction to Anse’s request for a house call is “he has wore her out at last” (41). Even Cora, whom Ladd calls “unreliable...in her assessments of individuals and their motivations,” perceives affection between Addie and her sons Darl and Jewel (21). Regardless that Cora’s perceptions are *wrong*, Addie’s performance as mother is normative enough that she is believed to have affection for her children. What is especially ironic about Cora’s misjudgment is that Jewel seems to be the only child Addie *has* true affection for. Darl recognizes that “ma always whipped him and petted him more” and even insinuates that she “named him Jewel” because she favored him

(18). It is also Darl who shares the only glimpse we have of Addie *actively* performing as mother and wife, and, predictably, it centers on Jewel. All of the other accounts of Addie's performance are either about her personality rather than specific vignettes, Darl's clairvoyant streams-of-consciousness, or from the woman herself after her death. Incidentally, what is interesting about this episode is that it clues Darl into Jewel's true paternity and Addie's deceit because he recognizes it as *unusual* for her to be so emotional and demonstrative, so he deduces that Jewel must be special to her and why.

When Jewel manifested a "mysterious" illness the summer he was fifteen, it was Addie who delegated his chores to the other children, made him stay in from the fieldwork, and "wanted to get the doctor" (130). Darl seems to detect a rare soft spot in Addie for Jewel, and it pinpoints the very distinction between public and private that I want to emphasize about her character. Because he notices Addie "doing [Jewel's chores] herself when pa wasn't there" and how she would "fix [Jewel] special things to eat and hide them for him," Darl "found it out, that Addie Bundren should be hiding anything she did, who had tried to teach us that deceit was such that in a world where it was, nothing else could be very bad or very important, not even poverty...[and] I knew that she was hating herself for that deceit and hating Jewel because she had to love him so that she had to act the deceit" (130-131). Despite how she felt about her pupils or Anse or even her *other* children, Addie feels true affection for Jewel, but she seems to feel the need to hide that. And while loving a child is certainly expected of a mother, hiding that emotion is not. This chapter documents Addie's *only* show of public affection when Jewel returns with his horse, proud of the animal he spent many nights hard at work to afford, and she "cried hard, not hiding her face...looking at him and him on the horse" (135). Addie seems to resent her tears, as if they indicate a feminine weakness, and Darl recalls thinking "maybe she

felt the same way about tears she did about deceit, hating herself for doing it, hating him because she had to” (136). Wood explains that just as Addie knows Jewel has been deceiving her by running off at night, “she realizes that, by keeping his paternity secret...she has been deceiving him” (108).³⁴ The complexity of such deceit involves Addie’s struggle with maternal devotion *and* the conventions of marriage. If not for Jewel, Addie’s gender performance might be flawlessly unemotional, but there seems to be something about the way she feels about him that makes her femininely sentimental, particularly because it stems from the specific feminine state of maternity. Such sentiment is also indicative of the way Addie essentializes her own motherhood in her monologue as she works through the process of feeling tricked and then fulfilled and then tricked again by her succession of pregnancies. It seems telling that this vignette that Darl recollects appears in the section adjacent to Addie’s own, in which we learn about everything she has to hide.

Confronted with her biting monologue, we must accept the hard truths that Addie imparts about herself: she is not a devoted wife or a loving mother or even a feasibly content woman. Regardless of her biological abilities, there is nothing maternal about Addie according to cultural definitions of motherhood; both Roberts and Wood find her void of the maternal attribute of “self-sacrifice.”³⁵ By her own account, Addie hates children, perhaps even her own since, as Wood claims, “motherhood is not a ‘duty’ for Addie...as she favors some children and rejects others” (103). She is not the sentimental character social fictions would have us believe she should be. In fact, we learn just the opposite; Addie feels so betrayed by society’s demands

³⁴ Wood also ties this deception to language, noting Paul Nielson’s argument that “Addie feels that when words are devoid of doing or feeling, they deceive and so are meaningless” (108). However, this emphasis seems a bit forced here where Addie’s emotional response and Jewel’s *actions* are foregrounded, rather than any immediate struggle with language.

³⁵ Wood says Addie is “selfish in her motherhood, as she rejects the notion of maternal self-sacrifice and duty” (103), whereas Roberts observes that Addie “rejects the role of self-sacrificing mother” (198).

on women, and perhaps the falsehoods of “sentimental tradition,” that “when she does not find what the words promise, she begins her war on the ‘something’ that violates her against her will and knowledge” (Ladd 42)³⁶. Herein lies an important distinction that Deborah Clarke, especially, makes: “motherhood—invented by men, who use words, and accomplished by women, who use bodies—lies at the core of *As I Lay Dying*”; and, thus, “Faulkner sets up two creative paradigms in the novel: mothering”—which women *do*—and “speaking”—which men do (35). For Addie, the realm of words, of “speaking,” belongs to *men* specifically; to her, the dependence upon *words* to “fit” what “they are trying to say” is a masculine quality, regulating the patriarchal heterosexual matrix in which she is expected to perform her gender normatively. But Addie seems to have made a startling discovery about herself and possibly her femininity; by realizing that “motherhood was invented by someone who had to have a word for it because the ones that had the children didn’t care whether there was a word for it or not,” Addie identifies language as a regulatory practice that concribes gender, so she attempts to subvert language in a way that prefers action to speech and that suggests an essentialist understanding of motherhood as something that can be divorced from language by those who experience it (171-172). Addie much prefers “doing” to words, which is perhaps why “mother” becomes a more important role for her to perform than “wife” as it involves an action, centered in the body, rather than promises represented by mere words (“I do”).

Addie’s resistance to language in understanding motherhood proves problematic from a Butlerian perspective because Butler believes discourse to be integral to the performance(s) that create(s) gender. For Butler there is no pre-discursive gender identity, no essentialist notion of

³⁶ Ladd does not explicitly elaborate on what that “something” is, but I would contest that it is similar to the “it” that permeates Addie’s section, and that it may even be a concept impossible to define with words, perhaps similar to Temple Drake’s “‘Something is happening to me!’” (102).

motherhood, a point she makes in her critique of Julia Kristeva's concept of "the maternal body as bearing a set of meanings that are prior to culture itself" (*Gender Trouble* 103).³⁷ Butler maintains that any gendered identity is "performatively constituted by the very 'expressions' that are said to be its results" (33). Butler views the expressions of motherhood as a gender performance manifested within a compulsory heterosexual matrix, another role for Addie to play that she seems helpless to resist. However, despite Addie's shocked reaction at finding herself pregnant, it is not the role of motherhood she rejects but the language that attempts to confine it and, therefore, her. Addie's rejection of words, of (the paternal law of) language, pushes her toward the very essentialism in maternity Butler criticizes and into a pre-discursive semiotic, where words cannot interfere in the un-aloneness she feels with her children. Wood, addressing how "Addie's search for identity through her body allies her with present French feminists like Luce Irigaray, Hélène Cixous, and Julia Kristeva," argues that Addie finds power and meaning through her body (99). However, I would disagree that Addie finds either. Other than recognizing a distinction between her experience and words, Addie fails to define or wield any power in the internalization of her maternity.

Butler argues that Kristeva sets up an economy in which the discursive production of the maternal body might be understood "as an effect or consequence of a system of sexuality in which the female body is required to assume maternity as the essence of its self and the law of its desire" (117-118). This economy of maternal essentialism suggests that the female body exists solely to act as a vessel for childbirth, that for a gender to be considered *valid* as feminine, it must include maternity. Butler's problems with essentialized maternity seem to stem from this

³⁷ Kristeva's theories develop the semiotic, a space ruled by rhythms, drives, sounds and colors: codes independent of language but without meaning. Addie seems to be specifically searching for meaning in the anti-linguistic space she essentializes.

heteronormative imperative that demands it as necessity to define femininity, reinforcing the idea that women only exist to provide men with children, a sentiment echoed by Anse, with his “you and I aint nigh done chapping yet, with just two” (172). While Addie might seem to resent such an economy, her rejection of language suggests that her experience of pregnancy exists outside of language. Addie, whose “aloneness had been violated and then made whole again by the violation” of her first child (172), resigns herself to a kind of fatalism (that we will see again in *Dewey Dell*) in that initial pregnancy, as she recalls “when I knew that I had Cash, I knew that living was terrible and that this was the answer to it” (171). But Addie immediately deems “this” impossible to define because that was when she “learned that words are no good; that words dont ever fit even what they are trying to say at” (171). Even without definition, “this” being the “answer” to the fact that “living is terrible” reveals that Addie is not completely disillusioned by and heartless toward the role of maternity, as if being Cash’s mother is an achievement that alleviates some of the trials of living. Becoming a mother, in fact, enlightens Addie as to why she so loathed her former students: “it was not that they had dirty noses, but that we had had to use one another by words like spiders dangling by their mouths from a beam” (172). In rejecting words as masculine, Addie appears to embrace *doing* as inherently feminine.

Despite Addie’s seemingly welcome discovery of a feminine essentialism upon having Cash, she quickly comes to recognize pregnancy as a regulatory pattern when she once again becomes pregnant and, as Matthews argues, finds “herself shackled to the patriarchal family in her efforts to control her body’s reproduction” (“The Machine Age” 80).³⁸ Realizing she “aint nigh done chapping yet,” Addie finds her second pregnancy unwelcome, and, thus, it only

³⁸ Clarke, too, asserts that “Addie finds no comfort in maternity once it becomes repetitious” (38). Moreover, Matthews also points out that “Addie’s resentment of maternity may also be measured against the long and complex history of reproductive rights of women in the US” (80).

compounds her disillusionment with discursive gender roles. Addie again identifies words with the masculine and Anse when she relates, “then I believed I would kill Anse. It was as though he had tricked me, hidden within a word like within a paper screen and struck me in the back through it” (172). Addie seems to equate word(s) as weapon with the actual sexual act of Anse impregnating her, creating a permanent danger in her mind between sex with her husband and a reliance on words. Just as her first pregnancy helped her realize the ambiguous need for words—by “people who never sinned nor loved nor feared”—with her second, she seems to understand that she is involved in a cycle of performance (174). Because Addie finally understands that she and Anse are both just playing roles established by the gender border control of their community, she is able to imagine the expressions of gender that make up her husband as “cold molasses flowing out of the darkness” until he becomes “a significant shape profoundly without life like an empty doorframe” (173). Without the trappings of his gender performance, Anse becomes “not-Anse” (174). Similarly, when Addie imagines herself without the expressions that constructed her gender role as a virgin, only an empty space exists. In such a space, names become meaningless to Addie because names are just words that belong to the realm of the masculine.

Addie has identified language as a tool to enforce the normative, and, because she has rejected language, she embraces the non-normative and commits adultery, disrupting the pattern of her marriage.³⁹ For Addie, Anse *dies* when she embarks on her affair because Anse ceases to exist as both her husband and even as a man. She does “not even ask him for what he could have

³⁹ Both Wood and Ladd note that it is specifically Whitfield’s spiritual authority that Addie finds so appealing about him; it makes the affair all the more transgressive. Furthermore, Ladd considers their trespasses as Addie’s “opportunity to repossess language [...] by reuniting mind or word with the body to create ‘the deed’” (43). However, whatever brief accord she may find by “coerc[ing] the terrible blood to the forlorn echo of the dead word high in the air” seems negated by the resignation she has toward her father’s “reason for living is getting ready to stay dead” once she has Jewel (*AILD* 175).

given [her]: not-Anse” because she has *taken* it in much the same way she “took” him to begin with, with the simple pragmatism of making up her mind (174). Because Addie disrupts her monogamous marriage, she ceases to think of Anse as a man or husband as much as she ceases to be a woman and wife to him, even if “he would never know” (173). Addie rejects Anse, and thus the heteronormative practices he represents, on every level; no longer his “wife” and no longer shackled by the language that defines his masculinity, she retreats into her essentialized femininity and claims “I would be I; I would let him be the shape and echo of his word,” be it “love” or *husband* or even *man* (174).

Essentializing her gender performance and identity provides Addie with an epiphany: her infidelity allows her to realize her sexuality in a way that she has not been able to articulate before. We can assume she merely “took” Anse sexually, but her affair with Whitfield affords her much more visceral access “to the terrible blood, the red bitter flood boiling through the land” (174). Addie’s scandalous affair seems to end as quickly as it began, but for her “*it* was not over,” and “there was no beginning nor ending to anything then,” because she has broken the oppressively repetitive cycle of her gender performance as wife (my emphasis 175). She has opened up the opportunity of her agency and found in it that her “children were of [her] alone, of the wild blood boiling along the earth,” as if she has broken the binary requisite of her heterosocial community for a brief moment in which she can identify with her children and “all that lived; of none and of all” (175). Addie eventually experiences herself as “three now,” three that exist outside of discourse and, therefore, deny definition; so it “doesn’t matter what they call them” (173).

However, whatever enlightenment she may have achieved with her disruption of the normative practices of her marriage ends abruptly when she realizes Whitfield too wields the

dangers of sex inherent in masculine language. The repetition of pregnancy once again reminds her of her father's declaration that "the reason for living is getting ready to stay dead for a long time" (169). While Addie found an "answer" to living when she had Cash and "the duty to the alive" in the invigorating sexuality of her affair, anything else, namely a return to the oppression of her gender performance of wife and mother, may as well be death for her.⁴⁰ For Addie, birthing Jewel alone meant one last moment of anti-linguistic opportunity and agency in which "the wild blood boiled away" before "the sound of it ceased," and she was once again resigned to the domestic role of wife to Anse and mother to his children (176). To "clean up her house," Addie gave Anse "three children that are his and not [hers]": "Dewey Dell to negative Jewel" and "Vardaman to replace the child [she] had robbed him of" (176). And then, with her accounts settled, her *house cleaned*, she "could get ready to die" (176).

Addie's separation of discourse from action, impossible under Butler's performance model, allows her to retreat to a space Butler argues does not exist, where words no longer hold any meaning in the context of her maternity. Divorced of language, Addie's gender performance is incomplete and thereby becomes ineffective in subverting the heteronormativity she so vehemently resists and rebukes in her monologue. Ever the contradiction, Addie reveals to us her revulsion with language in a *monologue*, which is *only* language. Several critics see Addie's subversion of masculine language as an opportunity for creativity and progress; Wood and Clarke both recognize creative force in Addie's preference for her own experiential femininity over men's words, and Ladd considers Addie's very "offensiveness [...] a sign of her freedom" (50). But, if we learn anything from Addie's long marriage, as well as her prolonged funerary trip, it is that she is not free. Addie's rejection of discourse actually fails to provide the

⁴⁰ John Limon, in "Addie in No-Man's Land," even goes so far as to claim that "Addie dies *partly* to escape the men of her family" (my emphasis 41).

disruptive potential Butler anticipates non-normative gender performance may produce. Despite Addie's dissatisfaction with conventional gender roles, her performance provides no opportunities for disruption because she essentializes and internalizes her maternity. Instead of conquering or reappropriating the language (of masculinity), as the above-mentioned critics argue, Addie merely tries to replace its totality with one of her own making. Addie strives to exist in a purely feminine space reached through the "boiling blood" she experiences between herself and Cash and Jewel and through her sexual encounter with Whitfield. Not only does her feminine trinity of blood hold no power outside of her own internalized space, but, as Roberts explains, "Addie must represent herself in language, in a text, and so she implicates herself in the very system from which she has tried to defect" (201). Therein lies a main reason why Addie's essentialism of her maternity and femininity affect no change in or *for* her family: Addie's shocking revelations about her own experiences are private. They occur in the impossible, *unintelligible* space of a dead woman's brain and are imparted to us by her disembodied voice in the very language she finds so misrepresentative of her experiences. However, Addie has already put into motion what will prove to be a very public performance and one motivated by action she instigates by making Anse "promise to take [her] back to Jefferson when [she] died" (173).

Just as she invents a kind of biological mathematics to provide Anse "his" children, Addie seems to identify an obscure gendered geometry within the novel in the juxtaposition of vertical and horizontal, a binary that Butler might critique thusly: "one is one's gender to the extent that one is not the other gender" (30). Butler considers such "logic" faulty for many reasons, the most apparent being the limitation of possibilities outside the duality of heterosexual gender pairs, but it allows the kind of binary set-up wherein the characters of the

novel seem to align vertical with masculine and horizontal with feminine.⁴¹ I would argue that Addie's "revenge" relates directly to such a pairing and involves Anse in ways that lend new perspective to any gender subversion she enacts.

Much has been made of Anse's immobility in the novel: Matthews notes how Dewey Dell makes fun of Anse's immobility with the analogy of his looking like "right after the maul hits the steer and it no longer alive and dont yet know that it is dead" (55); but Matthews also considers "a serious side to the image she offers," one indicative of Anse's resistance to change and modernity that may endanger the Bundrens' very way of life ("The Machine Age" 92-93). One of the first things Anse reveals to us in the novel is how he believes "it want any luck living on a road when it come by here" (35) because living on roads "keep[s] the folks restless and wanting to get up and go somewheres else when He aimed for them to stay put like a tree or a stand of corn" (36). The road has been a threat to Anse for some time, and, as Matthews asserts, "Anse blames the expansion of state authority as much as any natural catastrophe for his troubles" (77). Anse sees the road, "where every bad luck prowling can find it and come straight to my door, charging me taxes on top of it," as a danger to him and his family, as it proposes to lure Cash away in search of jobs, and has already taken Darl to war and Jewel to work for a horse, robbing the Bundren farm of nearly half its workforce (35). And the farm, as Kartiganer explains, "is life on the vertical, the world rooted, as Anse Bundren says, 'up-and-down ways...like a tree or a stand of corn,' or a man, whose God-appointed function is 'to stay put'" (281).⁴² Anse's immobility is represented by verticality; he wants to stay put, on his farm,

⁴¹ Donald Kartiganer pays especial attention to this juxtaposition of vertical and horizontal in the novel in his article "The Farm and the Journey: Ways of Mourning and Meaning in *As I Lay Dying*."

⁴² One of the first representations of Anse, who doesn't want to be "always a-moving," is "up-and-down ways, like a tree or a man" "because if He'd aimed for a man to be always a-moving and going somewheres else, wouldn't He a put him longways on his belly, like a snake?" (36). Despite the very clear idea of vertical versus horizontal lines,

versus journey away from it, except that he promises his wife to do just that upon her death. If Anse, on the farm, is vertical, the journey, instigated by Addie, is horizontal; and so Kartiganer rightly dubs Addie “the muse of the journey” because she “believes that the horizontal world alone is authentic” (291). In this context, “the vertical is the topographical idea of Being as opposed to horizontal Becoming, presence as opposed to process” (Kartiganer 281). The horizontal for Addie is the plane adjacent to words “going up in a straight line,” a plane along which she has felt her “wild blood boiling” (173); and so she associates the horizontal with her preferred *doing*, while the vertical represents a confinement imposed by masculine language. And for Addie, “doing goes along the earth, clinging to it, so that after a while the two lines are too far apart for the same person to straddle from one to the other” (173). For Addie, Anse, the vertical “empty door frame” (173), “the shape and echo of his word” (174), and the patriarchal compulsory heterosexual matrix he represents become something she cannot reconcile, an ideology she cannot “straddle,” so that he and his oppressive gender normativity become merely the “forlorn echo of the dead word high in the air” (175). Thus, in this juxtaposition of vertical/masculine/status quo and horizontal/feminine/change lies the gender crux of the entire novel: Addie’s revenge.⁴³

In her section, Addie tells us that:

perhaps intersecting like “L,” by aligning “tree” and “man” and juxtaposing them with “snake,” Faulkner is presenting an indirect tableau of the fall of Adam and Eve, a situation in which *woman*, tricked by the horizontal snake, corrupts *man*, who was content to follow the law of God that commanded unquestioning respect for the vertical Tree of Knowledge.

⁴³ Much has been made by critics of the exact nature of Addie’s revenge. Morris and Morris sum it up well as follows: “Addie’s revenge is silent, and Faulkner’s text is unclear at the crucial moment of her annunciation of it. Is this revenge her wish to be buried in Jefferson, or her affair with Whitfield, or her symbolic murder of Anse as she dismisses his presence in the emptiness of his name? The revenge of the ‘(m)other’ is unspeakable unless it can be appropriated as another form of revenge, revenge against the great-grandfather’s legendary authority and authenticity, against the better man of a better, more heroic time in Faulkner’s genealogical myth of the Old South” (155).

I had been tricked by words older than Anse or love, and...the same word had tricked Anse too, and...my revenge would be that he would never know I was taking revenge. And when Darl was born I asked Anse to promise to take me back to Jefferson when I died. (172-173)

Addie's request that Anse take her home becomes the ultimate revenge she can enact on gender normativity. She demands that Anse leave his paradise, the farm, and abandon his vertical situation of Being to travel the horizontal roads. But once he does so, he will be out in the modern world where he does not belong but from which he cannot turn back, which becomes clearer and clearer to his children every day of the journey to bury Addie. But to what end is Addie's anonymous revenge? Perhaps she wants to conscript Anse to a compulsive regulatory practice (keeping a promise) that he has no choice but to follow, regardless that it contradicts his masculine inclination to stay put. What Ladd calls "Anse's meditation on the virtue of the 'up and down ways' (elevation) over the 'long ways' (extension), on the righteousness of staying put rather than moving" suggests that Anse believes that if he stays put, he exerts some control over the influences of his life (46). We certainly know life on the road is not kind to the Bundren family, visiting calamities of flood and fire on them. However, Addie has always been compliant to forces beyond her control: the conventions of her social context. If we consider how horizontal situation has been aligned with Addie and specifically feminine activity—Addie lying in bed dying, then laid in her coffin; she rides horizontal in the wagon, even the prominent images in her section of her lying next to Anse in bed, having sex or birthing a child—then we can almost even imagine Addie forcing femininity on Anse, especially since we know he values "up-and-down ways" as related to his masculinity (how God made him). Addie wants Anse to feel vulnerable, out of control, imposed upon, just as she presumably has her entire adult life.

Kartiganer claims “the journey is the great threat to the farm,” a threat which Addie instigates in her request to be buried away from her family, a request Anse can’t seem to deny despite his aversion to travel (282). Addie has endured a lifetime with Anse wherein she felt compelled to perform under the oppression of her normative gender identity. In death, perhaps Addie wants to visit some of the same oppression on Anse she feels she’s experienced in her gender roles as wife and mother.

When Addie disrupts the normative pattern of her married life with Anse by making him promise to return her to and bury her in Jefferson, she successfully interrupts his long-standing cycle of immobility and verticality in order to travel the roads. She corrupts his isolation by making him travel to town, and, according to Ladd, “for him the loss of isolation means the loss of the ability to ‘hold one’s own’ in all the phrase’s suggestions of property rights and sovereignty” (20). Addie has endured a similar lack of self-sovereignty in her conscripted gender roles simply because of her sex. By setting Anse on the road, perhaps Addie believes she will remove him from the masculine role of control he has arbitrarily been granted by their community and its regulatory practices. However, Addie’s “revenge” atrociously backfires in one very blatant way: it traps *two* other women into the cycle of gender normativity she fought so hard to contest. *Because* of its anonymity, her revenge has very little effect on her husband or her children, much less the world at large. The privacy and essentialism of Addie’s non-normativity means that her gender performance succeeds in disrupting very little outside of her own personal experience and, thus, limits the opportunity for change of established gender norms, especially for her own daughter.

It seems almost tragic to consider Dewey Dell’s trajectory in the novel in the shadow of Addie’s vehement monologue, but there is no avoiding the fact that the same normative

oppression Addie fights in her section is visited on Dewey Dell just as brutally, or perhaps more so. Despite the social necessity Addie may have felt to marry Anse, she at least avoided the social stigma of an illegitimate pregnancy, which Kartiganer labels “one of community’s most serious infractions,” a fate Dewey Dell shares with Caddy, but without the social standing to land herself a suitable husband (289). However, where Caddy reacts to an unplanned pregnancy with a retreat to an expected role—“*got to marry somebody*”—Dewey Dell eschews the idea of getting married, although *why* is not clear unless Lefe is just uncooperative, and seeks a reasonable way to terminate the pregnancy in order *not* to end up unmarried and pregnant. In fact, despite her poor luck in doing so, Dewey Dell *uses* her mother’s final wish as an impetus for opportunity. Just as Addie’s death may have been an escape for Addie from the oppressive heteronormativity of her life, Dewey Dell finds in her mother’s request to be buried in Jefferson the possibility of *not* having to repeat the pattern of gender roles available to poor white women.

Whereas Caddy’s privilege could be expected to afford her a position to pursue a termination of her pregnancy, that same privilege seems to have guaranteed she could win a husband. Even as the family declined, we can imagine *some* prestige accompanying the Compson name, and Caddy does not seem to have had any problem finding suitors. Furthermore, even when Caddy is rejected as a wife and becomes an unwed single mother, her family’s wealth and station allow her the flexibility *not* to be an active mother, though she eventually tries. The Compsons can afford to keep on Dilsey as their housemaid and a mammy for Caddy’s daughter Quentin. Dewey Dell’s status allows her no such choices. *If* she becomes a young, unwed mother, she does not have the financial means to leave her rural community to escape persecution. Caddy was raised in the upper class southern world, navigating and manipulating both her family and the men who were attracted to her; she presumably learned

how to survive in that world even estranged from her family's wealth. Dewey Dell has no knowledge about the world outside of the Bundrens' small farming community, which is made all the more apparent by how she handles the situation of trying to obtain an abortifacient to end her unwanted pregnancy. Furthermore, even the sexual performance of these two young women, about the same age when they become pregnant, is affected by the differences in their social statuses. Caddy's privilege affords her a life in which she can be a social butterfly, presumably flitting from event to event and from young man to young man. However, Dewey Dell's sexuality is tied to her family's poverty and livelihood in a way that seems fatalistic.

Dewey Dell tells us immediately about "the *first* time [she] and Lafe picked on down the row," referring to the first time they had sex, and that act is irrevocably entangled with her chore of picking cotton in such a way that the cotton itself seems to end up determining their intercourse (my emphasis 26). Once Dewey Dell decides that the fullness of her sack will decide if she sneaks off into the "secret shade" with Lafe, she relinquishes control of her sexual actions and performance (26). Even *she* admits, "so it was because I could not help it" (27). Where her mother spent a good bit of her married life trying to take control of her gender/sexual performance, Dewey Dell, as Clarke points out, "refuses to accept responsibility for her decision and to participate in her sexuality" (45). "I could not help it" she repeats several times, and then, once Lafe is picking into her sack to fill it as well, and their "eyes would drown together touch on his hands and [her] hands," we can almost believe the fatalism, the *animal magnetism*, pulling the couple toward the woods (27).

However, the primitive romanticism of Lafe and Dewey Dell's cotton-picking tryst soon loses its charm when she realizes "everything in the world for [her] is inside a tub full of guts" and that "God gave women a sign when something has happened bad" (58). Presumably, she

has noticed that sign of something bad when she declares, “I am Lafe’s guts” (60). Dewey Dell seems to understand *how* it is she has become pregnant, but she still seems oblivious to her role as responsible for it, especially when she relates, “I feel like a wet seed wild in the hot blind earth” (64). There is an urgency in this statement that implies fertility and sexuality, what Morris and Morris call “mindless potency,” but also a kind of fear of the unknown, as if she has no concept of how her own sexuality and gender performance even occur, much less that she might have any active control over them (164). Wherein Addie realized, despite her chagrin at being pregnant, a kind of power in her ability to create life outside of the culture established by masculine language, Dewey Dell’s pregnancy, “rather than confirming her abilities to procreate life, denies her control over her own life and her own body” (Clarke 45). And it is therein that we find Addie’s tragic flaw: her privacy. The “ever private” woman succeeded in keeping the disruptive manner of her own dissatisfaction with gender conventions *so* private that she seems to have failed her daughter in some kind of feminist solidarity, or, at the least, instructed her as to the intricacies of sex. Dewey Dell shares her mother’s primal correlation between sexuality and the hot blind earth along which the terrible blood boils, but she has none of the insight into the gendered imperative of her sexuality that Addie maps out in her section. While it might seem obvious to blame this on Dewey Dell’s young age, it also presents the failure on Addie’s part to warn her daughter about the danger of an unwanted pregnancy. Addie rages violently against the social conventions that determine her gender roles and her life, but she neglects to share her discontent with her only daughter, and one cannot help but wonder if that may be because she is one of the three children that are Anse’s and not Addie’s. By keeping her own non-normative performance(s) private, Addie fails to make public her rebellion against

normative gender roles and dooms Dewey Dell, like Addie before her, to be a “mother by default, not by choice” (Clarke 48).

Not only did Addie keep her true personality private from Anse, and presumably from their sons and Jewel, but she also never connected with the only other member of her family who would face the same oppression of gender practices imposed by their time and place. Therefore it comes as no surprise that Dewey Dell fails in her pursuit of a termination to her pregnancy, despite the opportunity Addie’s dying wish affords Dewey Dell to seek resources outside their rural community. However, it is not Addie’s fault that Dewey Dell remains pregnant at the end of the novel. It is just as much the girl’s own responsibility, as she is the one who deferred such a weighty decision as whether or not to have sex with Lafe to how much cotton ended up in a sack, but she has also been let down by her mother and the men who surround her. Addie’s failure to help her own daughter navigate the complexities of femininity guarantees that Dewey Dell is not prepared for the appalling way the men she approaches for help behave. Lafe seems to relinquish his responsibility by giving her ten dollars and sending her on her way. However, Moseley becomes the voice of normative social regulations when he tells her “a thousand dollars wouldn’t be enough in my store...you take my advice and go home and tell your pa or your brothers” (202). Much like the social norms against which Addie so railed, Moseley is relegating Dewey Dell back to the patriarchal path of socially acceptable ends to a pregnancy by telling her “you go on back to Lafe and you and him take that ten dollars and get married with it” (203). But Dewey Dell seems to understand that marriage to Lafe is not even an option for her, and so she approaches the next pharmacist with the only commodity she has to offer: her sexuality.

If we can characterize Moseley as taking the moral high ground, then MacGowan most certainly does the opposite. First and most disturbingly, he associates Dewey Dell's lower class with sexual promiscuity, which is ironic in the wake of Caddy Compson's sexual escapades in *The Sound and the Fury*, and also historically recorded as false, since Sharpless claims the innocence of rural young women was closely guarded. While we certainly cannot attest that Dewey Dell is virginal, she is circumspect compared to Caddy, and we cannot help but feel more sympathy for the former, whether it is because she is less privileged by class or because the men around her behave so poorly.⁴⁴ Regardless, the advantage MacGowan takes of Dewey Dell seems purely based on his assumption that she is promiscuous, as evidenced when he asks her about the money for the abortifacient: "which one of *them* give it to you" (my emphasis 244). To her credit, if that is what we can call it, and reminiscent of Caddy's desperation, Dewey Dell seems to understand he intends to take sexual gratification from her for payment, but she knows she has "got to do something" (246). However, using her sexuality as currency, especially after Anse has *taken* her actual money, is a sacrifice that will afford her no relief from her unplanned pregnancy and no disruption of the gender patterns she is repeating. In fact, Dewey Dell's commodification of her sexuality only succeeds in backfiring on her so that she becomes as trapped by the imperative of maternity as Addie was when she "knew that [she] had Cash" (171). Matthews argues that we *may* see Dewey Dell's "behavior as part of a larger resistance to oppression by women in the modernized South" (81); but Clarke asserts that, for Dewey Dell, motherhood "represents her failure to employ symbolic discourse as a means of

⁴⁴ Darl, if anything, is antagonistic, at least psychically, toward Dewey Dell. Quentin may have performed non-normatively in his reactions to Caddy, but he still wanted to *save* her, even at the cost of his own sexuality and normative gender practices. Furthermore, while Jason Sr. has a soft spot for his only daughter, Anse is so oblivious to women in general, it is doubtful he would react to Dewey Dell's pregnancy in any way other than poorly. Plus, Darl says it would kill him.

averting maternity” (48). While Addie chooses to isolate herself from language because of her pregnancies, Dewey Dell seems simply unable to utilize the masculine language even Addie couldn’t master.

Just as Dewey Dell seems to be trapped in the same regulatory social pattern as Addie by the end of the novel, another woman literally *takes Addie’s place* as the matriarch of the Bundren family; or, as Morris and Morris argue, “‘Addie’ is rewritten as ‘Mrs. Bundren’ in order to translate the particular and unique into the conventional” (154). Addie has been dead less than two weeks when Anse marries another woman from Jefferson. This “duck-shaped woman...with them kind of hardlooking pop eyes like she was daring ere a man to say nothing” is, very possibly, the kind of older single woman Addie *might* have been had she stayed in Jefferson rather than teaching in a country school and marrying a rural farmer (260). Anse also fulfills a kind of prophecy when he introduces her to his children with “‘Meet Mrs. Bundren’” (261). In an early chapter, when Vernon Tull sympathizes with Anse and Addie, his daughter Kate interjects that when Addie dies “he’ll [Anse] get another one before cotton-picking” (34), suggesting not just a measure of time but indicating that he needs someone to harvest cotton, which supports Scott’s earlier claim that it was the poor white woman, rather than her spouse, who “had to keep the family alive” (28). However, what becomes even more clear with Anse’s surprise nuptials at the end of the novel is just how little repercussion Addie has had on the social world around her. In fact, her interruption of her gender performance has no public effect in the novel except to ensure that Anse and her sons (those not committed to an asylum) continue to enforce established practices, and that Dewey Dell and the *new* Mrs. Bundren become women tricked and betrayed by the very gender oppression Addie fought against in her section and through her affair. Ultimately, the private manner of Addie’s remarkable rebellion

against conventional gender roles not only goes unnoticed by the members of her family and community but in the absence of any kind of public disruption only reinscribes those very normative regulatory practices she so contested onto the women remaining in the novel.⁴⁵

Therein lies yet another similarity between *The Sound and the Fury's* and *As I Lay Dying's* leading ladies: the gender police of their respective social contexts shut them down with a final twist at the end. For Caddy, the "Compson Appendix" provides space for Jason to once again deny his sister gendered identity. Similarly, the surprise of "Meet Mrs. Bundren" effectively destroys any performative progress Addie may have achieved in her posthumous section of the novel. Ultimately, Addie's revenge fails because her attempt to visit change on Anse—to make him "not-Anse"—does not succeed. He remains Anse, the man who will die if he sweats, so it is imperative for him to get a new wife back to the farm before "cotton-picking." Addie was at least right in her claim that he would never know she was getting revenge, but only because she never actually achieved it. And thus, like the snuffing out of a candle, one of Faulkner's most intriguing female characters loses any authority she achieved by speaking from the grave to shatter the public illusion of her contented, simple life as the wife and mother of a tenant farming family. While Addie's section certainly affords her a voice that Caddy never had, the former exercises no more agency than the silent Caddy because Addie effectively silences herself by keeping her non-normative performance private, and Dewey Dell fails in her attempt to break established patterns of gender by following in her mother's footsteps. The significant difference that exists among these three women continues to be class. Caddy's promiscuity, because she is expected to be a Southern Belle, is deemed non-normative and ruinous for her

⁴⁵ Even Whitfield is spared any kind of consequence of their non-normative extramarital affair when Addie dies before he confesses. Furthermore, it is unlikely, given Addie's privacy that Whitfield realized the import he carried in her life and how it affected her gender performance.

reputation and fatal to her ability to play the roles of wife and mother in her society. Despite historians' and critics' claims that purity is equally valued across class lines, *As I Lay Dying* seems to suggest a laxity about sex and gender in the lower classes.⁴⁶ Dewey Dell's fatalistic sexual activity and subsequent pregnancy are almost expected of one who perhaps "doesn't know any better" because of her poor rural upbringing. Such a marked foreclosure of Dewey Dell's potential suggests that because of classist social regulations about gender, Dewey Dell is fated to be a mother, perhaps a wife, just like Addie, despite the dissatisfaction of both women.

That the satisfaction of his female characters is not paramount to Faulkner should come as no surprise in these early, tumultuous novels. However, *Sanctuary* continues the disruptions of heteronormativity for which *The Sound and the Fury* and *As I Lay Dying* laid the groundwork. Temple Drake's situation begins a greater look at public versus private gender performance that also includes an intersection of class and race in the later work *Requiem for a Nun*.

⁴⁶ However, let's not forget that Jason Compson believes all women to be depraved, a fact that, ironically, leads him to treat every woman the same, be she his (supposed) Southern belle sister, his former-prostitute companion, or his unruly niece.

IV: SOMETHING IS HAPPENING TO ME

Diane Roberts notes that in *Sanctuary*, Temple Drake “does what few women in Faulkner’s fiction do overtly: she tells her own story” (125). Despite the fact that both Temple and her predecessor Caddy Compson are expected to uphold the established performance of Southern Belle in a “southern culture that claims to value virginity and innocence above all in its young white women,” Temple’s story, which involves a degree of sexuality more intense than those discussed previously, is much different from Caddy’s (Roberts 125). Despite the similarities between these two rebellious young women, whom John T. Matthews, in *Seeing Through the South*, calls “two of [Faulkner’s] most memorable characters” (40), Temple Drake manages feats that Caddy, or Addie or Dewey Dell, can not even approach, performing her gender in such a way that Roberts recognizes as “Faulkner’s final dismantling of a cultural icon, the Southern Belle” (125).

In the second chapter, I examined how Caddy’s gender normativity was affected by her sexual promiscuity and how her brothers’ stifling attempts to control it only succeeded in preventing her from achieving normative gender performances as wife and mother. But Faulkner’s next Southern Belle is more progressive. She lives out from under the direct control of her male-dominated family: allowed to go to the university half a state away from where her “father is a judge.” Whereas Caddy’s opportunities were cut short by her sexuality and subsequent pregnancy, Temple’s initial experiences as a young woman on campus and about town seem to afford her new freedoms and contexts in which to perform her femininity. But this

should not be surprising considering the approximately twenty years between Caddy and Temple. In fact, Temple is more of an age with Caddy's daughter, Quentin, and it is not hard to imagine the two as friends had circumstances been better for the Compsons. Temple has no such fallen aristocracy to shadow her, though, and two decades after Caddy had few prospects other than marriage, Temple is attending university at the same age. These differences in privilege are especially striking when we consider the other novel of this early "trilogy" of Faulkner's, *As I Lay Dying*, and Dewey Dell's lack of opportunities therein. Before Temple's harrowing rape and abduction, she seems to be the young Faulknerian woman to date, in 1930, with the most opportunity to exercise her potential as a modern twentieth century woman. Unfortunately, much like the women in the two novels before her, Temple's gender performance will be greatly affected by the men around her because, as Matthews notes, "Faulkner suggests that some of the new forms of social and cultural expression promising liberation actually end up reinforcing powers of patriarchal, commercial exploitation" (41).

From the moment we meet Temple, she is wild and free and somewhat sexualized:

A bemused faculty member or a candidate for a master's degree on his way to the library would see Temple, a snatched coat under her arm and her long legs blonde with running, in speeding silhouette against the lighted windows of the Coop, as the women's dormitory was known, vanishing into the shadow beside the library wall, and perhaps a final squatting swirl of knickers or whatnot as she sprang in the car waiting there with engine running on that particular night. (28)

However, this passage is also an ominous foreshadowing of the horrors that will befall Temple as she is whisked away in other cars and pursued by dangerous men. Her legs "running" and "speeding" suggest a need to get away from something while a "silhouette" "vanishing into the

shadow” suggests a mystery or urgency to which we are not privy. Temple Drake is a mystery from the very first furtive opportunity we have to “see” her. In fact, until her confession to Horace in Miss Reba’s brothel in Memphis, when Temple “tells her story,” we are limited to only watching her, relegated to mere spectators of the abuses visited on her. But therein lay another intrinsic mystery of *Sanctuary*: Faulkner writes *around* the most horrific moment of his “pot-boiler” novel. He elides the rape of Temple Drake, of which we only hear her exclaim “something is happening to me” (102). That “something” is never fully defined, and that lack of definition and distance from the eclipsed rape establish a distance between reader and Temple that is not closed until we receive her monologue over halfway through the novel. One of the pitfalls of such distance is that it begs to be closed, demands that we move from outer to inner in order to discover the psychic interior of Temple Drake. However, such a psychic examination is impossible; we have only Temple’s performance through which to understand her character and the complicated gender roles she portrays. We must interpret Temple’s supposed “interior essence,” as Butler would call it, as “an effect and function of decidedly public and social discourse” determined by the same kind of gender border control that attempt to define Faulkner’s other characters.

Temple is subjected to a kind of psychic assault by critics and readers who are constantly troubled by the motivations for her performance and who therefore search for the psychology of the “inner” Temple to explain just *why* she behaves the way she does. Since the novel was first published, critical considerations of Temple have been preoccupied by her intelligibility as a woman, running the gamut from whore to victim to heroine to neurotic.⁴⁷ But these assumed

⁴⁷ Linda Dunleavy, in “*Sanctuary*, Sexual Difference, and the Problem of Rape,” notes that “traditional criticism reads *Sanctuary* as morally depraved and Temple Drake as the personification of evil”; traditional criticism suggests she brings her violation on herself, whereas feminist criticism tends to believe she is a victim (171). John Matthews

roles in which the critics cast her seem to be based on universal ideas of gender normativity rather than specifically considered regulations of Temple's social context. And these assumptions function within the "matrix of intelligibility," which Butler defines as "the peculiar alliance presumed to exist between the system of compulsory heterosexuality and the discursive categories that establish the identity concepts of sex" (24). However, the novel does not allow us any such insight into Temple's mind. Therefore, Temple's gender performance is constantly in question by many critics to whom her psyche is closed off, so that the psychoanalytic approach inscribes yet another set of codes onto her character. Butler claims that "the psychoanalytic critique succeeds in giving an account of the construction of 'the subject'" (38).

However, while such "psychoanalytic critiques," attempt to better understand the plight of Temple's character, they rob her of any agency by considering her a victim of her own psychology;⁴⁸ and that agency is a cornerstone to how Temple's gender performance transforms throughout the events of the novel. Specifically, I examine how Temple performs gender throughout the novel in such a way that allows a fresh interpretation of her character and shows how her rape and kidnapping cause such disruption that she must adapt her normative gender performance to non-normative to survive the conditions of her captivity. That interruption allows Temple to realize an agency that results in a curious kinship with her rapist, and captor, that sheds new light on her behavior in court at the end of the novel. Finally, I explore whether

considers Temple a victim and focuses very specifically on her fear. In his article "The Elliptical Nature of *Sanctuary*," Matthews notices a haunting quality about Temple wherein she is "inexplicable as a whole person in part because she does not know what to fear; so she fears everything and nothing" (354). Although it still involves an interior feeling (fear) that we are never privy to in the text, Matthews' mention of Temple's incompleteness marks a departure from labeling her amoral or evil in favor of recognizing her inscrutability.

⁴⁸ John Duvall, in *Faulkner's Marginal Couple*, uses psychoanalytic themes such as the primal scene and the incest taboo to consider what he calls the "patriarchal designator" and how it "manifests itself through language that attempts to control and define female sexuality" and how, by playing that role, "many men in the novel contribute to the rape of Temple" (xvi, 70).

Temple's disruption of normative gender performance presents her with opportunities unavailable to the female characters I've examined before her.

Butler argues that "the action of gender requires performance that is *repeated*" and this "repetition is at once a reenactment and re-experiencing of a set of meanings already socially established," a set of *regulatory practices* of which heterosexually intelligible gender performance is "the mundane and ritualized form of their legitimization" (178). Temple would be expected to perform under the "rules" for a Southern Belle that have been established and reiterated her entire life by her father and brothers, such as maintaining her honor and the reputation of her family by staying pure, genteel, and polite.⁴⁹ However, the only way we see Temple enact these regulatory practices is by transgressing them. What seems to be unique about Temple in the context of the other female characters discussed here is that her gender is not policed by her family or usual social context until the end of the novel. That Temple is outside the immediate proximity of her family is anomalous among the works discussed in this project. Whereas Caddy, Addie, and Dewey Dell are nearly suffocated by their male-dominated families, and their gender performances are determined by that influence, Temple is away from her father and brothers at the University and surrounded by other young female co-eds. Her father and brothers are busy upholding the law in the state capital, and, most interestingly, there is no mention of her mother, as if she has never been an influence in Temple's life. Temple seems to be all the more daring with her social exploits because of such lack of immediate regulation. Much as Caddy's upper class status allowed her a degree of flexibility with her gender

⁴⁹ I refer to the definition(s) of "Southern belle" by Kathryn Seidel first referred to in Chapter 1: "the young, unmarried daughter of a landed (and thus aristocratic) family, who lives on a great plantation" and being "of marriageable age, ready to be courted"; "although she may be only sixteen or seventeen, she is regarded as being at the zenith of her life" (xv, 3). In the context of Temple's society, she certainly fits this picture, even if the edges are a bit blurry; she is the daughter of a judge, rather than an aristocrat. We do not know whether she lives on a "great plantation," but the suggestion of family wealth and power certainly exists when she invokes her father to protect her at the Old Frenchman Place and when he swoops into the courtroom toward the close of the novel.

performance, the very privilege that grants Temple the opportunity of an education also provides her the leeway to push the boundaries of social acceptability.

Because very little gender border control is imposed by the characters in Temple's immediate vicinity, we must ask, what are the "acts [and] gestures" she repeats to establish her gender performance? And where and when do these repetitions break down enough to disrupt it? Her dating routine involves running out with town boys during the week, while she reserves the weekends for proper University functions, where she might be found on the arm of Gowan Stevens, whom she takes to be a "proper Southern Gentleman".⁵⁰ From the moment we meet her, "a snatched coat under her arm and her long legs blonde with running," Temple is *performing* her gender (28). Her frantic restlessness and her coy flirting are actions that seem harmless enough in Temple's original social context, but they will backfire once she is stranded at the Old Frenchman Place. Temple operates in a society that expects her to perform her gender in a very specific way, "to be a charming and flirtatious coquette" but not to *cross* the line from coquette to harlot (Seidel xvi). Temple is expected to uphold the same contradictory social cues applied to Caddy that creates the "impossible tension" of the role of the Southern Belle who must perform as "coquettes [but] never yield their purity" (Seidel xvi). Maintaining such tension is precisely Temple's dilemma. She puts on a fun and flirtatious performance for Gowan, but her name on the bathroom wall lends her a naughty edge (34).⁵¹ Matthews notes that Temple "takes advantage of the 1920s new sexual freedom to experience power once reserved for men" and, therefore, "represent[s] the modern emancipated young woman" (42). But once Temple is removed from the relative comfort of Oxford society, her performance begins to break down. Jettisoned by her

⁵⁰ That Gowan turns out to be just as "rough" as the town boys seems to be something Temple does not discover until it is too late to avoid his drunken side-trip to the bootleggers' headquarters.

⁵¹ However, even her name on the bathroom wall suggests the danger in her near future, but not because of the context in which the writing occurs but because Gowan himself straddles both worlds.

poor judgment and Gowan's drunkenness further outside of the social norms she was already skirting in Oxford, Temple's elite gender performance becomes unintelligible at the Old Frenchman Place as the gestures that usually qualify her as a woman to be wooed in town garner dangerous attention at the rundown plantation.

At the Old Frenchman Place, the regulatory practices are different from Oxford or Jefferson society. She runs around the Old Frenchman Place in a way suggestive of the first glimpse we have of her "long legs blonde with running," but in a way more sinister than the previous instance, where she was presumably running *to* something (a date) rather than *away* from someone (Lee, Popeye, Tommy). At Ole Miss, Temple ran out of exhilaration, out of youthful excitement to be getting away with sneaking out of the dorms and into a town boy's car. The familiarity of her environment seems to have lent her a daring and comfort that she knew what to expect in the boys she dated. At the Old Frenchman Place, Temple is out of her element and among criminals, and the man she expects to protect her is severely intoxicated and outnumbered and outmatched, besides. Temple is frightened, and her running becomes an attempt to escape, to protect herself since Gowan cannot, to hide. However, to the men around her, Temple's sprints become provocative, as if she is something to be hunted, and the danger of her situation only makes her run around more. Temple proceeds to run around the outside of the house in an increasingly frantic manner, until, as André Bleikasten notes, in "Terror and Nausea: Bodies in *Sanctuary*," her "brief, broken and zigzagging flights bring her back each time without fail to her point of departure" (21). It is not hard to imagine that Temple usually performs her gender for men by drawing attention to the physicality of her body; however, her attempts to be noticed at the Old Frenchman Place in order to get what she wants not only backfire by attracting dangerous attention, but have her running in literal circles. One need merely list the events that

happen while Temple is there barely twenty-four hours to understand the extent to which normal rules of elite society do not apply out there in the sticks: severe drunkenness, sexual assault, murder, rape. This is not a minor transgression of a coy Southern Belle going out with town boys, but a genuinely dangerous situation aggravated by the fact that Temple cannot predict the behavior of the men at the bootleggers' hideout once she realizes they will fail to act like the gentlemen Temple is accustomed to in her usual society.

The regulations Temple understands in her elite social context are non-existent at the rundown plantation where outlaws and gangsters hide out. These bandits are lawless and dangerous, and they seem drawn to Temple as moths to a flame, which disgruntles Ruby, as the caretaker of the group, because not only is Temple herself in danger but her presence also endangers whatever barely detectable system of rules the bootleggers follow at The Old Frenchman Place. Considering that the plantation house is being used to make and market prohibited alcohol, and that sexual assault, murder, and rape all occur in the night and day Temple is stranded there, it seems that whatever rules these men live by are only slightly upheld. Ruby's own anxiety over Lee's behavior around Temple suggests that it does not take much to disrupt any balance among these men who seem to be driven by violence, greed, and predatory desire. However, Temple is quick to try to establish her own gender border control when she tells Ruby, "I've got four brothers. Two are lawyers and one's a newspaper man. The other's still in school. At Yale. My father's a judge. Judge Drake of Jackson" (54). Temple's redundant assertion that her "father is a judge" is certainly intended as a warning and a protective invocation to ensure her well-being and safeguard her virginity when she realizes she is outside the context wherein southern men can be expected to act like gentlemen. And while such a statement may have protected her in the context of her elite society, in the country, in the midst

of outlaws, it is an empty statement. Temple can recite her father's position as a protective spell all she wants, but Ruby knows it will do her no good at the hideout. Temple seems to understand the statement's lack of power as she moves farther and farther away from her social circles, since she does not use the declaration of her father's position in the Memphis brothel, where it has no bearing whatsoever.

Temple's naïveté of the world at large is proven by how long she clings to the illusion of protection she thinks she invokes with her father's position, but Ruby seems to see straight through Temple's gender performance even if Temple herself cannot. Ruby understands in Temple's admission of "slipping out at night" that Temple is a risk-taker in her *own* social circles who has gotten in over her head with the drunkard Gowan (57). And Ruby knows her "sort":

Honest women. Too good to have anything to do with common people. You'll slip out at night with the kids, but just let a man come along... Take all you can get, and give nothing. "I'm a pure girl; I don't do that." You'll slip out with the kids and burn their gasoline and eat their food, but just let a man so much as look at you and you faint away because your father the judge and your four brothers might not like it. But just let you get into a jam, then who do you come crying to? to us, the ones that are not good enough to lace the judge's almighty shoes. (57-58)

Ruby astutely pinpoints the liminal line Temple is treading between being Daddy's little girl away at school and someone with a reputation for sneaking off campus and going out with town boys, but Ruby also knows what lies on the unconventional path—which is to be called, and treated, like a whore—which is why Temple's response that she "[has] been called that" only infuriates Ruby (58). For Temple to be called a whore and for Ruby to be called one are worlds

apart, almost literally, but especially because Ruby was actually prostituting herself while Temple has not only never had sex for money but she is still a virgin, the archetypal opposite of whore. Ruby knows what will happen to Temple if she exposes herself for too long to the masculine dangers of the Old Frenchman Place; and Ruby resents the threat it poses to her own standing as Lee's girl, since he seems just as enthralled with Temple as most of the other men. Despite her anger, Ruby is almost a mother figure, admonishing Temple's naughtiness when she tells her "you get away from here and dont you ever come back" (62). However, despite Ruby's attempts to help hide Temple and get her a way home, Temple falls victim to Popeye's deviance when he both sexually assaults her and then rapes her after he murders Tommy, significantly shattering any hope she had for her elite white pedigree to protect her on the plantation.

Donald A. Petesch, in "Temple Drake: Faulkner's Mirror for the Social Order," notes that "looks and gestures do not retain their significance at The Old Frenchman Place. Temple Drake's use of them becomes grotesque and exaggerated, her responses a self-parody" (40). What may have come off as a coy performance in Oxford becomes unintelligible when she "face[s] Popeye with a grimace of taut, toothed coquetry" (48). This repetitive gender performance that usually gets her what she wants from the men she is used to being around does not produce the same results when she attempts to wield it on Popeye. However, stranded outside of her usual context, Temple resorts to habits that provide her comfort, almost as if she is conducting a ritual, when she behaves as she would getting ready for bed in her dorm room rather than a ramshackle bootleggers' hideout:

She removed her slippers and set them on the bed and got in beneath the quilt...she sat up and removed the hat and shook her hair out and laid the hat with the other garments and prepared to lie down again. Again she paused. She opened

the raincoat and produced a compact from somewhere and, watching her motions in the tiny mirror, she spread and fluffed her hair with her fingers and powdered her face and replaced the compact. (71)

Temple performs actions in this scene that she has no doubt repeated a thousand times before, as if the feminine act of primping and powdering will somehow protect her from the masculine threat posed by the men lurking around the Old Frenchman Place. We know that no such thing is possible, but by repeating actions that accentuate her gender in her own society, where she feels it is protected by elite honor, Temple seems to be trying to find comfort in that normativity.

To put it in Butlerian terms, Temple is attempting to “ground” her “abiding gendered self” in “repeated acts that seek to approximate the ideal of substantial ground of identity” (179.) However, Butler emphasizes that the interruption, the “*discontinuity*,” of such acts proves the illusion of such grounding (179). We as readers, as spectators to Temple’s performance, must realize the “possibilities of gender transformation” that “are to be found precisely in the arbitrary relations between such acts, in the possibility of a failure to repeat, a de-formity [...] that exposes the phantasmatic effect of abiding identity as a...tenuous construction” (179). Just because she can perform gestures successfully in one “social temporality” does not mean Temple can do so in another (Butler 179). The breakdown of the meaning of familiar gestures, such as flashing her legs, coy expressions, or primping in the mirror, prove that there is no “abiding identity” afforded to her that allows her to function identically in multiple contexts and, hence, that very discontinuity demands that she transform her performance.

The disruption of Temple’s normativity, or perhaps what we could call a “de-formity” of her repetitive normative gestures, continues her gender transformation as Popeye kidnaps her away to Memphis. In the car, after what we could certainly argue is a “reasonable” reaction to

the trauma of harassment, rape and kidnapping, wherein Temple starts to scream, Popeye intervenes and “de-forms” her reaction so that “she sat motionless, her mouth round and open like a small empty cave,” in a frightening perversion of her grimace of coquetry from earlier (138). As if he understands a return to familiar acts might stabilize Temple, Popeye commands her to look in the mirror, and we witness her instant retreat to her conventional gender performance of primping:⁵²

She looked at her image, at the uptilted hat and her matted hair and her round mouth. She began to fumble at her coat pockets, looking at her reflection. He released her and she produced the compact and opened it and peered into the mirror, whimpering a little. She powdered her face and rouged her mouth and straightened her hat, whimpering in the tiny mirror on her lap. (138)

Not only has Popeye ravaged her physically; he has done irrevocable damage to the normative gestures Temple is accustomed to performing. Primping in the car mirror can in no way restore her stability after the physical trauma she’s experienced at his hands, but it seems to calm her. Several critics take this instance as an opportunity to criticize Temple’s failure to flee from Popeye at the pit stop, and some even emphasize her inaction within the situation as an act of compliance. Petesch asserts that “Popeye’s appeal to her vanity, to her sense of shame, keeps Temple from making an attempt to escape” so that “she hides from fear of being seen” (41). However, Joseph R. Urgo’s article “Temple Drake’s Truthful Perjury: Rethinking Faulkner’s *Sanctuary*” is one of the few to attempt to justify her actions, or lack thereof, when she has a chance to escape from Popeye on the way to Memphis. Urgo refers to the scene where Temple “escapes” from the car but Popeye finds her hiding behind a barrel. Many readers and critics

⁵² In her article “Machines and Machinations: Controlling Desires in Faulkner’s *Sanctuary*,” Amy Lowell Strong calls this act “a ritual that once held self-affirmation” for Temple (73).

have wondered why she did not take that opportunity to get away. Temple's excuse is that she saw a school friend and hid because she was ashamed of her condition. Urgo suggests that there was no schoolboy and "that this was a simple, frantic effort to get away from her captor, foiled by the mechanic who assumed she was just Popeye's girl" (439). However, Urgo's argument is not supported by any actual textual evidence, and even his sympathetic and new interpretation of the scene *still* assumes that a rape victim should try to get away from her abuser.

Clearly, the reason we immediately ask why Temple didn't run away from Popeye at the pit stop is because we *expect* her to; any "normal" woman who has been brutalized and raped would surely *try* to get away from her rapist. To attempt to flee rapist and kidnapper is expected and therefore understandable; so Temple's actions are intelligible when she runs away from the car while Popeye is in the store. What renders Temple unintelligible is why she stops and returns to the car. Why doesn't she call out? Why doesn't she run into the store? Why doesn't she just scream? Those would all be understandable reactions to her situation. *Not* doing any of those things, or countless other possibilities, is mystifying unless we consider that Temple stops running because she is so disoriented from her assaults that she fails to understand what she should do. Temple seems to be experiencing an extreme episode of the "situation of duress under which gender performance is always and variously occurs," according to Butler (177). Because her rape and kidnapping have put her under such duress, Temple can no longer repeat the gestures and actions that would be expected of such a victim. A proper Southern Belle would never even go to the Old Frenchman Place, much less spend the night there, vulnerable to the kind of dangers Temple has experienced. She has already broken so many rules of the elite gender codes she is accustomed to that she seems to lose the will to run away. As if her usual gender role as elite white co-ed has been obliterated, Temple abandons any reasonable or

expected behavior and gets back in the car with Popeye, to be whisked off to the even seedier underbelly of Memphis where being held captive and sexually misused by Popeye will force Temple to adapt her gender performance in order to survive. Perhaps no other instance in the novel better illustrates the disruption of Temple's normativity than the scene in which she narrates her ordeal to Horace Benbow, months after she's been kidnapped, and relates her subversions of gender norms in her own words.

Temple's monologue to Horace is a scene of great interest to critics, some of whom recognize Temple's *performance* therein, such as Matthews, who calls the monologue her "own rehearsal of her experience" ("Elliptical Nature" 258). Horace himself detects something of the performer in Temple as she begins her monologue in a passage that reads: "she went on like that, in one of those bright, chatty monologues which women can carry on when they realize that they have the center of the stage" so that "suddenly, Horace realized that she was recounting the experience with actual pride, a sort of naive and impersonal vanity, as though she were making it up" (216). However misogynistic it may seem, in actuality, Horace's evaluation of Temple is insightful; she *is* on stage, he is her audience, and she *is* "making it up." Roberts claims that Temple's monologue is "often taken as a 'mere' fiction. But it is a fiction she makes trying to save her life" (137). As a "strategy of survival," Temple has adapted her gender performance to survive in Miss Reba's brothel as Popeye's prisoner, so perhaps she is beginning to recognize the incarnations of her gender as performative (Butler 178). Horace notices that "the night she had spent in the ruined house" *before* being raped, which she refers to as "comparative inviolation," "was the only part of the whole experience which appeared to have left any impression on her at

all” (215).⁵³ *How* Temple relates her memories of that night marks a complete disruption of her accustomed code of gender. Temple seems to have constructed a performative fantasy of her memories that helps her cope with the trauma of her experiences. In fact, Roberts suggests that Temple’s story is “an attempt to take control through the making of her own fiction,” but at least she *does* get to tell that story, which is more than Caddy, at least, is afforded (125). In the same vein, Homer Pettey, in “Reading and Raping in *Sanctuary*,” suggests that Temple “transcribes herself as a multi-faceted text; she is reading back into the events and producing her own text” (81). For Temple’s interaction with Horace, what went through her mind that night is less important than how she relates it to him *after* the complete disruption of her normative gender codes. What remains most relevant is the agency Temple exercises through the reconfiguration of her normative gender performance in her monologue because, as Butler relates,

the source of personal and political agency comes not from within the individual, but in and through the complex cultural exchanges among bodies in which identity itself is ever-shifting, indeed, where identity itself is constructed, disintegrated, and recirculated only within the context of a dynamic field of cultural relations. (161-162)

Temple seems to understand that it is through the construction, disintegration and recirculation of their shared complex cultural exchanges that she can express to him the extent to which her normativity has been disrupted.

Temple tells Horace “I was looking at my legs and I’d try to make like I was a boy. I was thinking about if I just was a boy and then I tried to make myself into one by thinking”; “I’d

⁵³ And in fact, Urgo believes to Temple it *is* the instance of her true violation. He argues that “we must remember that she considered her night in Goodwin’s spare bedroom as worse than the experience of her actual rape, which occurred the next morning” (439).

think I had and how I'd go out and show them" (216, 217). Presumably, Temple is relating that she attempted to materialize a penis. When that doesn't "work," Temple imagines "fastening [her]self up some way," referencing a chastity belt, retreating from the phallic back to her own genitalia, as if the disruptive opportunity afforded her is the freedom to vacillate between these two signifiers of sex. The next manifestation she relates, of modifying the chastity belt, "thinking maybe it would have long sharp spikes on it and he [Popeye] wouldn't know it until too late" allows her to repeat a phallic performance in order to imagine she would "jab it into him," "jab it all the way through him" (218). By disrupting her *feminine* performance, Temple is able to move past just imagining a *masculine* appendage, but she also imagines returning the violence that is being visited on her. She is trying to subvert her role as victim by being the aggressor. Moving even further away from normative feminine codes, Temple relates *inviting* the violence and rape she should fear, which may foreshadow her affinity with Popeye, when she relates how she silently yelled at Popeye "come on. Touch me. Touch me! You're a coward if you don't. Coward! Coward!" (218). As Linda Dunleavy observes, Temple imagines "appropriating objects that will give her phallic power, making her not the victim of rape but the rapist" (178). She imagines performing as the aggressor rather than the victim in a situation where the former is assumed masculine and the latter feminine, in order to deal with the trauma of what happened to her. She subverts those *normative* assumptions to fight being a victim, to retain some kind of individual agency. Furthermore, this sudden appropriation of the masculine and aggression aligns the moments when he first assaulted her with the moment of telling—months later in a brothel.

In her monologue, Temple retreats again to the feminine, though, imagining herself dead, "all in white" and in "a veil like a bride," but that seems to rob her of agency and amplify the

horror of her rape with the imagined “shucks in the coffin,” so she repeats a position of power, still feminine, by imagining herself a teacher and Popeye a little black student (219). Temple attempts to gain agency again by imagining herself an older woman, “forty-five years old” with “iron-gray hair and spectacles” in a “gray-tailored suit,” but it is not until she returns to imagining being a man again, “an old man, with a long white beard,” that she regains any agency, and “the little black man got littler and littler” (219, 220). She recalls clearly imagining “I’m a man now;” “I thought about being a man, and as soon as I thought it, it happened. It made a kind of plopping sound, like blowing a little rubber tube wrong-side outward” (220). It may seem problematic that in order for Temple, as a *woman*, to gain agency in this situation, she must resort to the masculine, but it is not my intention to suggest that in order to survive as a woman, she should be more like a man. Deborah Clarke perceives Temple’s “litany of imaginative fantasies” as “designed to obliterate her gender” because of the “desire to erase one’s femininity in the face of sexual abuse” (64, 66). Very simply, in the scenarios Temple *remembers*, she performs as both a woman and a man, and in her imagination, the most effective way to protect herself as a woman, to protect her virginity and purity, those things upheld by the normative regulatory practices under which she is supposed to be operating, becomes the physical manifestation of *not* being a woman, of having a penis in order to survive. And that transformation not only allowed her to survive her trauma but also to adapt to the upheaval in her local situation in the aftermath of rape. Temple’s monologue reveals gender subversion as a survival strategy for her to survive rape, abduction and captivity. Because the rape was a violation of both her gender and her body, Temple imagines transforming gender performances in order to transform her sex. While she cannot literally alter her biological sex, she can relate to Horace a series of visualizations wherein her body was not violated because she was no longer

female or feminine, and thus not threatened by the sexual assault of a male or his masculinity. Any relative normativity becomes irrelevant in the face of survival, and, in fact, Temple's seeming "obliterat[ion]" of her gender is precisely the kind of disruption Butler sees as opportunistic. Relating her monologue to Horace is the ultimate catharsis for Temple, since, after he leaves, she seems to be a changed woman. She is no longer the same girl Popeye assaulted in that bedroom at the Old Frenchman Place; she is now a survivor, albeit a somewhat abject one, living outside the parameters of anything she understands as conventional, who, despite being a prisoner, seems to wield a bit of agency in her relationships with Red, whom she *seems* to have genuine feelings for, and Popeye, of whom she is no longer so terrified. Telling Horace about her experience, whether completely fabricated or not, has altered her gender performance; she has established a pattern of disruption, discontinuity, de-formity, and perversion that propels her into the following scenes and informs how she reacts to and performs for Popeye.

When Temple goes to the speakeasy with Popeye, she enacts a whole new performance, much like her self-presentation to Horace, with the authority of both masculinity and femininity. As Matthews puts it, "Temple Drake tries to make the trap itself the key to freedom" as she begins to use Popeye's demeanor *against* Popeye himself (44).⁵⁴ As she performs for and with Popeye, she seems to adopt some of his own masculine performance. Reminiscent of the pattern of her monologue fantasies, Temple perceives the power in the masculinity available to her and chooses to adapt that power to her performative strategy, since, as Matthews observes, "to enjoy the only kind of power Temple can imagine, she requires male menace" (44). Despite her initial defiance, Temple seems to warm to Popeye, "putting her hand on his arm" and calling him "daddy" (231). These are certainly unusual actions for a rape and kidnap victim to perform

⁵⁴ In *Seeing Through the South*.

toward her rapist, not to mention the deviant association of father with rapist, but they suggest a relation springing up between Temple and Popeye; furthermore, the insinuation of family she presents by calling him “daddy” expresses not only a bond greater than just the physical, but it also suggests that Temple has exposed how the codes of her original society, in which her “father is a judge,” failed to protect her white elite femininity.⁵⁵

Temple seems to perform Popeye himself when she visits the washroom at the speakeasy before resorting back to a very normative repetition of primping:

“Shucks,” she said, “it didn’t leave a mark, even;” drawing the flesh this way and that. “Little runt,” she said, peering at her reflection. She added a phrase, glibly obscene, with a detached parrotlike effect. She painted her mouth again. (233)

In a creepy way, Temple channels Popeye here, as we can almost imagine her putting on a voice to speak to herself in the mirror. Truly, the “detached parrotlike” description of her “glibly obscene” phrase certainly seems like she could be mimicking Popeye. Moreover, the way she “painted her mouth again” seems abruptly feminine in the wake of her bizarre behavior in front of the mirror, as if she were using the feminine act of putting on lipstick in order to interrupt her masculine Popeye-like performance.

The interruption of Temple’s normative gender performance allows her a kind of subversive alliance with Popeye, whom we know to be unconventional in his *sexual* performance. And, while it is beyond the scope of this project to analyze Popeye’s gender performance, Popeye’s impotent voyeurism (not to mention his status as rapist) is atypical, if not abject, and being so relegates him to the fringe, to which Temple has also been relegated, the

⁵⁵ See Petesch and Duvall for more in depth, psychoanalytical readings of the incestuous suggestions of Temple calling Popeye “daddy.”

periphery of the heterosexual matrix of their society.⁵⁶ Furthermore, as Butler argues, “‘intelligible’ genders are those which in some sense institute and maintain relations of coherence and continuity among sex, gender, sexual practice and desire” *and* because neither Temple nor Popeye have maintained those relations normatively, they are allied in their *unintelligibility* (23). Thus, Temple *and* Popeye become fellow members of a group of what Butler calls “those ‘incoherent’ or ‘discontinuous’ gendered beings” “who fail to conform to the gendered norms of cultural intelligibility” (23). While their unintelligibility might render them “developmental failures or logical impossibilities” within the domain of normative heterosexual society, it is in what Butler labels the “persistence and proliferation” of such performative anomalies like Popeye and Temple that the “critical *opportunities* to expose the limits and regulatory aims of...intelligibility and...open up...subversive matrices of gender disorder” (24). Certainly, it is arguably “subversive” for a rape victim to feel a kinship with her rapist, but that is what occurs between Temple and Popeye; and it is that kinship of unintelligibility that can help us understand why Temple lies in court *in favor* of Popeye, the *actual* murderer and rapist. In doing so, not only does Temple expose the failings of the dominant white regime of masculinity but she also proves intelligibility only exists because it is established by social norms. Horace thinks her better off dead because he cannot fathom how she can survive such an ordeal, but she has survived intact even if it means she had to defy all her society’s conventions.

However, we must question *what* critical opportunities such gender disorder presents, and I think the answer is right in front of us: Faulkner has managed to bring Temple Drake 180 degrees, from victim to aggressor, in her appropriation of Popeye’s performance, and the

⁵⁶ For extensive discussions into how Popeye is coded both sexually and racially in ways that situate him outside of normative social conventions, see Charmaine Eddy’s “The Policing and Proliferation of Desire: Gender and the Homosocial in Faulkner’s *Sanctuary*,” John Duvall’s *Race and White Identity in Southern Fiction*, and Deborah Barker’s “Moonshine and Magnolias: *The Story of Temple Drake* and *The Birth of a Nation*.”

distance Temple has traversed over the course of the novel is exceptional for an early modern female character. Not only has she adapted her gender performance to survive a series of horrendous events only to model the perpetrator of those events, but she will also manage to lie so convincingly to the white elite regime that an innocent man, one with whom she feels no such association, will be lynched. This is by no means a moral victory, but as disruptive gender performance, she has accomplished a kind of mastery.

The overwhelming question at the end of the novel is, of course, “why does Temple perjure herself on the stand during trial?” After all the abuses she experienced at the hands of Popeye, why would she not indict him, but choose instead to incriminate an innocent man? Temple’s perjury is pivotal in the wrongful conviction of Lee Goodwin for Popeye’s crime, but it is also the key to how she subverts the white male power that controls her society. Amy Lovell Strong, in “Machines and Machinations: Controlling Desires in Faulkner's *Sanctuary*,” asserts that “men use the courtroom as an official mechanism to define, construct, and consequently circumscribe women’s sexuality,” and Temple once again finds herself an unwilling captive (79). John Duvall, as well, considers how the courtroom “functions as a male space,” one which “foregrounds the silencing of women by patriarchy and makes of the law a silent partner in the father’s desire to control his daughter’s desire” (75, 76). The courtroom scene is dominated by men and the normative codes of their patriarchal influence on the situation: the lawyers, the jury, the judge, her father and her brothers all present a stifling male presence, as if their masculinity will reinforce any potential disorder. This situation threatens any agency Temple gained through her gender transformation in Memphis. The empowerment Temple may have realized through her non-normative gender performance in order to survive rape, abduction, and captivity at the hands of a violent criminal seems to crumble in the presence of such heavy masculinity as the

courtroom imposes. However, perhaps in her perjury, we can detect one final grasp at the power Temple has discovered in masculine performance.

The entire trial scene seems a staged performance, one in which Temple performs her gender as adequately as can be expected by the normative codes of the patriarchy rampant in the courtroom. From the grandstanding of the prosecuting attorney to the *deus ex machina* of Judge Drake to save his daughter from infamy, we seem to be witnessing a stage play. Furthermore, Temple resembles a made-up actress on stage: “her face was quite pale, the two spots of rouge like paper discs pasted on her cheek bones, her mouth painted into a savage and perfect bow, like something both symbolical and cryptic cut carefully from purple paper and pasted there” (284). Temple appears “in an attitude at once detached and cringing, her gaze fixed on something at the back of the room,” and while many read this scene as the deflation of Temple’s previous performance, I would draw your attention to the word “attitude” in this quotation (284). How can we do otherwise than interpret this scene in the courtroom as just another of Temple’s performances? We can imagine that Temple’s changed demeanor may simply be Temple playing the part of the victimized rich white girl, but there is one aspect of her gender transformation she cannot neglect, and that is what allows her to lie about Popeye on the stand.

Despite the perversion of their kinship, even *because* of it, Temple cannot betray Popeye because he is one of the few who exists in that abject periphery with which she has come to identify herself. In him, Temple detects kindred gender disruption, and, therefore, to indict Popeye as guilty of the crimes of rape and murder would be a kind of betrayal of an association that, despite its horror, has afforded her more agency than the white elite society in which she grew up. Just as she fantasized herself as the aggressor in the version of events she related to Horace, she has disrupted her gender performance to the extent that she cannot entirely revert to

the rules of her society's normativity. It is a twisted Catch-22; if her own gender performance had not been disrupted in the way it was, as a result of the rape she experienced, she wouldn't have achieved the agency that allowed her to survive the aftermath and trauma of that same rape. But that same agency, and the gender transformation it entails, allies her with her rapist. Temple lies in court to survive, but to survive with some agency of her gender transformation intact, even if what remains intact is related to the rapist that she is protecting.⁵⁷ In the disruption of her gender performance, Temple has discovered the cracks in her conventional southern femininity that allow for agency to break through, but she seems to have also identified the power of masculine performance in her society and the limitations of masculine power to project effective social norms outside the microcosm of white male society, represented here by the courtroom itself. Thus, Temple, who has been quiet and puppet-like in this context dominated by masculinity, finds a way to wield feminine power in language, and, according to Matthews, "Temple's grasp of formerly masculine power corresponds to the endangerment of all sorts of traditional authority" (43). Despite it being covert and false, Temple's lie exercises power; she uses the patriarchy's language and law against them to protect the man who, despite being her abuser, initiated her into the potential of gender disruption in order to achieve an agency that seems all the more significant because it was accomplished outside the shelter of her traditional society, suggesting that there is more power to be found—for white elite women in the South, at least—by transgressing the norms rather than following them.

Of the end of the novel, Matthews points out "the closing scene [...] exudes the restoration of privilege, paternal control, indifference. Families like the Drakes seem to have

⁵⁷ Incidentally, we will encounter the inverse of this courtroom lie in *Requiem for a Nun*, when Temple confesses her transgressions supposedly to save Nancy Mannigoe from the death penalty, but her motives are more selfish than just Nancy's salvation.

righted themselves yet again” (50). The setting is solemn and subdued, and it is not hard to imagine that Judge Drake has subdued Temple back to the conventions of white elite southern femininity. He has taken her nearly as far from the incidence of her non-normativity as he can, to, as Polk calls it, “a setting culturally at odds with the rest of the novel’s location in the rural and unsophisticated North Mississippi and in Memphis, Tennessee” (*Faulkner and Welty* 32). However, despite its luxury and reputation as the “very symbol of Western culture,” Paris in 1929 was “a loose, unstable confederation of French citizens with even looser morals, folks broken and resourceless after the war... a licentious city defined by the baser appetites it catered to” (Polk 32-33). If it was Judge Drake’s intention to distance Temple from licentiousness, he chose the wrong destination. While Polk merely qualifies this detail as “oddly out of joint” with the rest of the novel, perhaps the reputation of Paris in 1929 reflects Temple’s own tarnished reputation (33). Certainly, the tone of this scene is not subtle: it is a “gray day, a gray summer, a gray year”; “the sad gloom [...] had that quality of autumn, gallant and evanescent and forlorn” (316). There is the suggestion that something has been lost, something has lost its bloom, perhaps Temple’s innocence or her gender normativity, and that it is something to be mourned. However, Temple’s yawn and automatic gestures using her compact hint at a certain ennui that seems unusual from one recovering from such traumatic events. Just as she resorted to using her compact during her terrifying sleepover at Old Frenchman’s bend as a totem of normativity, Temple’s use of it in the Luxembourg gardens suggests she is putting back on her normative “face” for the public. Though Temple doesn’t say a word, she seems almost to be biding her time for the next disruption in her normativity, as if she knows to play the role of a proper young woman under the watchful eyes, those “dead tranquil queens in stained marble,” representations of genuine feminine power (317). Unlike the foreclosure of Caddy and Addie, Temple has

“survived” the atrocities Faulkner submitted her to intact and perhaps even with a greater knowledge of the intricacies of her own feminine gender performance. However, when we encounter her in *Requiem for a Nun*, Temple has once again disrupted her normative context with adultery and lies, and she is yet again a victim of atrocities that eventually foreclose her tenure as non-normative in Faulkner’s fiction.

V. SISTERS IN SIN

In *Requiem for a Nun*, published two decades after the first appearance of Temple Drake, Faulkner introduces us to Temple's life as Mrs. Gowan Stevens eight years after the events of *Sanctuary*, in a work that Susan Donaldson, in "Reimagining the Femme Fatale: *Requiem for a Nun* and the Lessons of Film Noir," describes as a "curious half-novel, half-detective film screenplay" (1). Despite the familiar characters, the form of *Requiem for a Nun* is puzzling to say the least: a "hybrid of narrative prose and dramatic dialogue," the former of which "recount[s] the phased history of Yoknapatawpha in the most chronological version Faulkner ever attempted" (Matthews 237). Phillip Weinstein refers to these long chapters as the "outer narrative" that "surrounds Temple's story as a sort of mythic becoming," but it is the dramatic scenes involving Temple that are most pertinent here, as it only seems appropriate that a project concerned with gender *performance* would find its encore character in a play (151).

The reappearance of characters in different works is certainly not uncommon among Faulkner's works. Consider Quentin Compson in both *The Sound and the Fury* and *Absalom, Absalom!*, the Snopes trilogy, or the whole of *Go Down, Moses*. Therefore, it is not surprising to find the author returning to one of his most infamous characters twenty years later, but what *may* be surprising, especially considering the list above, is that that character would be a woman. Barbara Ladd, in "'Philosophers and Other Gynecologists': Women and Polity in *Requiem for a Nun*," notes that what immediately differentiates *Requiem* from Faulkner's other works is that it

is “unusual among [his] work for putting women at the very center of the conversation, not only as a topic for discussion but as speaking subjects in the public sphere,” and that certainly rings true for the works discussed previously (1): Caddy has no real voice though she is the center around which *The Sound and the Fury* revolves; Addie and Dewey Dell Bundren are both vocal and central to *As I Lay Dying* but not in the “public sphere”; and Temple, while she has a voice in *Sanctuary*, is more talked about than heard from, and when she does speak, she is usually filtered through the men around her. In *Requiem for a Nun*, though, Temple and Nancy speak their own lines, despite Gavin’s obvious attempts to “translate” them. They voice their own lines often without the imposition of male narration, thus showing how, as Kelly Lynch Reames emphasizes in “‘Sisters in Sin’: Discourse, Discipline, and Difference in *Requiem for a Nun*,” “two disempowered women can change their lives through language” (29); however, I would argue that Temple and Nancy’s lives are changed just as fundamentally through their actions in the novel. Temple survived the tribulation of *Sanctuary* to achieve the normative, white, upper class femininity her marriage has allowed her in *Requiem for a Nun*. Similarly, Nancy survived a life of poverty and unfortunate circumstances, some of which are revealed in “That Evening Sun,” in order to be the nursemaid to Temple’s children and her “sister in sin” (137).

However, the bond suggested by “sisters” is misleading about the relationship between Temple Drake Stevens and Nancy Mannigoe. Despite their similarly sexualized backgrounds (“in sin”), there is no evidence of a reciprocal friendship between Temple and Nancy. Temple claims that Nancy, the “ex-dope-fiend nigger whore was the only animal in Jefferson that spoke Temple Drake’s language,” but there is no indication Temple ever listened to Nancy (136). What Temple wanted was just “somebody to talk to” (137); she never seemed to care whether Nancy spoke back or not. The Temple Drake who survived rape, kidnapping, and imprisonment in

Sanctuary and the Nancy Mannigoe who had her “face lying in the gutter, spitting blood and teeth” in “That Evening Sun” are not the same women we find in *Requiem for a Nun* (106). They have been restored to a level of relative normativity through roles in which they can both be perceived intelligibly wherein Temple is an upper class wife and mother, and Nancy is her children’s mammy, a normative domestic position for African American women from the elite white viewpoint. However, Temple and Nancy render themselves unintelligible through their non-normative performances of their conventional roles: as a mother who commits the opposite of self-sacrifice by abandoning her child(ren) to play gangster and as a mammy who murders her charge to prevent that abandonment from happening.

For all intents and purposes, *Requiem for a Nun* functions as a sequel to *Sanctuary*. When we last saw Temple, Judge Drake seemed to have his daughter well in hand, as they attempted to forget her scandal by touring the lovely Luxembourg Gardens in Paris. While we certainly may not have expected to find her married to the same Gowan Stevens who couldn’t handle his liquor and abandoned her to the deranged hands of Popeye at the Old Frenchman Place, there is little about the closing scene of *Sanctuary* to suggest that Temple won’t rebound from her abuses in the underworld of Memphis. While Gowan Stevens may not seem like the hero of Temple’s restoration to normativity, in *Requiem for a Nun*, she seems to have publically recovered by marrying and starting a family with him. Temple has been relegated back into heteronormativity by the gender border control of the men in her life, namely her brothers and father at the end of *Sanctuary* and in *Requiem for a Nun* by her husband and his uncle, Gavin Stevens. In the later novel, though, Temple is once again the victim of a terrible tragedy, this time the murder of her daughter at the hands of Nancy Mannigoe.

Temple as the victim of another atrocious trauma once again provides the basis from which to analyze her gender performance; however, whereas the violence of the previous novel was visited on Temple by dangerous men, the violence in *Requiem for a Nun* occurs within a feminine network: a woman Temple trusts murders her daughter. As much as her rape is the catalyst for Temple's disruption in *Sanctuary*, the murder of her daughter is the impetus for a change in Temple's gender performance in *Requiem for a Nun*. Whereas her rape and the events that followed forced Temple to adopt a non-normative gender performance, the murder of her infant daughter will compel Temple to return to the patterns of white southern femininity she has deviated from once again. However, in *Sanctuary*, Temple chose non-normativity for survival, but in *Requiem*, she chooses it out of preference. Temple survived rape, kidnapping, and captivity in Memphis for months by adapting to an unconventional gender performance; eight years later, Temple is *choosing* to leave her well-to-do life for a man from the same Memphis criminal element. By making plans to abandon her family with the criminal Pete, she is choosing perversion, and it renders her unintelligible because we cannot understand such a choice outside the dangerous conditions she was subject to in Memphis.

The Temple of *Requiem for a Nun* seems much different from the Temple of *Sanctuary*, leading critics to discuss her as if she were two separate people. For Phillip Weinstein, in *Unknowing*, "second Temple accesses first Temple's body not as it was experienced in earlier moments of crisis, but from a distant temporal perspective" (155). Temple spends Act Two reexamining her past behavior and even referring to herself in the third person, and Reames claims that Temple has "divided her identity into two separate characters, Temple Drake and Mrs. Gowan Stevens," the former determined by "the language and narrative surrounding sexual acts in her past," making Temple Drake, identified as non-normative, categorized by her

sexuality, while Mrs. Gowan Stevens is qualified by her domesticity (30). Temple continues to perform her gender strategically based on her social context, just as we saw in *Sanctuary*; however now, it is as if Temple has figured out how to use it to her advantage based on desire rather than in desperation to withstand trauma. In the earlier novel, Temple had to adapt her gender performance in order to survive the myriad situations Popeye, and the other men of the novel, subjected her to. In *Requiem for a Nun*, she is performing the roles of wife and mother, which pale in excitement to her history as the mistress of a gangster in Memphis. Only in the latter, she is fully aware of her multiple performances, referring to herself in the third person as Temple Drake and Mrs. Gowan Stevens. Just as we witnessed changes in her gender performance to survive in Memphis in a context with which she wasn't familiar, we see her *performing* as Gowan's wife. As Reames iterates, "Temple's reaction to her predicament is to try to control her public identity by anticipating other people's interpretations of her behavior and then presenting a public self that leads to an interpretation she prefers" (30). Both Temples are performances. Over the course of two novels and as many decades, *Temple Drake*, defined by her socially perceived non-normativity, seems to have become a more preferable performance for the character we know as Temple. *Mrs. Gowan Stevens*, the role her society accepts as normative, is a performance with which she has the least experience. Lacking a mother figure herself and having been held captive in a brothel in Memphis, Temple's roles as wife and mother are alien to her. Furthermore, having fulfilled the white southern requisite of reproducing a son to carry on the family legacy, perhaps Temple sees her performance of Mrs. Stevens as strategically successful, and so gravitates back toward the performance she *prefers*—a socially peripheral role in which, nonetheless, she found agency—in her plans to elope with Pete. Despite the abuses she suffered in Memphis at the hands of Popeye, her survival of them enabled her to

expose the failings of the white patriarchy under which her honor and virtue were supposed to be protected. By exposing such shortcomings, Temple hijacked a degree of masculine power from her elite world and used it for her own gendered agenda to identify with Popeye and lie in court.

Whereas in *Sanctuary*, Temple's gender performance is more instinctual and in order to survive the situation at hand, the Temple of *Requiem for a Nun* is very aware of the role expected of her and how she should perform it. Temple Drake was a Southern Belle before the Old Frenchman Place, and, if the events at the end of *Sanctuary* tell us anything, it is that Temple is expected to fit back into her original upper class white society despite whatever occurred between her and Popeye and Red. Thus, she becomes Mrs. Stevens of *Requiem for a Nun*. Temple even goes so far as to denounce her former non-normative persona, avowing, "Temple Drake is dead" (80). However, when Pete showed up to blackmail Mrs. Gowan Stevens, it's almost as if he catalyzed a repeat performance of Temple Drake by reminding her of the letters she had written to Red—"the kind...you would...rather your husband didn't see...no matter what he thought about your past" (130). The collision of the two social spheres within which Temple has performed sparks something in her that rocks the family she has begun to its foundation.

One of the things caught up in this struggle between *Temple Drake* and *Mrs. Stevens* is desire. Temple *wants* to revert to a performance that allows her to shed the role of wife and mother. While all she seems to have for Gowan is obligation, Temple exhibits desire with Pete and, before him, his brother Red. However, we can ask the same question of Temple's behavior in both *Sanctuary* and *Requiem* regarding these men: how does Temple's desire function as an aspect of her gender performance strategy? The two do not need to be mutually exclusive. Because she employs her gender performance in order to survive, perhaps she sees in Pete, and

before him in Red, the opportunity to perform her desire as a means for escape.⁵⁸ Just as I have argued she adapted her gender as a survival strategy in *Sanctuary*, perhaps she also employed her sexuality with Red as an avenue to escape a situation that she did not belong in. However, when Popeye shut down that strategy by killing Red, Temple adapted and aligned herself with Popeye. Temple also uses a strategy of sexuality with Pete to attempt escape from her reestablished elite social context, as if, between the two, she would choose the culture in which she does not have to adhere so strenuously to the contradictory rules of femininity: a world in which when she desires something, or someone, she can pursue it, rather than demurely pretend like she does not want it. Her experiences in Memphis, which allowed her to develop gender performance strategies, may have been so unconventional that she will never again be satisfied with the normativity of her elite social environment. Temple's desire for Red did not achieve the escape she hoped it would, but she was returned to her conventional society regardless, only to want to escape again once it's traditional gender roles do not satisfy her desire. Temple turns a threat of blackmail into an opportunity and tries the same strategy of escape with Red's brother Pete. However, whereas in Memphis, Temple was motivated to escape by the belief that her survival was at stake, her motivation to escape her family is fueled by selfish desire. While the suspicious demeanor of her husband and his uncle seems to suggest Temple's indiscretion with Pete is inevitable because of her past, it is her performance as mother that renders her unintelligible when she rejects her children in order to run away with a criminal. Her willingness to abandon her children in order to also be rid of her marriage suggest that she has lost any commitment to the normativity of her original social context and/or that she wants out of her roles as wife and mother that desperately.

⁵⁸ What seems noteworthy here is that Temple is initiating *normative* desire, since her partnerships with Red and Pete are heterosexual, but *non-normative* performance regarding her deviation from the roles belle, wife, and mother.

Doreen Fowler, in “Reading for the ‘Other Side’: *Beloved* and *Requiem for a Nun*,” argues that Temple is “abdicating her role as mother” in her elopement, despite her plan to take her daughter with her (143). However, there is no evidence that Temple wants to take her daughter with her out of any maternal devotion. Nancy, who has already stolen the elopement money to try and stop Temple, confronts Temple about abandoning her family and tries to talk her out of leaving by appealing to her motherly instinct. However, if we entertain the idea that motherhood as normative is a social illusion and that in her affair with Pete, Temple has rejected her normative marriage for the thrill of a non-normative life on the run, it seems doubtful that any amount of pleading on Nancy’s part—that Temple’s son will never see her again or over the hardships of traveling with a six-month-old—will make any difference (160-161). The intensity with which Nancy tries to convince Temple not to leave her family, and the lengths to which Nancy goes to prevent it, suggest that there is nothing illusory about motherhood to Nancy. We must not forget the violence with which, as Leigh Anne Duck puts it, “her unborn child was beaten to death while still in her body” (229). However, because of that experience, we might expect Nancy to have developed an “intense sensitivity to the vulnerability of children,” but her actions seem to prove otherwise, unless Nancy kills Temple’s daughter to spare her a future of motherless suffering.

Temple’s commitment to leaving regardless of Nancy’s attempts to prevent her finally pushes Nancy too far. As the two women are fighting in Temple’s dressing room, having argued about Pete and the blackmail letters, “hitting and screaming”—Nancy tells Temple, “I’ve hushed” (163, 162). The stage directions read, “she [Nancy] doesn’t move. She is not looking at Temple. There is a slight change in her voice or manner, though we only realise later that she is not addressing Temple”; and then Nancy says, “I’ve tried. I’ve tried everything I know. You can

see that” (162). In retrospect, it is a chilling moment, as Nancy is either talking to God or indirectly to the baby in the next room. Regardless, Nancy dares Temple with the ultimatum that “if you can do it, you can say it,” to which Temple’s exasperated response of “children or no children!” finally pushes Nancy to infanticide (164). As Nancy leaves the room dejected, going to the nursery where we know she will smother the infant before returning Temple’s money, she mutters once again, “I tried everything I knowed. You can see that” (165). And she truly has tried everything she knew to keep Temple from leaving; thus, she resorts to the most unintelligible act we could expect from a baby’s nurse, *much less* a mammy: the murder of that baby. In the most horrific, and therefore effective, way possible, Nancy uses non-normativity to force Temple back into the appropriate space of her family. Nancy commits the most heinous act she can to ensure Temple’s performance becomes intelligible once again, proving that the potential opportunities Butler believes non-normative disruptions can present will not always be positive or liberating, and that, in fact, such disruptions often manage to reinforce the normative.

However blithely Temple seems willing to abandon the life she had established with Gowan, it is an entirely different matter when a member of her household murders her child. The young Temple of early *Sanctuary* seemed content to push the boundaries by flirting with town boys, but she probably never anticipated that doing so would eventually lead to her rape at the hands of a criminal in the dark corn crib of a bootleggers’ hideout. Similarly, Mrs. Gowan Stevens never imagines that leaving her seemingly unhappy marriage would result in the death of her infant daughter. Although Temple repeatedly refers to Nancy as a “nigger dope-fiend whore” whom she and Gowan “took out of the gutter to nurse [their] children,” Temple remarks that as “a human being too,” their employment of her would “give her another chance” (103). Temple struggles to bridge the gap between the “all-Mississippi debutante whose finishing school was

the Memphis sporting house” and her performance as the wife of Gowan Stevens (101). By hiring Nancy, “to have someone to talk to,” and not just *someone*, but a poor black former prostitute, Temple is attempting to mitigate the distance between her present and past through an association with a woman with a similarly scandalous history (105). Therefore, Temple invites Nancy Mannigoe into her life because “Temple Drake, the white woman...descendant of long lines of statesmen...couldn’t find anybody except a nigger dope-fiend whore that could speak her language” (105). The suggestion of a shared language suggests Temple has merely been “putting on” her elite white roles for her community throughout her marriage to Gowan, and that it is the “old” Temple, the *Temple Drake* of *Sanctuary* and Memphis that she feels to be an authentic performance of her gender. Temple has possibly welcomed Nancy into her life in an act of the same affinity with non-normativity that aligned her with Popeye in *Sanctuary*.

However, while it may be tempting to imagine Temple hiring Nancy out of some kind of fallen-woman solidarity, Temple does not seem to want a reciprocal relationship with Nancy.

She wants

Somebody to talk to, as we all seem to need, want, have to have, not to converse with you nor even agree with you, but just keep quiet and listen. Which is all that people really want, really need; I mean, to behave themselves...; the maladjustments...and the rest of anti-social enemies, are not really maladjustments but simply because the embryonic murderers and thieves didn’t have anybody to listen to them. (137)

Despite Temple’s insistence that they speak a similar language, Nancy does very little speaking. Since Nancy is that “somebody paid by the week just to listen,” Temple seems to be labeling herself the “maladjustment” in this scenario, which seems appropriate since she has probably

hired Nancy so that the children will be taken care of when Temple chooses a life outside the regulations of her social context and abandons them. Temple wants someone who can identify with her own non-normative experiences but who can also fulfill the most recognizable role a black woman could hold in white society, that of mammy.

When we meet Nancy Mannigoe in *Requiem for a Nun*, admittedly not her finest hour, she is not new to Yoknapatawpha County. She first appeared in the short story “That Evening Sun”—published in a 1931 collection, the very same year Faulkner introduced us to Temple Drake in *Sanctuary*—in which Nancy was employed to care for the Compson children while pregnant and in fear for her life⁵⁹. Nancy is already surrounded by controversy even in the short story, where her public efforts to get paid for sexual services rendered and the violence that followed are known to even her young charges. The rumors surrounding the young black woman are anything but flattering, and the details that are later elaborated on by Temple in *Requiem* paint a picture of a woman struggling just to survive in a world in which her race and gender seem to act as two strikes against her. She is pregnant but doesn’t know who the baby’s father is, despite being married; thus, she is performing non-normatively as both wife and mother.⁶⁰ She is hardly an effective guardian for the Compson children, as she insists on taking them home with her to protect *her* in some way from her abusive husband. The early Nancy we meet in “That Evening Sun” is terrified of violence being visited on her, fatalistic to a fault—“I aint nothing but a nigger” (293)—and even suicidal when imprisoned—“hanging from the window, stark naked, her belly already swelling a little, like a balloon” (291-292). But in *Requiem for a Nun*,

⁵⁹ The chronology of Faulkner’s creative events are interesting when we consider that he is rumored to have begun work on the ideas of *Requiem* in the mid-thirties, suggesting that he linked the lives of Temple Drake and Nancy Mannigoe long before the novel was published.

⁶⁰ In a way, Nancy’s situation in “That Evening Sun” foreshadows Temple’s own family life in *Requiem*, in which it is suggested that Gowan suspects Bucky may not be his son.

we encounter a different Nancy. Her station has been improved, but she cannot disentangle herself from violence. In this way, she seems to bookend her own saga, beginning in “That Evening Sun” by putting the children she is charged with protecting in danger. She is pregnant when we meet her, in fear for her own life and that of her unborn child’s and using the Compson children as shields against that potential violence; and then, in *Requiem for a Nun*, she willfully murders a baby and resigns herself to the end of her own life. But even the motivations for these two behaviors unusual for a black woman put in charge of white children illustrate a change in motivation as substantial as Temple’s from survival to desire. Whereas Nancy shielded herself with the Compson children in order to survive as a mother herself, she murders Temple’s infant daughter in an attempt to corral Temple’s gender performance back into its “proper” roles as wife and mother. What is perhaps most distressing is that in order to ensure Temple remains mother to at least one of her children, Nancy feels the need to kill the other, which relegates her to a space outside any acceptable social norms.

However, Nancy is no novice to crime, as we know that she has been a prostitute in the past. Because, as Deborah Clarke notes, “black women receive scant attention as anything other than stereotyped mammies or sex objects” in Faulkner’s fiction, it is scarcely surprising that Nancy Mannigoe bears a sexualized past. In “That Evening Sun,” she is a sex object, a “hypersexualized, manipulative and destructive” Jezebel, which Donaldson argues “contended for dominance of black female stereotypes with the figure of mammy,” the other role Nancy performs in *Requiem for a Nun* (7). Donaldson further claims, “in the South, the figure of the Jezebel tended to be paired as the defining underside of the white lady” (7); thus, Nancy enables

Temple's performance as the upper class Mrs. Stevens.⁶¹ That Nancy fails to successfully perform as a mammy should go without saying considering her murder of the infant. But in fact, it is difficult to identify any gender role in the text that Nancy performs normatively, which does not, of course, excuse the violence to which she has been victim, but neither does it excuse her as the perpetrator of violence. In the novel itself, Nancy's roles are mammy and convicted murderer. We know she has been a prostitute, which qualifies her as a Jezebel, and a domestic servant to at least one other family, but other than that, we know very little about Nancy. Temple claims Nancy "made her debut into the public life of her native city while lying in the gutter with a white man trying to kick her teeth or at least her voice back down her throat" (105)—a voice loudly yelling "'Where's my two dollars, white man?'" (106). When a woman's livelihood depends to an extent on her physical allure, as it does for prostitutes, having her teeth kicked in does not help her sell herself. Furthermore, a prostitute that doesn't get paid is *not* technically a prostitute and thus has no economic credibility *as* one. Nancy seems to have a track record of failing to fulfill even the few gender roles early twentieth century southern society would allow a black woman, which does not bode well for her performance as mammy.

It would not have been unusual for the Stevenses to have a black servant in their home; it is more Nancy's scandalous past that makes her a curious hire for the Stevens. However, because of her own tumultuous past, Temple specifically chooses Nancy. Mrs. Gowan Stevens might have been Nancy's employer, but Temple Drake seems to have found in Nancy someone to confide in, one-sided as it may be. What may be most non-normative about the arrangement is the idea of an authentic friendship, outside of the rules of employer/employee, between a white woman and a black woman in such a period stringent segregation of southern culture. Jacqueline

⁶¹ It could be argued, since she seems to portray herself as two different people, that Temple Drake, as a Jezebel, plays her own underside to her role as Mrs. Gowan Stevens.

Jones, in *Labor of Love, Labor of Sorrow*, makes the point that the majority of work for black women in the 1930s would still be as domestic servants to upper class white families; however Jones details how black women balanced their working lives and their own home lives, qualities we cannot apply to Nancy from what the text tells us (112). While we know from details that Nancy was not a live-in in the Stevens' home, the lack of specifics about Nancy's private life is problematic. Such a deficit implies that the only relevant part of her life is when she interacts with white society, just as Jones recounts that black servants were only included in white society *as workers*, and "no white people were ever privy" to the "day-off get-togethers" held by their black employees (5). Perhaps, Nancy's opportunities to live a heteronormative life within her racial community have been ruined by violence and hardship, incidences similar to those Temple suffered. However, Temple *has* been able to reestablish normativity within her community; therefore, perhaps Temple believes Nancy can establish herself normatively by mammying for the Stevenses, despite the events and performances of her past.

Kimberly Wallace-Stevens reports that "between the 1820s and the mid-twentieth century...the mammy became the most widely recognized representation of an African American woman" (2). Because she grew up in such a culture, and perhaps even had a mammy herself given her family's elite status, it is not surprising that Temple would hire one for her own children. It is problematic that Temple is not maternal but she expects a woman she has hired, supposedly for their similarities, to be maternal simply because of her race. Perhaps Temple, in light of her own reformed heteronormativity through her marriage to Gowan, hires Nancy to give the former prostitute the opportunity to regain legitimacy in the world of working-class black society. However, there is no evidence that Temple feels such urges for social reform. More likely, Temple is attempting to bestow on Nancy the only legitimate normative role a white

woman can fathom for a black woman with few enough job opportunities regardless of any scandal in her past: mammy. As Deborah Barker, in “Demystifying the Modern Mammy in *Requiem for a Nun*,” notes, “because Nancy’s past is not that of a stereotypical mammy, her employment can be seen as an act of progressive charity rather than traditional servitude” (11). However, Temple makes the southern, racist mistake of assuming that Nancy, because she is a woman, *and* perhaps because she is black, will perform maternally as a mammy. Barker also points out, “the easy acceptance of her past is based on the assumption that all black women are potential mammies, regardless of their background or training” (11). Temple’s expectations for Nancy to perform successfully as a mammy are both racist and oppressively heteronormative, as Temple seems to uphold the idea that “the maternal body for many white southerners was the black maternal body” (Barker 9). While Temple does not seem emotionally invested in the role herself, she still expects Nancy to play the “self-sacrificing mammy of the white family” (Barker 7). By adopting the racist assumption that Nancy can fulfill the role of mammy because she is black and a woman, despite every other detail about her being opposite to the qualities of a mammy Wallace-Sanders emphasizes, Temple performs the same paternalism toward Nancy that she resents the men in her life using to codify her.⁶² Whereas Temple herself has gone through multiple performative transformations because of situation and context, she does not seem to be able to identify the same in Nancy simply because the latter is racially different. Temple’s trust of Nancy to be a caring mammy toward her daughter reveals one way that race can mitigate perceptions of how gender will be, or *should* be, performed.

⁶² Those attributes, as listed in Chapter 1, are “her deeply sonorous and effortlessly soothing voice, her infinite patience, her raucous laugh, her self-deprecating wit, her implicit understanding and acceptance of her inferiority and her devotion to whites” (2).

Despite meeting her at the moment of her conviction in Act I, scene I of *Requiem* as the woman who “willfully and with malice aforethought kill[ed] and murder[ed] the infant child of Mr and Mrs Gowan Stevens in the town of Jefferson and the County of Yoknapatawpha,” the novel presents a relationship between Nancy and Temple that is more complex than just servant and employer but does not quite reach the stage of friendship (44). Reames identifies power in their relationship, “which arises out of similar experiences of misogynist violence and which their class and racial differences would ordinarily preclude” in order to offer “a potential source of resistance that is more powerful than either woman’s singular efforts” (30). Furthermore, employing Nancy allows Temple to perform as both Temple Drake and Mrs. Gowan Stevens at the same time, to seemingly straddle a gap between her own normative and non-normative gender performances. Reames notes that Temple is “committed to performing the Mrs. Gowan Stevens social identity” that “by definition precludes her sexuality” but that “Nancy enables Temple to maintain another subjectivity, one that allows her sexuality [and] seems to promise more freedom, because it seems to be less normalized” (34). Reames believes that subjectivity to *be* Temple Drake (as opposed to Mrs. Gowan Stevens), and that “Temple’s need to save Nancy is...her need to save herself; their identities and destinies have become enmeshed” (34). However, the idea the Temple *needs* to save Nancy suggests an emotional connection of which I do not believe Temple is even capable. Furthermore, the intrusion of Pete into this delicate balance tips the scales, encouraging Temple to abandon any sense of duty she may have felt toward Nancy in order to indulge a sexually charged performance to “reclaim the identity of Temple Drake” who will abandon her husband and child, “thereby fulfilling the role of ‘whore’” (Reames 41). In the arrangement of southern matron and mammy, Temple and Nancy both fail to maintain normative performances within the upper class white social context. However, if these

two women are bound by their non-normative performances, the bond may legitimize Nancy in a way that transcends race, as Reames claims their “social identities as ‘whores’ gives them an equality that would not otherwise exist in the relationship of a white woman and a black woman who works for her” (41). But Temple can survive the scandal of her sexualized trauma in order to reenter the heteronormativity of her society, because of her *whiteness*, which is not a privilege Nancy can exercise.

Much like Temple’s pin-balling gender performances from *Sanctuary* to *Requiem for a Nun*, we can recognize Nancy’s own gender performance transformation from Jezebel in “That Evening Sun” to mammy in *Requiem for a Nun*,⁶³ but unlike Temple, Nancy’s race does not allow her the fluidity to vacillate successfully between non-normative and normative. Her gender performance can only progress in one direction. Even Temple refers to Nancy as a “nigger dope-fiend whore,” attacking both her race and gender. Furthermore, if sexuality is coded as black in Faulkner, as previously discussed, black womanhood becomes defined by sexual performance, deviant or otherwise, making mammy one of the few socially acceptable roles for a black woman in white society, since it is completely divorced from sexuality specifically because the mammy does not birth the child(ren) she cares for. Therefore, Nancy, who has managed to surpass the sexualized black role of Jezebel in order to fulfill the legitimized racial role of mammy, might be distraught to discover that opportunity ending. When Temple’s plan to run away with Pete threatens the gender stability Nancy has managed to establish, it is possibly more than the woman can bear. Temple’s race and class afford her the ability, like Caddy Compson, to vacillate between non-normative to normative, allowances that Nancy does not have. Nancy’s race

⁶³ While Nancy does briefly watch the Compson children in “That Evening Sun,” she is merely a substitute for their regular mammy, Dilsey, and Nancy is pregnant with a baby whose paternity she does not know *and* she uses the children to protect herself instead of the other way around. Thus, her performance in the short story is more Jezebel than mammy.

demands that any change in her gender performance be unilaterally normative in order to avoid the most extreme of consequences, and she has already experienced terrible abuse as a prostitute having her teeth kicked in and her baby killed in the womb, which makes her commission of infanticide that much more puzzling. We can conjecture that Nancy's services as mammy would still be needed for the son Temple would leave behind, but since the murder of one of their children prompts Temple and Gowan to more protectively parent Bucky, perhaps the shock of abandonment would push Gowan to do the same.

The question that this all leads and contributes to is, of course, why did Nancy murder the infant she was supposed to be caring for? Polk urges us to consider "the possibility that Nancy is partially motivated by revenge: against Temple who has been no better morally than she yet who is reaping all the rewards of virtue—husband, family, and community standing" (201-202). However, it seems to be a popular view among critics that Nancy sacrifices herself in order to enforce the normative rules of Temple's society so that she may salvage her family and her normative southern femininity, but, in that way, Nancy simply becomes a tool for the very society that has relegated her to the periphery of the racially and sexually non-normative fringe⁶⁴. While I don't disagree with such views, what I find more useful is how such an interpretation exposes the limits of Butler's theory that the disruption of normative gender creates opportunities for progress. Nancy's violent disruption of her own performance as mammy not only fails to produce disruptive opportunity but shuts it down instead as her actions reinforce normativity and demand actual death. Reading Nancy as a martyr complicates any commitment she has to the normative performance of Temple as a mother. If Nancy invests so much in Temple's maternity,

⁶⁴ Reames argues that "Nancy sacrifices her own life and that of Temple's infant to ensure that Temple will stay with her family, will continue to enact her role as Mrs. Gowan Stevens" (39), and Roberts believes "this prostitute Nancy redeems the fallen Temple and salvages the white Stevens family with her death" (219).

why would she threaten it so severely by murdering Temple's daughter? In order to return to their normative roles, Temple must sacrifice her daughter, and Nancy must resign herself to execution. She was already somewhat scandalous as a "nigger dope-fiend whore" working for a well-to-do white family; however, white society would not consider a black woman as a nigger or a dope-fiend or a whore non-normative. But a mammy who kills a baby is unintelligible, specifically because it is possibly the only thing white society would not expect from her. Nancy is so alienated from white norms that murder is the only thing she can do to cause enough disruption to render Temple once again intelligible.

Nancy's murder of the infant interrupts the repetitive normative cycle of mother to daughter that we have seen in other works discussed in this project (*Caddy-to-Quentin*, *Addie-to-Dewey Dell*), but Temple's abandonment would have done the same, which makes the violent act seem that much more arbitrary. This is problematic for Butlerian performativity theory because it reveals that violence against women successfully disrupts normative gender performance but provides no opportunity. As if Nancy is some kind of desensitized angel of mercy, Reames argues that "she [Nancy] fulfills for Temple's daughter what may seem to her the inescapable, violent destiny of a woman, in which her life and Temple's have been cast" so that "her act reveals the devaluation of life that the violence in her own life has taught her" (38). This idea paints Nancy as a vehicle to enforce the male-driven agenda of controlling southern femininity through the most horrific means available: the murder of "an innocent white girl," "the crime for which," Barker points out, "black men were lynched" (2). Despite the literal outcome, Nancy's performance as a vehicle of punishment for transgressing gender boundaries suggests a misogyny in Nancy that doesn't correspond to her impulse to reinforce normative femininity. If Nancy so deeply values the preservation of Temple's family, there will never be a

valid explanation for murdering her baby (except for perhaps psychopathy). The simple truth remains that we do not know why Nancy killed Temple's baby daughter; we are not privy to her motivations, so any reasons we might entertain, including Reames's above, are merely conjecture. Despite Nancy's intelligibility in the racialized roles of Jezebel and mammy, she is incomprehensible as a murderer. Therein I find a possible missed opportunity to establish an authentic connection between Temple and Nancy with the potential to push the boundaries of race and class. However, Nancy's murder of the child may indicate a commentary on race that has more to do with Nancy herself than Temple or the relationship between the two of them.

Perhaps Nancy realizes Temple will never recognize her performance outside of the acceptable gender roles for black women in southern society. If Temple assumes Nancy can and will be a good mammy, simply because she is black, Nancy's murder of the child proves Temple racist and wrong. It is upon the symbolic reminder of another racist and classist role acceptable for black women that Nancy seems to decide to murder the child. When Temple attempts to pay her from the money stolen from Gowan, any potential connection between the two women, through shared experiences of oppression and violence because of their very gender, despite their differences of race and class, is shut down. Nancy is once again a prostitute standing in a gutter, just a black woman being used for services rendered, except that this time two dollars is not enough, neither is whatever amount Temple lays on the dresser. Perhaps Nancy, unwilling to face being treated like a prostitute, is driven to the extreme of rejecting the role of mammy in the most abhorrent way possible.

In her discussion of Dilsey as mammy in *The Sound and the Fury*, Wallace-Sanders argues that Dilsey's ailing health and the fact that she distances "her emotional life from the Compsons by the end of the novel" sound the "death knell of the mammy as the most

recognizable symbol of the mythic South” (125). However, two decades later, Faulkner gives us the mammy again in the character of Nancy Mannigoe. Wallace-Sanders also pays special attention to the erroneous belief that the black mammy “preferred white children to her own” (2). If we consider mammy as just another gender role to be performed, that assumption may certainly describe performed affection, which calls into question most conventional southern assumptions about mammies. It deflates not only the popular impression that the black mammy was trustworthy, devoted, and maternal but also the racist notion that black women were appropriate to fulfill the role because they possess those qualities. Once those illusions are dispelled, it becomes entirely possible for Nancy, as mammy, to murder an infant. Furthermore, perhaps Nancy’s crime is just another performance, one intended to dispel the very myth of the sweet maternal mammy. This interpretation carries the same issues of violence against women mentioned above; however, it provides Nancy an agency in attacking patriarchal and racist assumptions about black female performance, albeit through the awful action of murdering a child. While Nancy’s actions propel Temple back into her conventional family roles, perhaps they also signal to Temple, and her paternalistic society, that black women are much more complexly gendered than the narrowly sexualized, domestic, or maternal roles to which elite white society usually relegates them.

The truth is that we will never understand just why Nancy Mannigoe murdered an innocent infant in her crib, but what we do know is that that infanticide begins a chain reaction of gender performance by Temple that eventually ends in her relegation back to the normative. However, Nancy pays a mortal price. At the end of *Requiem for a Nun*, only one of the women can survive. The threat of resistance is already so outside the normative comfort zone for the men involved that they have declared the “evil” Temple Drake “dead” and Mrs. Gowan Stevens

reformed. Nancy Mannigoe is so far down the normative social scale that there is no chance she can be allowed to survive the scandal of *Requiem for a Nun*, especially considering her murder of an innocent child. Society *might* allow the reformation of a former prostitute and jezebel, but it cannot allow the murder of a white girl by any black person, male or female, and especially not by a mammy. Temple revisiting her past and “confessing her sins” is meant to earn her *own* pardon because both she and the men around her know it will not save Nancy. Nancy’s fate is sealed by the commission and conviction of her crime; the narrow normativity she is granted in white southern society will not survive the murder of an infant, no matter who speaks up for her. However, if Temple will once again perform her gender to the satisfaction of the gender border control around her, she can survive yet another horrendous situation. Ultimately, the normative gender performance Nancy drives Temple back to is less wife and more mother. She needs to return to her marriage and the life she lives with Gowan for her son, “to let the little boy learn with his own eyes that nothing, not even that, which could possibly enter that house, could harm him” (179). Nancy’s presence in the house brought Bucky no physical harm, but only because the violence was visited on Temple and her daughter, suggesting that the misogynistic possibility that sacrificing an infant girl for a wound white male is a fair trade. In this way, and in the tradition of the compulsory heterosexual matrix, women have suffered and even sacrificed themselves for the benefit of a white man or his child.

Temple’s past in Memphis presents a threat not only to the microcosm of the Stevens family, and perhaps even Yoknapatawpha County as a whole, but also to white heteronormativity in general. If Temple can adapt her performance to whatever situation she must in order to survive, what effect does that have on the gender border control of her society who enforce the rules of the elite white heterosexual matrix? Temple has already proven that one

can come back from such scandal and alienation; she was “saved” from her Memphis reputation by marriage and family. However, her attempted elopement with Pete threatens the fragility of her life when it proves that she is not afraid of returning to that sphere, that in fact she may *want* to. Thus, the men in her life lose a measure of control over her. If the power of the white patriarchy lies in maintaining control of its social system, Temple’s adaptability to people and performances outside her race and class threatens that power. Because of Nancy’s actions, regardless of her motivation, the white elite loses control over her as an intelligible and regulated woman. However, as a side effect of the loss of control over Nancy, they regain control of Temple.

Thus, she must confess that “Temple Drake liked evil,” confirming Jason Compson’s belief that all women are bad (117). For her to actually adapt her gender performance in ways successful to her survival is subversive for men like her father the judge and her husband and his uncle, whose very status and livelihood depend on Temple, and all other former Southern Belles like her, to perform as stable, regulated women within their society. Furthermore, the idea that she might *prefer* the non-normative is practically unthinkable and most assuredly threatening to the male-dominated society in which she is expected to function. Therefore, to the men around her, the only conclusion acceptable for Temple’s erratic performance is that it is a condition of her gender that she *likes* evil. A part of her wanted to be raped and kidnapped by Popeye in *Sanctuary*; a part of her wanted to stay in that brothel in Memphis being used pornographically by the gangster; a part of her loved Red, and that same part of her wanted to shed the normative life she was living with Gowan and flee into the fringe with Pete. Believing such allows the patriarchal society in which Temple performs to label her as disruptive rather than recognize her performance as a capacity to adapt. Allowing women such an ability presents dangerous

resistance to the contradictory and oppressive traditions of the southern patriarchy that keeps women “in their place” through the regulation of femininity with class and race. If Gowan and Gavin accept that Temple’s gender *is* a performance, that performativity does not only apply to the non-normative. Thus, her normativity becomes a performance as well, and one that she can, and *has*, change(d) according to her social context and, more dangerously, her desire.

Heteronormativity seems obsolete if a woman can adapt to a situation and strategize her gender performance without needing a man to rescue and take care of her. While the alternative may offer little of the security of hearth and home that her marriage provided, there is space in the non-normative, room to breathe, room for Temple to push the envelope of who she has been and who she is expected to be, where she does not have to *act* like the grieving mother or the devoted wife. Because despite what her male gender border control believes, Temple’s “confession” is just another tactic of her gender performance. Temple tells the men around her what they want to hear to gain their sympathy or trust or forgiveness. Instead of admitting that she did “what she had to do to survive,” which is somehow *worse* than liking evil, she reinforces the misogynist stereotype that women like evil and need to be regulated by society and those who wield power in it.

There is no end to the cycles enacted to regulate Temple Drake Stevens. The various interruptions of her gender performance have rendered her no lasting opportunities, only heartache and death. The loss of her daughter seems to have jumpstarted some kind of maternal obligation within Temple that drives her back to her normative performance as wife and mother “tomorrow and tomorrow and tomorrow” and “forever and forever and forever” (180).

Despite Temple Drake’s vast opportunities to realize potential with her disruptions of normative gender performance in *Sanctuary*, Faulkner once again forecloses such opportunity at

the end of *Requiem for a Nun*, much as he did with the quiet scene in the Luxembourg Gardens that ended the earlier novel. Temple's "Coming" as a response to Gowan's off-stage beckoning rings loudly as the vocal endorsement for the dutiful wife she has resigned herself to be and, as Fowler claims, "signifies her willingness to take her place in the social order" (148). Gone is the Temple to whom "something" was happening in *Sanctuary*; in fact, perhaps too much has happened for Temple to welcome any adventure further disruption might entail. Donaldson remarks that "it might be more accurate to describe the book as a requiem for Faulkner's lost women as both poetic inspirations and as racialized fantasies" and that perhaps he "would never quite relinquish that crucial figure," but "she had proven herself to be just a little too dangerous for Yoknapatawpha's inhabitants" (14). Certainly, the women discussed in this project have all proven dangerous for Faulkner's literary world, but they've all been corralled by the gender border control of their respective novels: Caddy Compson with a precise "everything in its ordered place," Addie Bundren's legacy with "Meet Mrs. Bundren," and Temple's "coming" as she returns to her husband, perhaps signaling that finally Temple Drake, the woman who among all these characters seemed capable of utilizing her gender performance for progress, *is* dead.

VI: CONCLUSION

Faulkner's women are memorable, controversial even, because they are confined by gender practices that their social contexts impose as compulsory but to which they do not want to adhere. The most idealized feminine gender role in Faulkner's South is that of the Southern Belle, but it is also one most exclusive of race and class. While it is a normative role every woman in the South, including even Faulkner's most silent and absent female characters, can identify, it is not always one they can identify *with*. Thus, Faulkner's attempts to portray complex, controversial women in his fiction, in fact, correspond to the reasons Judith Butler seems to have developed her theory of performativity: to open up possibilities of variations on conventional gender roles in the disruption of the repetition of those conventions. However, Butler admits that the point of her critical theory "was not to prescribe a new gendered way of life...[but to] open up the field of possibility for gender without dictating which kinds of possibilities ought to be realized" (*Gender Trouble* viii). Because such possibilities are left undefined in Butler's premises, practical application of Butler to literature, especially literature permeated so thoroughly with the issues of class and race as Faulkner's, is complicated by those very issues to extensive ends. As this project has shown, class and race tend to expose the limits of Butler's theories of potential agency in the disruption of normative feminine gender performance. In Faulkner, such opportunities usually prove not to be positive or liberating precisely because of race, and disruptions often end up reinforcing the normative. Furthermore, when agency is achieved, it is often destructive instead of reformative of normativity.

Despite her concession that “because gender intersects with racial, class, ethnic, sexual, and regional modalities of discursively constituted identities...it becomes impossible to separate out ‘gender’ from the political and cultural intersection in which it is invariably produced and maintained,” Butler’s imprecise directions for evaluating gender performance do not allow for class and race (6). Thus, the standards of white southern femininity are not adequate to police half of the women examined here.

I began this project with the principle that “gender is a project which has cultural survival as its end,” and while southern culture at large may survive the various disruptions of these female characters of Faulkner’s, the women themselves hardly do. Caddy Compson is absent throughout text of *The Sound and the Fury*, and the events of the Appendix leave us wondering if she has escaped to Europe and is cavorting with Nazis. Caddy’s gender roles of Southern Belle, sister, wife, and mother unravel through the oppressive projection of her brothers’ warped views of femininity and how they regulate it. With the combination of her absence and Jason’s rejection of her in the appendix, Caddy manages to lack agency from beginning to end of her story. Addie Bundren literally does not survive *As I Lay Dying*; but despite the fact that she is dead the majority of the novel, with her one chapter of monologue, Addie achieves more agency than Caddy. However, Addie imparts her own silence toward her social context, keeping her non-normativity private so that any subversion she intended is nullified when Dewey Dell repeats the patterns of the roles of wife and mother Addie so vehemently resents. In fact, not until Temple Drake in *Sanctuary* is any real potential realized by examining the disruptions of these characters’ gender performances.

Not only does Temple achieve agency through her non-normative gender performance in her relationships with Popeye and Red and by accomplishing a lie so convincing in court that it

condemns an innocent man but she also manages to *survive* the novel not only intact but also in a position to return to her normative social context. Temple ventures down the path of non-normativity and lives to tell the tale as well as returns to her socially sanctioned gender role. However, Temple's agency proves that violating gender norms is not always liberating or expansive, as her most radical act is to identify non-normatively with her rapist to such an extent that an innocent man is lynched because of her actions. However, if we qualify her as a "survivor of culture," Temple does just that in *Sanctuary*, and Faulkner even grants her a sequel. The ramifications of the disruptions of her gender performance come back to plague her in *Requiem for a Nun*, though, when she threatens to destroy the very cornerstone of normative white southern culture by abandoning her upper class family. By planning to abandon her family to once again embrace the world of crime and danger, Temple proves that non-normative practices can become normative. But to what end? Temple's attempt to shirk her roles as wife and mother produce the very opposite of survival: in Nancy murders Temple's daughter in an act of non-normativity meant to force Temple back into normative and intelligible roles as wife and mother. Nancy, alienated from the valorized normative ideals of Southern femininity by race and class, becomes the sacrificial lamb of non-normative gender performance, ensuring the "cultural survival" of the white Southern Lady at the end of *Requiem for a Nun*.

To argue that the foreclosure of progressive gender performance for these female characters is a failure of any feminist agenda of subversion on Faulkner's part may be accurate, but in anticipating successful subversion, we have explored some of the practical limitations of Butler's theory of performativity. Often, we associate subversion with progress in a revolution against oppression, but rarely is revolution without casualties, both literal and figurative. However, we should not see such setbacks as failures. As Barbara Ladd says of Addie Bundren,

“if her story is read as a version of the artist’s predicament in the modern world, [she] fails, only more ‘magnificently,’ which just means, in the world of William Faulkner, that she succeeds” (45). Faulkner’s fiction is full of such contradictions just as the myriad regulatory practices imposed on feminine gender performances are contradictory. And while those contradictions tend to mean the lack of possibility through disruptive non-normativity in the texts for Faulkner’s female characters, such complexity opens up more abundant possibilities for the interpretation of those characters. Furthermore, in reality, many gender performances may be impossible to evaluate, much less measure for any impact they might impart on the world at large. However, literature seems a surprisingly apt place to employ Butler’s philosophies; the inclusive society of a literary work provides an ideal environment to analyze the gender performances of individual characters and examine how those performances reverberate through the community. For some of Faulkner’s women, such analysis reveals avenues of agency to which they would not otherwise have access. Recognizing agency where it has not been identified before elevates these women from static two-dimensional characters to complex individuals in whom we can identify the same issues of self-identification we experience. While the women discussed here, for the most part, may not achieve reform or progress through their various gender performances, in their attempts, and the unknown futures of some of their daughters, we can imagine the hopeful potential for expansion of the boundaries of the intelligibility of femininity.

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