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Patterning the Past: History as Ideology in Modern Southern Fiction.

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Patterning the past: History as ideology in modern Southern fiction

Wilson, Deborah, Ph.D.
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Patterning the Past: History as Ideology in Modern Southern Fiction

A Dissertation

Submitted to the Graduate Faculty of the Louisiana State University and Agricultural and Mechanical College in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy

in

The Department of English

by

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B.A., Louisiana Tech University, 1974
M.Ed., Mississippi College, 1982
August 1991
"History may be thought of as a train which will deliver us to our destination; but even if you think in these curiously teleological terms there's always the problem of those who died in the tunnels and perished in the sidings, those who will not after all be hauled through to the source of light at the end of the tracks."

"The tradition of the dispossessed is always in this sense in thrall to the history of the oppressors—not a parallel, autonomous narrative which 'ghosts' the latter and can be plucked out and recounted whole and entire, as in the fantasies of some labor and 'radical' feminist historians, but nothing less than a set of crises or spasms within that hegemonic history, that history construed in a certain way, lit up from another angle."

---Terry Eagleton, "History, Narrative, and Marxism"
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Abstract

In this study, I analyze the modes of historical representation in works by Robert Penn Warren, William Faulkner, Eudora Welty and Ellen Douglas. In the chapter on All the King's Men, a novel that exemplifies the masculine historical perspective of traditional Southern literature, I show how Warren defines history as a process moving toward a predetermined end and then structures the narrative so that the women characters are constantly positioned outside that definition.

In the second chapter, I begin with Eudora Welty's The Robber Bridegroom, examining the ways she alters the traditional story line of American history by drawing attention to alterity within that history. Then follows a reading of her autobiographical novel, The Optimist's Daughter, in which she foregrounds the fictive, constructed nature of history, this time focusing on personal rather than national history.

Ellen Douglas, the next author studied here, uses radical narrative strategies to disrupt the masculine tradition of Southern literature, and her novel A Lifetime Burning exemplifies what I am calling a feminine Southern literature. Corinne, the narrator, struggles between deference to masculine narrative assumptions and her own, different impulses to subvert those assumptions. The text
she finally authors articulates the repressed feminine voice so consistently silenced in masculine versions of history.

William Faulkner also uses radical narrative strategies in *Absalom, Absalom!*, the final novel studied here; however, in spite of the novel's apparently non-linear, polyvocal structure, its feminine voices are ultimately subsumed and silenced by the masculine voice of its author, who, like Warren, encodes a defensive patriarchal ideology in his fiction.

Although throughout this study I point out differences between masculine and feminine forms of historicizing, I do not define these as absolutely antithetical categories but as concrete tendencies in the writing of Southern men and women. I do not exclude, for example, the possibility of feminine history in the writing of a man or masculine in the writing of a woman.
Chapter One

Southern Literature and the Appeal of/to History

In attempting to define what makes Southern literature distinctive, critics are constantly compiling lists of the traits that Southern writers share. Whatever variants occur in those lists, the single most common claim centers around the Southern fixation on the past. The particular manifestations of this putatively Southern historical consciousness in Southern fiction serve as sites for examining the ideologies at work within such "historical" texts. As historian J. H. Plumb states, "The past is always a created ideology with a purpose, designed to control individuals, or motivate societies, or inspire classes. Nothing has been so corruptly used as concepts of the past" (17). Thus there is no innocent use of history, or, in Lévi-Strauss's words, "history is therefore never history, but history-for" (257). History is always written by; the historian/author selects from the chaos of events and imposes order upon them. By virtue of its selected content and imposed form, history (as well as fiction focused on the historical) is an instrument of ideology.

Hayden White suggests that "narrativity, certainly in factual storytelling and probably in fictional storytelling as well, is intimately related to, if not a
function of, the impulse to moralize reality, that is, to identify it with the social system that is the source of any morality we can imagine" (14). The narrative (re)constructions of history that appear in traditional Southern fiction (which typically connotes Southern fiction by white males) betray a patriarchal "morality," or ideology, in which men consistently relegate women to the historical and textual margins. Complaining about the lack of impartiality in most biographies of women, Phyllis Rose argues that, although a biographer cannot be neutral, there should be an "awareness of one's bias": "And if you do not appreciate the force of what you're leaving out, you are not fully in command of what you're doing" (77). By omitting or marginalizing the women characters in their fiction, Southern writers like Robert Penn Warren and William Faulkner betray the limits of their imagination and their thralldom to patriarchal power relations.

The historical patterns in such writers' works are part of a tradition extending back to the antebellum South, and these writers' fictions replicate the relations of dominance so prevalent in that patriarchal past. History became a significant part of Southern defensiveness before, during and after the Civil War, specifically through the direct linking of Southern history with Biblical history. Comparing the South's struggles with those of the children of Israel in the Old
Testament was a beneficial strategy that provided comfort and hope throughout the chaos of the war and its aftermath. The Biblical comparison strengthened belief in the rightness of the Southern cause and the politics behind it, tangentially reinforcing a power structure that gave white men mastery over blacks and women. Although the pernicious effects of such uses of history are now easy to identify and to condemn in the speeches, sermons and literature of the previous century, these same historical patterns appear even in modern Southern writers who are acknowledged critics of the South rather than ardent apologists for it. By encoding their fiction with patriarchal values, writers like Faulkner and Warren become covert defenders of the system they overtly critique.

Even before the American Revolution, Southerners were writing defenses in an attempt to correct British misconceptions, although Southerners' own awareness of a separate and distinctively Southern identity probably was not pronounced until the debates over slavery and tariffs. As Fred Hobson states, "The Southern need to explain and to justify thus had its origin, in part, in a defensive response to a national dilemma, and it was on the defensive that most Southerners were to remain for the next century and a half" (20). Even after having physically defended the South in combat and having lost
that struggle, Southern apologists persisted in their defense of a society they feared was disappearing. In the midst of chaos after the war, these apologists offered systems for ordering experience, ways of looking upon that chaos as both meaningful and part of a process in which one could function in spite of defeat.

Religion and the historical paradigms of the Bible offered Southern apologists just such a system. In *Baptized in Blood*, Charles R. Wilson refers to the problems faced by the South after the Civil War as "cultural but also religious--the problems of providing meaning to life and society amid the baffling failure of fundamental beliefs, of extending comfort to those suffering poverty and disillusionment, and of encouraging a sense of belonging in the shattered Southern community" (10). Anthropologist Clifford Geertz claims that the religious response to disorder is the creation of symbols "of such a genuine order of the world which will account for, and even celebrate, the perceived ambiguities, puzzles, and paradoxes in human experience" (23). The postwar church in the South preached a transcendent, cosmic order which linked Southern history and Biblical history, thereby offering the defeated South ultimate vindication by means of alignment with the redemptive process. Part of the role of the church was to provide comfort in a time of chaos and to offer a peaceful haven
to counter the numbing sense of despair that tends to immobilize and even destroy the defeated. Without such comfort, people like Edmund Ruffin of Virginia saw nothing but defeat. After writing at the end of his diary a memorandum to his son proclaiming his "unmitigated hatred to Yankee rule--to all political, social and business connections with Yankees, and the perfidious, malignant and vile Yankee race," Ruffin shot himself in June of 1865 (949). For most people the church offered an alternative to such despair, a way to live and work, a way to persevere and perhaps even prevail--in other words, a redemption from defeat.

One major source for the church's redemptive system of order was Biblical typology. Since Protestants feared that the Catholic meditative tradition of contemplating symbols or images would lead to idolatry, they developed their own tradition. In their meditations, Protestants were to contemplate how the individual fits into salvation history and how some event in his life recapitulates a Biblical event. This typology applies all of salvation history to the self and defines all history in relation to the incarnation and passion of Christ. Old Testament Biblical personages are types who prefigure Christ's life (as Jonah in the whale's belly for three days prefigures Christ's three days in the tomb), whereas those living between the passion and last judgment are neotypes who
recapitulate events of Christ's life. Within this tradition, all life becomes symbolic and resonant with meaning (Lewalski 111-44). During the aftermath of the Civil War, this typology became a means of explaining to the South its defeat in terms that were not only comforting but glorifying.

If we look only at the period after the war, the beneficent results of such an historical perspective (comfort in defeat and order in chaos) seem to outweigh its pernicious effects. But when we examine the use of Biblical history to defend secession and the slave system, the balance shifts. Before the war, as part of the justification for secession, ministers pointed out the Biblical teaching that God ordained civil governments. Historian W. Harrison Daniel elaborates:

The creation of the Confederacy was acknowledged to be the hand of God in history in a manner not unlike his creation of the kingdom of Israel under David. The prosperity, atheism, and materialism of the North had prompted the Almighty to move against the nation, to divide it, and set apart a righteous remnant in the South to preserve his truth, justice, and honor. (383)

One of the secessionist orators in the church, Benjamin M. Palmer, preached a sermon from 2 Chronicles 6:34-35 in which he compared South Carolina's secession to the
Israelites' exodus from Egypt: "Eleven tribes sought to go forth in peace from the house of political bondage, but the heart of our modern Pharaoh is hardened, that he will not let Israel go." The April, 1863, Southern Presbyterian Review claimed that God had spoken from heaven, saying, "Come out of the Union, My People," a claim that once again identified Lincoln with Pharaoh and Jefferson Davis with Moses. Southerners seemed unaware of the paradox in aligning themselves with an enslaved people when in fact they were the ones who enslaved the black race as the Egyptians had the Israelites. While black slaves sang "Go Down, Moses," in which they envisioned a Moses sent by God to deliver them from their white masters, those very masters saw Davis as the Moses who could deliver the South from the North.

Throughout the war, white Southerners continued to make typological comparisons. In April, 1861, J. H. Elliott preached a sermon on the Confederate victory at Fort Sumter, declaring that "the hand of God seems as plainly in it as in the conquest of the Midianites." Rev. Samuel Davies Baldwin of the Methodist Episcopal Church South spoke to the Yankees who had occupied Nashville in 1862 from chapters thirty-eight and thirty-nine of Ezekiel. Comparing the Confederacy to the true Israel and the North to Gog, the Satanic force of the apocalypse, he prophesied that the South, though laid
waste, would ultimately triumph (Hundley, *Prison Echoes* 40-41). Many Southerners firmly adhered to a belief in a sovereign God directly involved in their struggle and to a confidence that with God on their side, victory was inevitable. Whenever Confederate forces won, their victory was declared proof that God was on their side, and whenever they lost, that proved, not that their cause was wrong, but that they were guilty of sins which required punishment. As James Silver states, "A pleased God smiled on his people at Second Manassas, Fredericksburg, Chancellorsville, Chickamauga, and Cold Harbor, but turned his sterner side to them at Donelson, Malvern Hill, Gettysburg, Vicksburg, and Chattanooga"; Silver adds that "it never occurred to anyone that He might have been a disinterested or even a disgruntled spectator" (32).

According to Southern clergy, the sins which brought on God's displeasure and Confederate losses during the war did not include slavery, since they believed God sanctioned the institution of slavery and gave it to the South as a sacred trust; therefore, opposition to slavery was opposition to God. According to historian Willard E. Wight,

Disruption of the Union was necessary in order to preserve slavery, God's work on earth; hence, the creation of the Confederate States of America was the work of Providence. All institutions ordained
by God demand the unswerving allegiance of
Christians; ergo, all Christians must support the
Confederate government with unflattering loyalty.

(361)

In December of 1865, the Presbyterian General Assembly,
South, declared that assertions of the "inherent
sinfulness" of slavery were unscriptural and "condemned
not only by the word of God, but by the voice of the
church in all ages," adding that military defeat did not
require Southerners "to bow the head in humiliation before
men, or admit that the memory of many of our dead kindred
is to be covered with shame." Southern defensiveness
required the appropriation of scripture and resulted in
theological hair-splitting. Robert Lewis Dabney, a
Virginian and Calvinist theologian, declared, "A righteous
God, for our sins towards Him, has permitted us to be
overthrown by our enemies and His" (A Defence of Virginia
356). For Dabney, those sins included speculation,
profiteering, pride, and a lack of commitment, but not
slavery. To acknowledge slavery itself as sin would be to
acknowledge Southern society and its cause in the war as
inherently evil, an admission that would leave the South
outside any Biblical system of order or redemption.

The church had contributed to Southerners' confidence
in God's intervention in their behalf. Therefore, when
their defeat was an accomplished and irrevocable fact,
those who had listened to the church looked to it to explain its apparent error. After the Confederate defeats at Vicksburg and Gettysburg, Bishop Elliott, who had been so confident after Fort Sumter, had already begun to speak of the paralysis taking hold of the Southern heart:

Our hands hang down and . . . our knees are feeble. . . . The earth mourneth and languisheth. Lebanon is ashamed and hewn down. Sharon is like a wilderness. They that did feed delicately are desolate in the streets; they that were brought up in scarlet embrace dunghills. They ravished the women in Zion and the maids in the streets of Judah. They took the young men to grind, and the children fell under the wood. The joy of our heart is ceased; our dance is turned into mourning. The crown is fallen from our head—woe unto us that have sinned. 

Even before the final defeat, and even while claiming that sin had brought about Southern defeat, clergy like Elliott were assuaging the despair of those defeats by using the language Old Testament prophets had used to the children of Israel. Since anyone who knew the Bible knew that the Israelites were God’s chosen people and would therefore eventually triumph in spite of any setback, even harsh prophetic language carried with it comfort and reassurance.
The defeat of the South became positive when looked upon through the lens of typology, for just as the Israelites suffered because they were chosen of God, so would the South, and it would learn a profitable lesson from its season of captivity and wilderness wanderings. As Hobson states, "Military defeat had been a fall from innocence," but it "came to be seen as felix culpa" (86-87). Unlike prewar apologies for the South, postwar defenses were written to reassure Southerners rather than to persuade Northerners. In his 1867 book, A Defence of Virginia and Through Her of the South, Dabney offered his version of reassurance in his concluding paragraph:

Although our people are now oppressed with present sufferings and a prospective destiny more cruel and disastrous than has been visited on any civilized people of modern ages, they suffer silently, disdaining to complain, and only raising to the chastening heavens, the cry, "How long, O Lord?" Their appeal is to history, and to Him. They well know, that in due time, they, although powerless themselves, will be avenged through the same disorganizing heresies under which they now suffer, and through the anarchy and woes which they will bring upon the North. Meantime, let the arrogant and successful wrongdoers flout our defence with disdain: we will meet them with it
again, when it will be heard; in the day of their calamity, in the pages of impartial history, and in the Day of Judgment. (356)

In an 1882 address at Hampden-Sydney College, Dabney spoke of a "strange permission of Providence" that was not really strange, for "the task which duty and Providence assigned us was, to demonstrate by our own defeat, after intensest struggle, the unfitness of the age for that blessing we would fain have preserved." In an earlier lecture published in 1868, Dabney had claimed that anyone who equates success with right is an atheist, and he added, "It is not a new thing in the history of men that God appoints to the brave and the true the stern task of contending, and falling, in a righteous quarrel." Like many other Southern clergymen after the war, Dabney was trying to set forth an explanation for the defeat of the Confederacy within the church's theological system before and during the war. Such an explanation allowed people to continue their belief in God's intervention (a belief that would necessarily interpret the outcome of the war as the will of God) and yet at the same time offered people a hope in God and a future bright with the promise of some ultimate victory.

Certainly the political role of the Southern church before and during the war continued through Reconstruction. The clergy still worked to maintain and
legitimize their society, yet another dimension arose in the societal function of the church—a psychological dimension. Samuel Hill writes of that dimension in terms of "strain theory," stating that the church helped "a defeated, disorganized, and poverty-stricken people . . . cope with the anguish of social-psychological disequilibrium and afforded them a measure of conquest over anxiety" (40-41). Within that psychological function in the ministry of the Southern church during Reconstruction, Biblical typology played an important and necessary role, for it provided a system, or what Hill calls a "basic symbol structure," which helped objectify the people's sufferings and at the same time imbued that suffering with a noble, spiritual dimension.

Not only did the South identify with the Israelites in the Old Testament, it also saw in its defeat the passion of Christ, a passion that promised resurrection. Long after the end of Reconstruction, that identification persisted. Southern novelist Thomas Nelson Page published an address in 1892 in which he described the South as crucified and then risen:

Two-and-twenty years ago there fell upon the South a blow for which there is no metaphor among the casualties which may befall a man. It was not simply paralysis; it was death. It was destruction under the euphemism of reconstruction.
She was crucified; bound hand and foot; wrapped in the cerements of the grave; laid away in the sepulchre of the departed; the mouth of the sepulchre was stopped, was sealed with the seal of government, and a watch was set. The South was dead, and buried, and yet she rose again. The voice of God called her forth; she came clad in her grave-clothes, but living, and with her face uplifted to the heavens from which had sounded the call of her resurrection. (4)

Page's description, extreme as it is, reflects a view of the South subscribed to by both North and South for years to come. As a neotype of Christ, the South would recapitulate not only His death, but his resurrection as well. Biblical history would thus be re-enacted in Southern history, fulfilling (through typology) Dabney's appeal to history for vindication. But that history was not impartial, for the South rewrote its history while (and by means of) comparing it to Biblical patterns. Seeing in themselves God's chosen people and the crucified Christ awaiting resurrection, Southerners were incapable of seeing themselves as they actually were. The delusion allowed them to go on with their lives after the war, but those lives would continue to be lived in a society largely without self-criticism and therefore beyond the
probability of any genuine reconstruction for a long while.

This lack of self-criticism was a dominant characteristic of the short-lived Southern literary revival of the 1880s: "For all their shortcomings and the comparative brevity of the revival (it reached its peak by 1887), the Southern writers undeniably possessed solid virtues. Among them, however, one will search in vain for a realistic portrayal of their own times" (Woodward 168). The major participants in this revival were also participants in a nation-wide literary trend—the popularity of the historical novel, in vogue for a decade following the Spanish-American War. According to statistics compiled by Sheldon Van Auken in 1948, from a study of seventy-two (out of nearly four hundred total) of the most popular historical novels published from 1895-1912, thirty-four were written by twelve Southerners and thirty-eight by fifteen Northerners (160, 162, & 165):

All twelve of the [Southern] authors were members of old, proud families. Three-fourths of them had belonged to the class of the wealthy, slaveholding planters. . . . Nine . . . came from families of considerable ante-bellum wealth; at least eight of these lost their wealth primarily as a result of the war. (174)
Of the thirty-four most popular historical novels produced by these writers between 1895 and 1912, twenty dealt with the Civil War or Reconstruction (161-62). And, except for Upton Sinclair, all of these authors were "to a greater or lesser extent defending the old culture" (175). As Woodward states, "The Southern aristocracy . . . had no dearth of [literary defenders] in the days of adversity, when the old culture was in ashes. For almost with one voice the romancers spoke in vindication of the society, ideals, and values of the ancient regime" (432).

Although the obsession with history (and even, to a degree, the popularity of a different type of historical novel) carried over into the Southern literary renaissance that began in the 1920s, the authors of the new revival no longer saw themselves as defenders vindicating the South. Their newfound distance from and ability to criticize the South (both Old and New) made possible, apparently for the first time, a vital and enduring literature to replace the endless repetition of defensive apologies. But, as I will later show, the elitism and defensiveness so obvious in the historical novels of the 1880s persisted even into the new renaissance.

In the period during which American New Criticism developed, the 1930s through the 1950s, the South was rapidly becoming industrialized and invaded by Northern capital as it had once been invaded by Northern armies.
John Crowe Ransom, who named New Criticism, perceived the changing South as still offering an aesthetic alternative to the North's industrial sterility. In the Fugitive literary movement of the 1920s and the Agrarian political movement of the 1930s, the New Criticism began to develop its ideology, summarized by Terry Eagleton as follows: "Scientific rationalism was ravaging the 'aesthetic life' of the old South, human experience was being stripped of its sensuous particularity, and poetry was a possible solution" (Literary Theory 46). As Eagleton claims, "New Criticism was the ideology of an uprooted, defensive intelligentsia who reinvented in literature what they could not locate in reality," and poetry became for them "a nostalgic haven from the alienations of industrial capitalism" (47). The poem as object, severed from any historical or social context, and also from any concern with the biography and intentions of its author, became an organic form, "the new organic society in itself, the final solution to science, materialism, and the decline of the 'aesthetic' slave-owning South" (49). Literature then became a kind of substitute for history, a new organic myth to replace the myth of the organic Old South, and by means of that substitution the Old South and its history continued its hold over the very writers who attempted to displace history from literary criticism.
The Agrarians' nostalgia for the Old South as they gazed upon the developing New South continued an older Southern tendency to look backwards. Hugh Holman claims that the South was already looking back to its past as a golden age even before the Civil War: "As soil depletion and population growth forced the South steadily to move westward, it forced it physically away from that part of the past which seemed to it beneficent, orderly, and with the qualities of magnificence, and thus the nineteenth-century South was bound emotionally to that lost world." (The Immoderate Past 10). Holman also mentions the influence of Sir Walter Scott's novels (with their emphasis on the past and on cultures in conflict) upon the South, an influence W. J. Cash incorporated in his portrait of the Southern mind. Fred Hobson briefly notes that Edmund Ruffin, Thomas Nelson Page, Walter Hines Page, and Cash all "absorbed large doses" of Scott (132). The writings of Thomas Nelson Page and others of the romantic school of plantation fiction were overtly influenced by Scott (135), yet Scott's historical novels also contributed to a Southern historical consciousness among writers who may never have read and who certainly did not imitate him.

The classic formula for the historical novel (established in Scott's Waverley) "calls for an age when two cultures are in conflict, one dying and the other
being born" (Holman, A Handbook to Literature 254). In discussing the Southern literary renaissance of the 1920s and 30s, historian George B. Tindall gives an almost identical definition (although without reference to Scott or the historical novel): "The South had reached a historical watershed; . . . it stood between two worlds, one dying and the other struggling to be born" (287). He then quotes Allen Tate's explanations for that renaissance, explanations long accepted by most. In 1935, Tate wrote about "the peculiarly historical consciousness of the Southern writer" as a "curious burst of intelligence that we get at the crossing of the ways, not unlike, on an infinitesimal scale, the outburst of poetic genius at the end of the sixteenth century when commercial England had already begun to crush feudal England" ("The Profession of Letters in the South" 175-76). Later, in 1942, Tate again explained that outburst, that "quickening" of the Southern imagination after World War I:

After the war the South again knew the world, but it had a memory of another war; with us, entering the world once more meant not the obliteration of the past but a heightened consciousness of it; so that we had . . . a double focus, a looking two ways, which gave a special dimension to the writings of our school . . . which American
According to Tate, then, the surge of creativity in the South was a direct result of looking backwards.

In *Origins of the New South, 1877-1913*, C. Vann Woodward describes the pre-renaissance South as a "cult of archaism, a nostalgic vision of the past," and notes the paradox that, the greater the commitment to the new order, "the louder the protests of loyalty to the Old" (154-55). The Southern literary revival that occurred in the 1880s seems to prove Tate's thesis, yet that revival was amazingly short-lived, and during the years between that revival and the one that would come in the 1920s, the South produced a culture Woodward claims was marked by sterility and imitation (429). If being poised upon a new order while looking back toward the old can truly be the fertile ground for artistic burgeoning, then there seems no explanation for this barren period. Tindall emphasizes the role of the 1925 Scopes trial in Tennessee and H. L. Mencken's attacks on the South in moving Southerners toward a new consciousness of their Southernness and its traditions, a consciousness that contributed to the new vitality of Southern literature. But those attacks and the resultant consciousness produced a resurgent defensiveness as well.
Hobson labels Southern apologists after the Civil War a "school of remembrance" and places those apologists in opposition to the critics. Admitting that his schema is an over-simplification, he adds, "It is salvation in Southern values—and a glory of the past not always properly captured in written history—that the apologists have seen; it is the burden of that past the critics have stressed" (5). Writing in 1933, William Faulkner used a schema similar to Hobson's when he concluded that the South could no longer sustain Southern artists, who could only choose either "to draw a savage indictment of the contemporary scene or to escape from it into a makebelieve region of swords and magnolias and mockingbirds which perhaps never existed anywhere" ("Introduction" 158). In that particular statement, Faulkner saw two choices for the Southern writer: either be a critic of the South or an escapist from the present South into its golden age, whether mythic or not. I would argue against both of these either/or stances.

Instead, I would argue that certain Southern writers who consider themselves (and are considered by most) critics of rather than apologists for the South are, in fact, both. Underneath overt critiques of Southern society by writers like William Faulkner and Robert Penn Warren, critiques that have validated these writers' places as debunkers of Southern mythology, lies a
relatively hidden defense of that society. Even more remarkably, their covert defenses use the same tool apologists like Robert Dabney used right after the Civil War—history. In *A Defence of Virginia*, Dabney appealed to history and to God against the "disorganizing heresies" of the North, claiming that the defense of the South would be heard in the "pages of impartial history" (356). History and God can be appealed to as one when history is interpreted as the working out of God's plan. In such a view, history has direction: utopic reward for the righteous (God's chosen people, whether the old Israel or its neotype) and/or apocalyptic destruction for the rest. The present (and the projected future toward which it tends) is the end, the telos toward which the past has been driving; and since Biblical history aims for both utopia and apocalypse, one can believe both in a redemptive, progressive history headed for utopia and in a damning decline away from some past golden age toward apocalypse. In both there is an implied narrative, a narrative directed toward a predetermined end—a predestination. In their uses of history (and in pairing it often with Biblical history), Faulkner and Warren betray a defensiveness about the South. Their narratives, although far from direct apologies, are nonetheless encoded by similar patterns, patterns which indicate an ideology that
orders experience (unlike the "disorganizing heresies" of Dabney's Yankees) along a patriarchal line.

Dabney appeals to "impartial history" as a defense of the South on the "Day of Judgment." But history cannot be such a disembodied judge, blind to and unhindered by ideology. The narrative of history is authored since, as Hayden White says, "real events do not offer themselves as stories" (4). Narrativizing the chaos of historical events and records, writing them as a story, requires selection: "Every narrative, however seemingly 'full,' is constructed on the basis of a set of events that might have been included but were left out" (10). White comments further on "the frequency with which narrativity, whether of the fictional or the factual sort, presupposes the existence of a legal system against which or on behalf of which the typical agents of a narrative account militate" (13). Thus the historian can construct a story that legitimizes or authorizes a particular social system.

The authors of history are thus the masters, the ones with power. In the American South master has a stronger resonance than in the rest of the country. Who were the masters that would write the history to which Dabney appealed? They were white men, and their history would be as much a defense of patriarchy as the Civil War had been a defense of slavery. In The Newly Born Woman, Hélène Cixous comments on the continuing male domination of
history: "The same masters dominate history from the beginning, inscribing on it the marks of their appropriating economy: history, as a story of phallocentrism, hasn't moved except to repeat itself" (79). And the repetition Cixous cites becomes, in the works of many Southern literary masters (even the greatest of them), a nostalgic defense of a past Southern culture in which white men predominated and controlled. Their obsession with history can be seen as a subtle appeal to history as witness for the defense.

History can only be the arbiter of justice Dabney called for if the pattern of events is inherently moral and if there is an end set as THE destination at which events should and must arrive. That end must also be set by an ultimate judge who embodies absolute, unvarying morality. The Bible, of course, has such a judge in God. But writers who, like Faulkner and Warren, yearn for moral justification in history while remaining outside fundamentalist theology must develop their own versions of that Biblical judge. Admittedly, Faulkner's eccentric personal theology has proven an insoluble puzzle, and Warren's temperament is Christian while his intellect is skeptical. Yet both present apparently orthodox visions of a deeply flawed humanity. However eclectic their personal beliefs, both tend to focus on the Old Testament

The society portrayed in the Old Testament is certainly patriarchal, and Yahweh is the preeminent pattern of the all-powerful white male. In a Southern society whose men had formerly held a similar power, only to be reduced to the powerlessness most people feel in the modern age, nostalgia for that powerful past and justification for it in the Old Testament myths are predictable, if not praiseworthy. Although nostalgia seems an innocuous word, its presence in the works of many Southern writers is not. Obsessed with history as directed toward an end—an end linked with the Biblical restoration of the imminently patriarchal Israel—such writers make themselves the judges, the masters, even the gods of a power system that covertly and overtly denies access to women and blacks.

Traditional critics of Southern literature likewise tend to replicate such patriarchal patterns in their discussions of the Southern writer and history. In The Immoderate Past, Hugh Holman claims:

[The South's] concern with what is as a product of what was and the shaper of what may be, with history viewed as a process in which events are inexorably linked to each other in a broad shape, is so characteristic of many of its best minds
that we can think of the South as a region passionately hungry for the meaning of the shape of its past and with a strong sense of the overarching process by which past becomes future. (11-12).

Here the present is a "product" of the past and the "shaper" of the future, and the concern of history is "process," the inexorable linking into a "broad shape." If Holman's view is true for all Southern literature (even though he claims it only for the South's "best minds"), then all Southern literature participates in defending a patriarchal view of history and, through that history, the historical dominance of the Southern white male. But Holman's description applies to only part of Southern literature— the tradition of the masters, the fathers of modern Southern fiction, particularly William Faulkner and Robert Penn Warren.

There is also a Southern literature outside that tradition, even though critics like Holman insist upon appropriating that other literature, labelling it by the same ubiquitous "traits of Southern literature" and attributing to it the same obsessions. Holman even implies that literature lacking such traits and obsessions is the work of lesser minds. Yet there are Southern writers— like Eudora Welty and Ellen Douglas (definitely not lesser minds)— who either ignore completely the
history of their region or undercut the notion that history moves in a line toward its end. Hélène Cixous claims that it is time to change history, to invent the "other history":

There is "destiny" no more than there is "nature" or "essence" as such. Rather, there are living structures that are caught and sometimes rigidly set within historicocultural limits so mixed up with the scene of History that for a long time it has been impossible (and it is still very difficult) to think or even imagine an "elsewhere." (Newly Born Woman 83).

The "elsewhere" in Southern literature, or the "other" Southern literature, is outside the tradition of the fathers and resists being drawn inside that lineage.

Throughout this study I will refer to the tradition of Faulkner and Warren, the literature described by Holman, as masculine and the "other" literature as feminine. In illustrating the different uses of history within Southern literature and how those uses reveal ideology, I have grouped the writers I discuss according to gender. However, I do not argue that all Southern writers beyond the ones I have chosen here will likewise divide along gender lines. Although I identify patriarchal ideology with a masculine viewpoint, I do not argue that all males will necessarily write a masculine text. Nor is it
impossible for a woman to write within rather than against that masculine ideology. To argue a biological-sexual division would be to argue for the rigidly set destiny, nature or essence to which Cixous objects. Furthermore, I do not see the masculine and feminine as enemy camps with distinct lines drawn and uncrossable limits set. There were border states with divided loyalties even in the Civil War (in spite of the Mason-Dixon line or the documents of secession).

I do not even argue for a continuum along which these writers line up. To do so would imply that there exists an absolute position at either end. Instead, I would rather see Southern writers as members of a family. In literal families, some members look more like one parent and some like the other; some favor each other (same nose, perhaps, but different eyes) and some are almost too distinctive for comparison. Such comparisons in literal families carry with them no judgement of right and wrong: how can a child be wrong for resembling one parent more than another (unless, of course, you're a parent with your own designs upon a child)? Yet when we leave physical resemblance aside and discuss character, there are traits we can justifiably praise or condemn. In the metaphorical family of Southern writers, I see ideologies as those character traits. Some are preferable to others. Inheriting your father's green eyes instead of your
mother's blue ones is acceptable (and unchangeable), but inheriting his sexism or her racism is not.

Although Cixous admits that "defining a feminine practice of writing is impossible . . . for this practice will never be able to be theorized, enclosed, coded," she does suggest that a woman's discourse, "even when 'theoretical' or political, is never simple or linear or 'objectivized,' universalized; she involves her story in history" (92). The fiction of those Southern writers who write against the prescribed pattern of Southern literature reveals a "feminine practice" that includes women's traditionally marginalized stories. Rather than encoding their works with the patriarchal patterns of linear history, they emphasize personal memory that circles backward and forward (and beyond the sidelines that have excluded women), piecing the past together more like a patchwork crazy-quilt than like Holman's inexorable process-product.

In the following chapters, I begin with Robert Penn Warren's All the King's Men, a novel that exemplifies the historical perspective at the heart of the masculine tradition of Southern literature. Of all Warren's novels, All the King's Men has long been considered "the most comprehensive statement of Robert Penn Warren's philosophy and art" (Ruoff 128). Through Jack Burden, the only professional historian in the novels studied here, Warren
(the only author in this study who wrote non-fictional history) defines history and then structures the narrative so that its women characters are constantly positioned outside that definition.

Whereas Warren always denied writing historical novels, Eudora Welty did call *The Robber Bridegroom* her one historical novel. However, she added that it is "not a historical historical novel" since it "does not fit . . . into that pattern . . . nor was fitting into the pattern ever its aim" (*Eye* 302). In the second chapter, I begin with that novel, examining the ways she alters the traditional story line of American history by drawing attention to alterity within that history. Then follows a reading of her autobiographical novel, *The Optimist's Daughter*, in which she foregrounds the fictive, constructed nature of history, this time focusing on personal rather than national history.

While Welty, like Warren, tends to conform to more traditional, often chronological narrative forms, Ellen Douglas, the next author studied here, uses radical narrative strategies to disrupt the masculine tradition of Southern literature. Although Douglas's earlier novels use certain patterns within that tradition, her 1980 novel, *A Lifetime Burning*, exemplifies what I am calling a feminine Southern literature. Corinne, the narrator, struggles between deference to masculine narrative
assumptions and her own, different impulses to subvert those assumptions. The text she finally authors articulates the repressed feminine voice so consistently silenced in masculine versions of history.

William Faulkner also uses radical narrative strategies in *Absalom, Absalom!*, the final novel studied here and perhaps the greatest novel by the South's recognized master of fiction. However, in spite of the novel's apparently non-linear, polyvocal structure, its feminine voices are ultimately subsumed and silenced by the masculine voice of its author, who patterns his history along the same rigidly patriarchal lines so evident in *All the King's Men*.

While explaining what is in this study, I also need to explain what I am aware is not here. In Southern fiction, there is not only the margin of gender; there is also the margin of race. The fathers of Southern literature are white as well as male, and to discuss power relations in the South necessarily involves race relations. However, in this study, as in any study, there must be limits, and I have chosen to analyze white writers' relations to Southern history, realizing that the relation of blacks to that history is inevitably and profoundly different. Whatever the degree of powerlessness experienced by white Southern women, they were never officially defined as property. In Alice Walker's *The Color Purple*, the
concluding scene occurs on July 4th. When Henrietta asks why the family reunion is always on such a hot holiday, Harpo answers, "White people busy celebrating they independence from England July 4th, . . . so most black folks don't have to work. Us can spend the day celebrating each other"; and Mary Agnes responds, "Ah, Harpo, . . . I didn't know you knewed history" (243). Walker, who is doubly marginalized by gender and race, here portrays the gap that exists between white Southern history and black Southern history—a gap based upon independence. For years Independence Day had no historical significance for black Southerners; their history was one of difference and deference. Although the history that Harpo knows is an "elsewhere" outside the scope of this study, Walker's fiction offers an appropriate paradigm for what I am calling the "other" Southern literature—the quilt and the collaborative history it represents.

Southern writers who are part of that "other" literature do not people their fiction with historians like Jack Burden or the narrator in World Enough and Time, nor do their projects begin with the documented words left by men like Jereboam Beauchamp (the historical figure upon whom Warren's Jeremiah Beaumont is based). Whereas Faulkner's Quentin Compson and Shreve McCannon sit in a frigid Harvard dorm (a masculine domain in Puritan
reconstructing the linear design of Sutpen's life, Alice Walker's Celie, Sophia and Shug are on the porch (a domestic scene and therefore by association feminine) piecing a quilt. Hobson describes Quentin's historical obsession: "Possessed of a rage to order as well as to explain, he agonized over the larger meaning of Thomas Sutpen's story, over the significance of what had happened in the South during the century just past. . . . The very telling render[ed] him oblivious to the presence of the bespectacled, analytical Shreve" (5-6). In reconstructing and ordering the past along a line that he believes will render an ultimate revelation at its end (as both Biblical history and text end in revelation), Quentin loses touch not only with the present but also with the presence of his friend.

Walker's women have a practical motivation for quilt-making: quilts provide warmth. Beyond the practical, the quilt has meaning and value because the pieces of cloth are from clothes worn by loved ones, each scrap evoking a specific and personal memory. The scraps/memories are ordered by a pattern called "Sister's Choice," a name implying a feminine logic that does not attempt to place all memories in line to achieve some final revelation. A quilt patterned in a line would be too narrow for communal warmth. The mutual contribution of scraps and the collaborative making of the quilt ultimately create and
represent a personal life-affirming bond among these women (unlike the isolation at the end of Quentin and Shreve's collaborative narrative). That bond is the final revelation of their efforts, and it is a bond that, in the last scene of The Color Purple, includes women and men, children and adults, all together at what was once the father's house, then the daughter's, and finally a home for the whole extended family.
Notes


8. Woodward comments on the North's attraction to nostalgic visions of the South following the Civil War ("Yankeedom took to its heart the Lost Cause"), and he even notes that the song, "Carry Me Back to Old Virginy," was composed by a Long Island native descended from slaves (155-56).

9. The simplistic "moral" Ruoff finds in the novel is that only God can see the order within history.
Chapter Two
"An Obscure and Necessary Logic": Robert Penn Warren and the King's Women

The importance of history in Robert Penn Warren's work is without question. What James H. Justus calls Warren's "natural predilection for history" began in childhood (Achievement 212). His boyhood habit of reading history continued through his years at Berkeley, where he read extensively in American history (Singal 344), and for the rest of his life (Sale 137). An early proof of that historical predilection, his first book (published in 1929) was a biography of John Brown. In an essay entitled "Robert Penn Warren as Historian," Thomas L. Connelly argues that, although Warren may "fall short of the academic purist's conception of a historian," he is nonetheless "very much a historian, if this means that he employs a philosophy of history and uses past experience as a central theme" (1).

Connelly is not alone in seeing history as the "thematic core" of all Warren's writing. Warren himself agrees:

Novel after novel that I have written, and poem after poem, have had some germ in historical reality. . . . It's interpreting that not as mere
Yet, in spite of that declaration, he persistently insists that he does not write "historical novels" (Sale 137). In a 1969 interview, after ardently denying that All the King's Men is historical ("Well, historical, my foot!"), he added:

What I'm trying to find is what happened, something that has the distance of the past but has the image of an issue. It must be an image, a sort of simplified and distant framed image, of an immediate and contemporary issue, a sort of interplay between that image and the contemporary world. That's the only historical novel of interest to me. It must have this personal reference, a feeling of something, whatever that strange thing is that's making that story relevant for you, that involves something that is in you. (Sale 137-38)

Warren here acknowledges that his interpretations of history are structured by his personal responses to the issues implicit in historical events. The resulting "moralized" history thus reflects his personal ideology.

Describing "Warren's kind of history," Justus notes that Warren selects information that "contributes to the meaning of events that he is trying to shape out of the
disordered pressures of those events" ("Warren and the Narrator" 110, 112). He then adds that Warren's reconstructions of the past reflect "not simply an archivist's diligence but a poet's sensitivity to the interstices of the record" (110). In a similar remark, Justus refers to the "logic at work" in *All the King's Men*:

This logic is located within the novel itself, both what is put in and what is left out. If Jack Burden can at one point . . . [feel] that he is like God brooding on history . . . , it is also true that overall, on all points, Warren is like the historian, another surrogate God, brooding on history. (Achievement 204)

What Warren chooses to include and exclude while shaping the historical vision in *All the King's Men* betrays the phallocentric ideology, or "logic at work," within that text. At the center of Warren's vision is the patriarchal father, while women are repeatedly pushed to the margins and robbed of both voice and power.

Warren's patriarchal predilection is not limited to *All the King's Men*. In a brief autobiographical piece written in 1953, he speaks of his grandfather, Gabriel Telemachus Penn, a Confederate cavalry officer who rode with Forrest, and calls him "the living symbol of the wild action and romance of the past" ("Self-Interview" 2). For
Warren, "He was . . . 'history'" (2). Warren associates his father with history, too, since his father usually chose history to read aloud to his children (2). A few years later, while talking about the "extraordinary romance about American history," Warren describes that history as "the grandpaws and the great-grandpaws . . . [going] up, down, here and there" (Ellison and Walter 37). For him, history is clearly tied to his own father and grandfather in particular and to male ancestors in general.

The father is central not only to Warren's vision of history, but to his fictional versions of history as well. He admits "that the true and the false father are in practically every story [he has] written" (Walker 157). Although he says he does not know what that means, he goes on to discuss the "perfect father" as one who fuses fact and idea, the Emersonian and the Hawthornian. After adding that such a father is "only in heaven," he admits again that the "question of finding the father, this perfect father, is, in one way or another, in the various stories" he has written (157). In spite of his claim that the father in his fictional quests can only be found in heaven, his fiction tends to locate that father in a specific (and earthly) historical context--the Southern past.
For the boy Warren, his Confederate grandfather was not only a symbol of history but also what Singal calls a "symbol of the virtues of the old regime" (342). The adult Warren's biography of John Brown reveals his own "still-vigorous southern pieties" (Singal 346). In his first fiction, the largely autobiographical "Prime Leaf" (published in 1931), the Civil War generation were "truly giants stalking the earth" when "compared with the mere mortals who succeeded them" (Singal 350).

Discussing Warren's belief in that superior heroism of Civil War Southerners, Justus insists that this romanticizing of Southern history (which he compares with Mr. Compson's ideas in Absalom, Absalom!) is not a defense of "Confederate principles or regional pieties," but is instead because those earlier figures "represent the Father" (Achievement 322). Such a division of motives is not necessary. In fact, the two issues are ineluctably interconnected when viewed in the light of gender and power relations. The Old South was an unarguably patriarchal social system that empowered its white fathers and grandfathers while disempowering blacks and women. Fathers are central in the history of the Old South as well as in Warren's fictional versions of that history.

Although admittedly aware of the father's position at the center of his work, Warren (and his critics) seem unaware of the limited and limiting positions his women
characters occupy. In All the King's Men, his narrative replicates the patriarchal patterns of the Old South by marginalizing and silencing the women within it. After setting up a definition of history in the text, Warren proceeds to place women outside that definition. Furthermore, he places the father at the center of the text while making it clear that the father he prefers (in heaven or on earth) resembles the God of the Old Testament. The New Testament Christ undermines patriarchal rule by including slaves and women among his heirs:

There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female: for ye are all one in Christ Jesus. And if ye be Christ's, then are ye Abraham's seed, and heirs according to the promise. (Galatians 3:28-9)

As a result, in Warren's narrative, Christ is rejected along with the ones he sought to include. For Warren, as for the Old South, men must remain at the center. In All the King's Men, he makes certain they do.

In the final pages of All the King's Men, Jack Burden offers a précis of the narrative he is concluding: "This has been the story of Willie Stark, but it is my story, too" (435). By the admission of its own narrator, then, the novel is within the tradition of history-as-the-lives-of-great-men. On Jack's final visit to Lucy Stark, she
tells him that in spite of Willie's mistakes and misdeeds, she still believes he was a "great man." Jack later admits to himself that he, too, "must believe that," and because he "came to believe that [he] came back to Burden's Landing" (426-27). In addition to his and Willie's stories, Jack includes the stories of Judge Irwin (the father whose house he returns to at Burden's Landing), Adam and Governor Stanton, and Cass Mastern, a ghostly figure from the past whose life is nonetheless connected to the other lives Jack relates. These men's lives are linked not only in the telling, but also in the "doom" (or predestination) that Jack claims brought them all together (436). The lives are all men's lives, and the story Jack tells is finally theirs. The reader of the narrative is finally with Jack in the father's house. There are, of course, women in the novel, but their stories are marginal rather than central. The title itself makes masculine centrality clear. This is HIStory, not hers.

Jack describes his view of history while he looks back at the "gradual piling up of events, then the rush to the conclusion" on the day Stark was shot:

As I experienced that day, there was at first an impression of the logic of the events, . . . [but] I was able to grasp, at the time, only the slightest hints as to the pattern that was taking
shape. This lack of logic . . . gave the whole occasion the sense of a dreamlike unreality. It was only after the conclusion . . . that the sense of reality returned, long after, in fact, when I had been able to gather the pieces of the puzzle up and put them together to see the pattern. This is not remarkable, for, as we know, reality is not a function of the event as event, but of the relationship of that event to past, and future, events . . . But this only affirms what we must affirm: that direction is all. And only as we realize this do we live, for our own identity is dependent upon this principle. (383-84)

The logic he speaks of allows him to piece together the puzzle, to "find" the pattern inherent in history. For him, reality is only in the relation of past, present and future, and the pattern of that relation must necessarily be linear, since "direction is all." Events do not just pile up in a chaotic heap; they rush to the conclusion they have been aiming toward. Jack's identity requires such a view of history because his identity and his logic are patriarchal. Rather than finding a pattern in history, he imposes one that suits his needs, using the pieces to create a series of male portraits. In the logic of this novel, which makes history linear and directional,
women are consistently motionless and directionless, and their portraits are like sketches in the margins.

In *A Room of One's Own*, Virginia Woolf comments on the exclusion of women from traditional history. Her search for knowledge about the Elizabethan woman leads her to "Professor Trevelyan . . . to see what history meant to him" (46). There she finds a set of chapter headings that refer to a series of wars and solely masculine institutions. Woolf then concludes that history should be rewritten since "it often seems a little queer as it is, unreal, lop-sided":

But why should they not add a supplement to history? calling it, of course, by some inconspicuous name so that women might figure there without impropriety? For one often catches a glimpse of them in the lives of the great, whisking away into the background, concealing, I sometimes think, a wink, a laugh, perhaps a tear.

(47)

In *All the King's Men*, Warren presents just such a "lop-sided" history, in which women are glimpsed in the background of the "lives of the great."

Early in the novel, Jack glimpses a nameless, unknown woman from the window of the train he is riding to meet Stark:
As the train pulls away, a woman comes to the back door of one of the houses—just the figure of a woman, for you cannot make out her face—and she has a pan in her hands and she flings the water out of the pan to make a sudden tattered flash of silver in the light. She goes back into the house . . . but you cannot see through the walls to the secret to which the woman has gone in. . . . But nothing happens, and you remember that the woman had not even looked up at the train. You forget her, and the train goes fast. (76)

In this scene, the man is in motion and the woman is fixed; he has direction and a destination while she goes back into a house where "nothing happens"; he forgets her because she is outside motion and thus outside history. According to Jack's definition of life— "Motion toward Knowledge"—she is "Non-Motion, which is Non-Life, which is Death" (150). She does move from the door back into the house toward some secret knowledge, but that motion is, to Jack, a withdrawal rather than a progression, and the secret knowledge she has is apparently a domestic knowledge not worth his investigation.4 Throughout the novel, knowledge is equated with power, but the feminine knowledge possessed by this unknown woman is outside the power structures with which this novel is concerned.5

This is not just a story about men; they are the king's
men, men involved in a power structure that allows women only marginal space.

In the opening passage of the novel, Jack is in a car rather than a train, but he is still moving toward a destination, and although he is on a highway rather than a set railroad track, the necessity of staying on track is the same. To drop off the shoulder of the road is to die in the inevitable wreck. Riding with Stark and his entourage to visit Stark's father, Jack thinks of riding by farmhouses in the afternoon when "you know the only person in the house is the woman":

She has finished washing up the dishes and has swept the kitchen and has gone upstairs to lie down for half an hour and has pulled off her dress and kicked off her shoes and is lying there on her back on the bed in the shadowy room with her eyes closed and a strand of her hair still matted down on her forehead with the perspiration. She listens to the flies cruising around the room, then she listens to your motor getting big out on the road, then it shrinks off into the distance and she listens to the flies. (22)

This passage reveals what Jack Burden assumes to be the secret life of the other woman, who was also apparently washing dishes, in the passage quoted before. Here the woman is lying in bed like a female figure in a sexual
fantasy, and she is waiting for the man in motion, whose
car engine/phallus "gets big" as he passes her by. Since
he does not stop to insert meaning into her fixed life,
she is left to watch the flies circling over her. The
flies signify her status as flesh, and they are drawn to
her because she also signifies the death Jack equates with
her motionlessness.

These two unknown women and their fixed,
uninvestigated lives on the side of the road represent the
status of all the women in All the King's Men. Although
Anne Stanton, Lucy Stark and Sadie Burke appear to be
central characters, they are nonetheless outside the
dominant "logic" of the novel and are shunted onto the
side tracks of service to and self-sacrifice for men
(Sadie is even sent into madness). Although Jack's life
seems to center around Anne, her life is instead
circumscribed by his. More than the other women in the
novel, Anne resembles the unknown women. Jack's recurrent
images of Anne are significantly similar to his
descriptions of those nameless women he passes on the
train and in his car.

The first time Jack sees Anne's separateness from
himself and her brother Adam, he believes he has
attributed to her an individual identity, a "new self"
(281); but for him that identity is coupled with his
recognition of her sexuality, making her both subject and
object at once. He sees her afloat, "her face lying in
the water, very smooth, with the eyes closed, under the
dark greenish-purple sky, with the white gull passing
over" (119). Throughout that summer, during which they
fall in love, she calls him "Jackie-Bird," and in his
vision of her, she is floating on her back, motionless in
a feminine fluidity, as the birds he is identified with
wheel freely overhead.

On the way home from their first date, Jack stops the
car and looks at Anne, who is again much like the image in
the water: she is lying back in the car seat, her head
back and her eyes closed. At the sound of a train
whistle, Jack realizes the exact time, takes her home, and
then guns his car engine as he drives away. The train--
with its reminder of motion, direction and chronology--
prevents Jack's sexual engagement with Anne, and he vents
his sexuality through the car engine that is once again
heard by a woman in a house. Once he is home, he connects
the image of Anne in the car with Anne in the water and
concludes that "the moment tonight had been in that moment
long back" (277). There follows an erotic passage in
which he "pop[s] up in bed . . . filled with rapture . . .
[his] veins swelling to burst" because he is "on the verge
of knowing the real and absolute truth about everything."
He then remembers Anne's image, which had "provoked the
rapture [and] had itself been lost and forgotten in the
rapture which had exploded out into the whole universe."

Rapture signifies not only sexual or emotional ecstasy but a mystical revelation of divine knowledge as well. The pursuit of truth/knowledge replaces the woman as desired object because that pursuit follows a masculine, phallic direction—upward and into. His revelation depends upon attributing movement and direction to the moments he has with Anne (even their separations are "mileposts" [288]), for if their relationship is outside that paradigm, he can no longer consider himself masculine.

In spite of Anne's complaint that Jack is without direction (the apparent cause of her refusal to marry him), "Jackie-Bird" is identified with flight while Anne is never allowed such free motion. When she does "perhaps the highest [dive] she was ever to take in her life," climbing upward and away from Jack, refusing to acknowledge his calls to her, she still must reenter the feminine role set for her within this plot (289). She dives "deep, as if to continue the flight as long as possible through the denser medium," but the flight is downward, back into fluidity. As she begins to rise, Jack embraces her. During their rise together to the surface, he experiences another "rapture" (comparing it to the one he had had on the night of their first date), while she "let[s] her arms trail down, loose, not making a motion." Even this brief upward motion of Anne's must be enclosed,
limited and denied, and the same movement that causes Jack’s rapture is for her a passive motionlessness.

The dive she had made was a swan dive, and swans are most graceful in water. Quiet, sometimes mute, these ornamental birds were once considered exclusive, royal property, even having their bills marked with the owner’s sign. Anne, too, is largely silent throughout the novel and becomes the property of the king and his men. She walks away from Jack after the dive, and, two days afterward, she walks away from him on the tennis court "as though she had made up her mind to go somewhere and it was quite a way and she had better start walking" (290). But swans are awkward and slow on land, and Warren’s plot allows her no destination other than, finally, the walls of Jack’s father’s house and the limiting enclosure of Jack’s arms.

At the end of the summer, on the night that he undresses her passive body (while he remains fully clothed), his mind keeps "flying off to peculiar things . . . [taking] those crazy wild leaps and centrifugal plunges like an animal with one foot in a trap or a June bug on a string" (294). He is trying to remain the free-flying bird in spite of her threat to prevent his motion. As she lies on the bed and closes her eyes, he again remembers her floating in the water, and the two scenes fuse:
And at that instant, as I stood there with the constriction in my throat that made me swallow hard and with my body tumescent, I looked at her there on the iron bed . . . and knew that everything was wrong . . . and that this was somehow not what the summer had been driving toward. (295)

He has a direction, and becoming sexually involved with or committed to Anne threatens the motion which is his life. Jack previously described their physical relationship in similar terms: "We went quite a long way, that summer, and there were times when I was perfectly sure I could have gone farther. When I could have gone the limit" (287). But to have gone the limit with Anne, who calls herself Jackie-Bird's "soft warm nest" (287), would be to accept as his destination what he sees as the limits of women's lives.

In spite of Anne's recurring presence in the novel, she is central only in her relation to the men's lives. After the summer romance, Jack indicates Anne's textual status when he says that being separated from her meant being "withdrawn from her context" (288). Her story is important only insofar as it illuminates the main text, which is the story of men. After the briefest summary of his marriage to Lois, Jack tells of Anne's life since they went their separate ways: "As for the way Anne Stanton went meanwhile, the story is short" (308). There follows
a two-paragraph summary of her loves, her griefs and her work. He then concludes:

That was the Anne Stanton whom Willie Stark had picked out, who had finally betrayed me, or rather, had betrayed an idea of mine which had had more importance for me than I had ever realized. That was why I had got into my car and headed west, because when you don't like it where you are you always go west. (309)

Her story, even in its drastically abbreviated form, is given only to explain Jack's actions. But her action, the act of betrayal, is a strangely passive affair, since Willie is the one Jack claims picked her out.

Jack later claims "that somehow by an obscure and necessary logic [he] had handed her over" to Willie, thus robbing himself of the past by which he had been living (311). This logic is part of the logic that explains everything for Jack at the end of the novel, allowing him to impose his own order on history and thus preserve his identity. The only way Jack can live by the past is if, within that past, women are the ones passed (and passed on) by men on the way. He explains Anne's betrayal as the result of masculine will and logic because her betrayal exists only within that logic: she has betrayed his patriarchal idea, not just of her, but of all women. She has left the nest, the house whose walls he can penetrate only to imagine her prostrate form waiting for him. Yet
she is still, within this novel, marginal, powerless, and an object of exchange in a masculine economy.

On the night of their first date, the night of Jack's rapturous revelation (long before he hands her over to Willie), he compares the awe he feels at being in love to the feelings of someone "who learns unexpectedly that he has inherited a million dollars, all lying up there in the bank for him to draw on" (277). He feels that by dating Anne he has "robbed" her brother Adam, implying that he took her from one man's possession before giving her into another's (281). He calls her body "an elaborate and cunning mechanism in which she and [he] shared ownership" (287). Years later, when she asks him to meet her to discuss Adam, he describes her as "something put in a showcase for you to admire but not touch" (322).

Not only does he see her as merchandise/object of exchange, he sees their relationship as a monetary transaction. After they both go away to school, he calls their letters to each other "checks drawn on the summer's capital":

There had been a lot in the bank, but it is never good business practice to live on your capital, and I had the feeling, somehow, of living on the capital and watching something dwindle... Far off somewhere in the great bookkeeping system of the universe somebody punched some red buttons
every day on a posting machine and some red figures went on the ledger sheet. . . . The red figures fell like bloody little bird tracks on that ledger leaf bearing my name in the sky.

(299)
The capital their relationship had produced (the million dollars Jack feels like he has received when he realizes he is in love) dwindles in Anne's absence, and her story dwindles as well.

Once Anne is outside Jack's story, she is storyless. For a time, she reenters the text as part of Adam's struggle with Willie, but when Adam dies she becomes a ghostly inhabitant of her father's house. During the autumn between her brother's death and her own marriage to Jack, she and Jack are frequently together. He compares their present time to their romantic summer twenty years earlier:

That summer we had seemed to be caught in a massive and bemusing tide which knew its own pace and time and would not be hurried even to the happiness which it surely promised. And now again we seemed to be caught in such a tide and couldn't lift a finger in its enormous drift, for it knew its own pace and time. But what it promised we didn't know. I did not even wonder. (405)
While Anne is with Jack, she has motion and direction, and, even though her destination is unknown, the fact that she has one makes her a part of history and life again.

But what is the promise, the implied contract that this tide of history offers her? Jack has a book to write, the history of another great man, and he plans to reenter politics, an arena that offers him power. But Anne's only work we know of was with the Children's Home (which Jack now says she "was interested in"—past tense [438]), and she no longer seems to have anything to do. Just as Jack could not imagine the lives of those unknown women inside the houses he passed, Warren apparently cannot imagine a life for Anne after her marriage. We can probably assume that hopes for her own children, which used to be so vivid in her imagination though vague in Jack's (284), are gone along with the orphan children at the Home. Thus her life will apparently consist of caring for her husband. That is the promise toward which she moves. 9

Jack once described being perfectly in love as the lack of difference and distance. The two lovers would coincide perfectly, there would be a perfect focus, as when a stereoscope gets the twin images on the card into perfect alignment" (282). But rather than each image altering the other to make a being which is some of both (like Virginia Woolf's androgyne), Anne's image disappears
into Jack's. The only image we can see in this perfect alignment is his and the patriarchal line of history he has drawn. Anne gives her father's house to the Children's Home as "her gift to the ghost of Adam" (438), thereby fulfilling the laws of patrilineage: the house still goes from the father to his son. She has moved from her father's house into Jack's father's house. Jack says that since neither of them wants to live there, they will let the bank have his house and will leave Burden's Landing. At first, this seems to imply that the patriarchal structure is breaking down. But then he also says, "We shall come back, no doubt, to walk down the Row"--another straight line (438). Burden's Landing is still a destination to which they will return; even the name of the place insists upon its status as destination. There is no stepping outside of the novel's patriarchal history without stepping back into it.

While we see nothing of Anne's life after her marriage, we never see Lucy Stark before her marriage to Willie. As Anne is the context, or accompanying text, for Jack's life, Lucy is for Willie's. She is with the men on the way to Old Man Stark's at the beginning of the novel, but we find out later that at that time she had already been living on her sister's farm for a year (156). Even before the story begins, Lucy has withdrawn to the margins. She is going to Mason City with Willie for some
publicity photos in which she will provide a homey context for his political persona (like the chickens do in photos taken at the poultry farm [156]). Jack comments that the father's house will make a good picture "with Willie and his Old Man on the front steps, with Lucy Stark and the boy and the old white dog" (23). The obvious center of the picture is the two men, with the woman, child and dog there to provide the context. Jack later calls Lucy "part of the climate in which the process of discovering the real Willie was taking place" (63). She is thus the context for his life rather than the subject of her own.

Lucy had at one time had her own sphere as a teacher, but she lost that because of Willie's political career. Now she is a "girlish" figure with a Pre-Raphaelite face "that demanded to be framed by a wealth of long and lustrous-dusky tresses tangled on the snow-white pillow" (59). We never actually see Lucy in Anne's supine posture, but, at least according to Jack, we should. She has become a woman who "wipes the perspiration-soaked wisp of hair back from her face" and sits in the "bliss of self-fulfillment," watching the men eat the food she's cooked. On Jack's previous trip to Mason City, when he first met Lucy, she was sewing while Willie paced the room and repeatedly declared his intention to run for re-election. Willie, listening for a "signal maybe" from outside, ignores Lucy's questions until her words finally
pull him back into the room (62). He is "irritated at having a train of thought interrupted," and he continues pacing even though she asks him to sit down.

Like Jack in the car with Anne, Willie is pulled away from the woman by a desire for motion. He has the "face of a man who tops the last rise and looks down at the road running long and straight to the place where he is going" (64), and one of his major political accomplishments will be fixing the roads throughout the state (51). Whereas Jack hears a literal train whistle, Willie is listening for an unspecified signal, but his thoughts are a train in motion while his feet literally move him along. He is limited by the domestic space he inhabits with Lucy, so his motion must necessarily be pacing, like an animal in a cage (or like the tied June bug to which Jack compares his own thoughts).

On Jack's last visit to Lucy, he says she has grown "fleshier," and he identifies her with the house she inhabits:

She was more like the woman the house had reminded me of the first time I had seen it--a respectable, middle-aged woman, in a clean gray gingham dress, with white stockings and black kid shoes, sitting in her rocker on the porch, with her hands folded across her stomach to take a little ease now the day's work is done and the men-folks are still in the fields and
Lucy is living in her sister's house, a house that reminds Jack of a middle-aged woman, yet even in this feminized place Jack can project no other life for her than waiting for and waiting on men. She will become the woman sitting in a rocker that only moves back and forth in one place, going nowhere. She has bought into the patriarchy by literally buying the baby she believes to be her grandson and naming the child Willie Stark "because Willie was a great man" (426). Like Anne, Lucy cannot step outside the system because, in this novel, an outside is not only uninvestigated but unimaginable.

The one woman in the novel who seems completely outside the feminine/domestic sphere and inside the masculine/political sphere is Sadie Burke. She acquires motion and direction by participating in the masculine economy:

She had come a long way because she played to win and she didn't mean to win matches and she knew that to win you have to lay your money on the right number . . . She had been around a long time, talking to men and looking them straight in the eye like a man. . . . [When her eyes] looked at the wheel before it began to move they could
see the way the wheel would be after it had ceased to move and saw the little ball on the number.

Although she is not playing for matches, neither is she playing for money. On the night of Tom Stark's football injury, Sadie tells Jack that she "could have been rich a long time back" if she had wanted to, and Jack agrees (372). What Sadie wants is the power that she cannot have outside the masculine game. Within their system she "had channels of information closed to the home-maker type" (141), and in this novel "knowledge is power" (312, 313). Jack tells his mother that "information is money," adding that Willie (like Sadie) is not interested in money (126). Instead, Willie is "interested in Willie," using the knowledge he has about people to wield and to keep power.

Whereas Willie uses his power for self-promotion, Sadie must use hers to promote a man to whom she attaches herself. Although she has learned to win at the men's game, the only way she is allowed to play is through a man. She is apparently the one who makes her lover, Sen-Sen Puckett, politically successful, or, as Jack says, she "had put him into political pay dirt" (73) by giving him "the benefit of her gift for laying it on the right number" (85). In spite of being "a very smart cooky" with a great deal of political savvy, Sadie initially works for the Stark headquarters "in some such ambiguous role as
secretary" (74). She is sent there to gather information for Sen-Sen as a way to further his career, not her own. Even after she does become a significant part of Willie's campaign, she also becomes his lover, as she had been Sen-Sen's before, thus giving Willie power over her.

Even though Sadie never escapes her subsidiary role, the fact that she is female makes her participation in the men's game a threat to them. After blasting Willie about "the Nordic Nymphs" he had two-timed her with, Sadie bursts out of his office "about the way one of the big cats, no doubt, used to bounce out of the hutch at the far end of the arena and head for the Christian martyr" (141). In particularly hostile language, Jack then describes her face as "a plaster-of-Paris mask of Medusa which some kid has been using as a target for a BB gun" and with eyes that were "a twin disaster, . . . a black explosion, . . . a conflagration." In the scenes that occur after Willie's repeated indiscretions, Sadie's eyes blaze, her hair "lift[s] electrically off her scalp and her hands . . . flay out in a gesture of rending and tearing" (329).

Because she is outside the traditionally feminine, she is a monster who turns men to stone, thus rendering them motionless. Her acquisition of power, even though she is still entirely dependent upon a man for that power, is always a threat.
The first time Jack sees Sadie after Willie's death, she has committed herself to the Millett Sanatorium. Now, as she lies on a chaise longue, her Medusa-like face is "a mask flung down on a pillow and the eyes that looked out of it belonged to the mask. . . . There wasn't anything burning there" (408). In a place traditionally associated with women (Elaine Showalter discusses mental illness as "the female malady"), Sadie is powerless and so no longer threatening. Instead, she has become "like a fevered child on a pillow" (410). The woman who once wielded power by means of her knowledge, who could be depended upon to keep her mouth shut since she "didn't have any confidant, for she didn't trust anybody" (329), insists that she has not come to this place to "swap secrets" with the psychiatrist (408). But Jack has come there for information, for Sadie to verify what he thinks he knows—that Duffy made the phone call that provoked Adam Stanton to shoot Willie. She is still part of the power structure by means of her knowledge, even though she has physically withdrawn from it, for she knows what Jack does not—that she is the one who told Duffy to make the call.

What finally removes Sadie from the game she has learned to win is the handing over of her secret knowledge to Jack. Her admission of guilt makes her the Medusa that Jack has always seen in her since she takes responsibility for killing both Willie and Adam. But she justifies
herself by claiming that Willie did not live up to his end of their contract; he was going to throw her over for Lucy, in spite of all that Sadie had done for him, after she had "made him" (410). By doing so, he would fix the game so that she would be excluded and powerless. Since the male game is the only one in town, at least in this novel, Sadie decides to withdraw before she is tossed out, but she takes Willie with her. Yet Jack will not give her credit even for the act that proves she has learned the game well. He decides that since her motivation was emotional (traditionally considered a feminine trait) while Duffy's was rational and calculating (traditional masculine attributes), her "act had somehow been wiped out . . . [and] did not exist for [him] any more" (411). The one woman in the novel who acts is finally denied responsibility for her actions because, even though she plays the game well, she can never be considered a player on her own. She even depends on a man, Duffy, to make the final play for her.

Having rejected Duffy's implied offer to be her new front man, she has no more access to power, and she tells Jack that she came to the Sanitorium because it "was the only place [she] could come" (412). There is no other road for her to take, no other direction left for her as a woman. In her letter to Jack, she makes it clear that she no longer cares who knows what she knows. She sends him a
notarized statement, making her knowledge a gift to him, since she can no longer participate in the power struggle going on after Willie's death: "You can do anything with it you want for it is yours. I mean this. It is your baby, just like I said" (415). Having given up her last vestige of power, she tells him, "I'll be gone a long way... maybe somewhere the climate will be better" (415–16). Although she will be in motion, she does not know her destination (she gives Jack her cousin's address since she will not have one of her own). Again, Warren can imagine no future for this woman. She has no husband or child to care for, unlike Anne or Lucy, and so is left to wander aimlessly. Still giving Jack political advice and still concerned about the rules of the game she can no longer play (she does not want him to think she is welching on a deal), Sadie disappears into the unknown.

Just as Sadie makes her knowledge a gift to Jack before she goes, Jack's mother gives him "a present, too, which was a truth" (432). By telling him that Judge Irwin was his father and that she had loved the Judge, she gives him a "new picture of herself [that] filled in the blank space which was perhaps the center" of his new picture of the world. She has been a blank space to Jack because he has seen her as an object of exchange. Her hair is an "expensive job" (111) and her face an "expensive present" (128, 159).
He summarizes part of her life as a list of men, "the Scholarly Attorney and the Tycoon and the Count and the Young Executive" (115). The meaning of her life is in her relationships with men and particularly in her relation to Jack. While driving back to the capitol after a visit with his mother, Jack explains why he is "in the car, in the rain, at night"—because the "Scholarly Attorney went to Arkansas and the girl was on the steps of the commissary" (130). Ellis Burden, the man Jack thought was his father, had met Jack's mother on a business trip to an Arkansas lumber town where he was to collect information; he was thus a man in motion toward a destination and moving toward knowledge. He sees her standing on the steps of the commissary where her father worked, and when "the man has finished his business and leaves the town, he takes the girl with him" (129). She seems to be part of the commissary merchandise and part of Burden's business transaction. Although he takes her with him on the train back to Burden's Landing, once she is there, she ceases to move. Instead, she spends hours standing alone on the beach looking over the water without knowing why, but "it wore off" (130).

Her apparent desire to escape her fixed life leads her into an affair with Judge Irwin, but he offers her no way out. His first wife had been injured in a riding accident and died a bedridden invalid (214). He had married the
second Mrs. Irwin thinking she had money, and she, too, had become an invalid who never left her upstairs room until her body went back for burial to her former home (214-15). Jack’s mother had "looked up eagerly and desperately to the hawk-headed" Irwin (again the man is associated with the birds), but even had he not been married, a man whose wives both ended up isolated and immobile promised little freedom (351). What he does finally offer her is a relation that allows Jack to love her. The night she learns of the Judge’s suicide, Jack feels "not only pity for her but something like love, too, because she had loved somebody" (352). Before that, her love for him is "a little island right in the middle of time" (112). To be with her was to be outside the movement of time and history. She earns Jack’s love by virtue of her relationship with his father and because her story becomes a part of the Judge’s story.10

After Irwin’s death, she decides to leave the house on the Row to the Young Executive and go away. But, like Sadie, her destination is unknown. At the train station before she leaves, she tells Jack that she should have stayed where she was (in Arkansas), and that now she is "going to some quiet, cheap place. . . . [she doesn’t] know where" (130-31). To Jack, her face is still like "a damned expensive present she was making to the world and the world had better appreciate it" (431). In return for
the truth she gives him, he gives her a lie, telling her that the Judge killed himself because of his health. Watching her train dwindle into nothing, Jack convinces himself that the lie, her "going-away present," is not just to protect himself. He wants to protect her from the truth. Yet the truth she tells him has made him free. She is not given the chance for that kind of freedom.11

When Jack finds out the truth about Irwin's crime, he says that all "historical researchers believe . . . [that the] truth shall make you free" (260). Here Jack is quoting from the eighth chapter of the gospel of John, where Jesus is telling his disciples that he is sent by his Father to do his Father's works.12 In verse thirty-five, Jesus tells them that "the servant abideth not in the house for ever: but the Son abideth ever." The truth that makes Jack free is the truth of his paternity—the truth that allows him to inherit his father's house—just as the truth that makes Christians free is the truth of Christ's paternity. Once one believes that Jesus is the Son of God, one can be a son of God (I John 5:1), become a joint-heir with Christ (Romans 8:17) and live forever in heaven (in the Father's house where Christ goes to prepare a place for the saints [John 14:2-3]). After Christ tells his disciples that he is going back to his Father's house, Thomas asks how they can know where he is going and how to get there. Jesus responds, "I am the way, the truth, and
the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me" (John 14:5-6). The way to ultimate truth and revelation, according to Christ, is a path that depends upon paternity and leads to the Father. Warren's novel depends upon the same logic, even though his is not a theological truth. However, whereas the New Testament opens the path to all—male or female, bond or free (Galatians 3:28)—Warren keeps women off the road.

Although Warren's "truth" is not theological, Justus points out that the recurring quest for self-definition in Warren's fiction clearly has a "massive orthodoxy" behind it: "Even the terms of Warren's enactments are theological" (Achievement 2). Justus indicates the complexity of what he calls Warren's "orthodox Christianity" by adding that it is "chastened and challenged by the secular faiths peculiar to the twentieth century: naturalism (deriving from late nineteenth-century skepticism) and existentialism" (1). He further notes that, although "God's justice is the given [in Warren's work], what is so often missing . . . is any sure sense of a balancing mercy" (5). Warren's preference for the Old Testament God of justice over the New Testament Christ of mercy, who tries to erase male/female and master/slave difference, points to the patriarchal base of his moral vision. In both that vision and the "moralized" history
it produces, women are shadowy, peripheral figures glimpsed in the background.

In *All the King’s Men*, Jack Burden’s two fathers can be seen as versions of the old God and the new, and his choice is unquestionably for the old, more patriarchal one. When Jack learns who his real father is, he is relieved:

I had always felt some curse of [Burden’s] weakness upon me, or what I had felt to be that. He had... let his strength bleed away into weakness. And he had been good. But his goodness had told me nothing except that I could not live by it. My new father, however, had not been good. ... But he had done good. He had been a just judge... I had swapped the good, weak father for the evil, strong one. (353-54)

In spite of this oppositional description of the two men, Jack had earlier called Burden the Judge’s "other self" (194). The two men are then much like the New Testament Christ and the Old Testament God. Although Christ insisted that to see him was to see the Father (both part of a Trinity that is three and yet one, united and yet separate), in most portrayals, God is stern and judgemental while Christ is meek and compassionate (traits translated as weakness in Jack’s theology).
The New Testament book of Hebrews, chapter 12, sets up an opposition between the God of justice and the Christ of mercy, and this antithesis of the old and new covenants is in keeping with the contrasts throughout this epistle. The comparison begins with Mount Sinai, from which the Old Testament law was given by a God who manifested himself in terrifying, destructive power while remaining hidden in clouds and darkness. Then the focus shifts to Mount Zion and a scene of fellowship rather than fear, to "the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, . . . and to God the Judge of all, and to the spirits of just men made perfect, And to Jesus the mediator of the new covenant" (verses 22-24). Although God the just judge is still present, he has become less fearful and threatening through the mediation of Christ.

The new covenant of redemption exists because Christ was willing to turn his back on the power and glory of heaven, come to earth as a man, and die to rescue humanity from God's judgment. Philippians 2:6-7 says that although Christ, "being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God . . . [he] made himself of no reputation, and took upon him the form of a servant."

Warren depicts Ellis Burden as a Christ figure who turns his back on money and power to care for the sick and the poor, without hope of or desire for repayment (as Christ taught his followers to do: "When thou makest a feast,"
call the poor, the maimed, the lame, the blind: And thou shalt be blessed; for they cannot recompense thee" [Luke 14:13-14]). But to Jack, Burden is merely "henlike [and] maternal" as he cares for George (199); thus Jack rejects this New Testament sacrificial pattern for being feminine and hence contemptibly weak.

Irwin, on the other hand, is a "just judge," like the powerful Old Testament God who metes out eye-for-an-eye judgement, in accordance with a masculine economy of exchange. Irwin even measures himself in those relentless old scales, finds himself wanting, and requires his own life in payment. His is a strength Jack can admire and emulate. In the first description of the Judge, a memory from Jack's childhood, he is on horseback, his "dark-red hair bristling off his high skull like a mane and the hooked red nose jutting off his face and the yellow irises of his eyes bright and hard-looking as topaz" (38) -- a powerful, perhaps fearful man who is in motion. He had taught Jack to hunt and ride and (like Warren's own father) had read history to him (40). Fascinated with war and artillery, the Judge had been "a good officer . . . and a brave man," with a "medal to prove it" (121). Once, when a man he had sent to the penitentiary threatened to shoot him in the street, the Judge "walked straight at the man, not saying a word . . . and took the pistol away from him" (121). Since he is the Jehovah-like, chivalric hero
of the Old South (like Warren's grandfather), Warren's hero predictably chooses him above the Christ-like, maternal Burden.

At the end of the novel, while Jack is living in his true father's house and eating "bread bought with his money," he takes in Ellis Burden, whose title Jack reduces to "the old man who was once married to my mother" (436). Not only has Burden lost his former identity (as father to Jack and as minister to the weak), his physical self now mirrors the inner weakness Jack has always seen in him. Sick and feeble, he no longer has the strength even for a game of chess and so sits reading his Bible and dictating to Jack a tract he will not live long enough to finish. In that tract, Burden has found a circuitous way to justify the Old Testament God's creation of evil, which is the "index of God's glory and His power" (437). Not only is he justifying God's evil, he is also, by association, justifying Judge Irwin, whose evil strength Jack had chosen over Burden's weak goodness. Jack does the actual writing for Burden, and, in an odd reversal, the thoughts seem more like Jack's as well (he later says that "in [his] own way" he believes what the old man says). Thus the New Testament God is effectively erased by the novel's end.

humor in the fact that while he lives in Irwin's house, he is going back to the story of Cass Mastern, the man he once "could not understand but whom, perhaps, [he] now may come to understand" (438). The humor stems from the difference between Cass and the Judge: "If Judge Irwin resembles any Mastern it is Gilbert, the granite-headed brother of Cass." Like the Judge, Gilbert is "the master sitting the spirited roan stallion . . . in front of the white veranda" on a plantation paid for by a mysteriously (and possibly illicitly) acquired fortune (162). Although Gilbert sees to it that Cass is educated in plantation management and "a great deal of Presbyterian theology," Cass finally rejects both (163).

After his affair with Annabelle Trice, the death of her husband, and the sale of the slave Phebe, Cass eventually frees his slaves. Afterward, Gilbert treats him "like a wayward and silly child" (183). When the Civil War begins, Gilbert is a commissioned officer, while Cass enlists as a private. Believing he has "used up [his] right to blood" by the death of Duncan Trice, Cass determines never to fire the musket he carries into battle (186). He begins to feel a sense of brotherhood with his fellow soldiers, and he writes, as he lies dying of a bullet wound outside Atlanta, that "it may be that only by the suffering of the innocent does God affirm that men are brothers" (187). Rejecting the Old South/Old Testament
role of master and destroyer, Cass becomes a meek, compassionate, non-violent man for whom his brother can only feel contempt. Since Jack prefers Judge Irwin to Ellis Burden, his failure to understand Cass is predictable.

Jack's inability to accept the goodness of Burden or Cass stems from their rejection of a traditional masculine role, or, to put it differently, from their feminization. Just as the story of Cass interrupts the linear narrative of the novel, his behavior breaks with the masculine logic of the novel. His story does not fit in with the other lives of great men that Jack tells. Even Cass's morally heroic deeds are failures: the slaves he frees merely move from one misery to another (183), and, wishing for death, he remains for a long time inviolable while leading others "who did not seek it" to their deaths (187). His attempt to find Phebe, who is sent away because of his sin, is fruitless; the relationship with Annabelle is destroyed. He is reduced to rotting flesh in an army hospital and finally buried in an unmarked grave. As Warren can imagine no life for the women in his novel, there is no life for feminized men like Burden and Cass. In his scheme, the effeminate Christ is fit for crucifixion but not resurrection, and even his death is not redemptive.

Just as there is no forgiveness for blurred gender roles in Warren's male characters, there is none for the
masculinized women. The villain in the Cass Mastern story is Annabelle Trice, for, according to Jack, "though the journal does not say so, in the events leading up to the 'darkness and trouble,' Cass seems to have been, in the beginning at least, the pursued rather than the pursuer" (164). After Annabelle sells Phebe (an act Cass admits is common enough in the world of men, and which is vividly proven so by the sale Cass later witnesses in Lexington), Annabelle becomes monstrous (reminiscent of the Medusa-like Sadie Burke), her fingers digging into his arm "like talons," raking her nails down his cheek (178). She speaks with a "wild sibilance" and sobs "a hard dry sob like a man's." She has become unrecognizable to Cass, and he never sees her again. Just as her escape from the sexually passive role brings about destruction, so does Anne's escape from Jack's passive image of her. Anne's sexual liaison with Willie Stark (along with Sadie's gift of knowledge/power to Duffy) triggers the events that lead to the deaths of her brother and her lover.

If Anne is the villaness in Willie's story (as Annabelle is in Cass's), then Willie is (like Cass) the victim. But the two men have something else in common: both Willie and Cass know Presbyterian theology, Cass from the tutor Gilbert hired for him and Willie from a "Presbyterian Sunday school back in the days when they still had some theology" (337). Cass finally rejects the
old harsh God who sets an unalterable path toward a predetermined destination; instead, he walks away from his old life and old self to become the new, meek man seeking death among his brothers. Willie, on the other hand, is never able to resolve the struggle between the old theology and the new—the desire for power and mastery and the desire to meet the people's needs. When the managing editor of the Chronicle sends Jack to interview Willie, he tells Jack that Stark "thinks he is Jesus Christ scourging the money-changers" out of the courthouse (51), and when Jack visits Sadie in the sanatorium after Willie's death, she says that Stark had still been "practicing to be Jesus" (410). The editor and Sadie speak sardonically, but truly. Willie does try to be Jesus, but he fails, partly because his Jesus carries the Old Testament scourge in his hand.

One of Jack's "fathers" in the novel, Willie is a strange mixture of Irwin and Burden, of the Old Testament and the New. He has an Old Testament calling like Samuel's when Tiny Duffy asks him to run for Governor: "For the voice of Tiny Duffy summoning him . . . had made him sit up in his room, night after night . . . . For him to deny the voice of Tiny Duffy would have been as difficult as for a saint to deny the voice that calls in the night" (69). Yet he also has a New Testament experience, like Paul on the Damascus road: "The blaze of
light hitting him in the eyes blinded him" (69). After he learns the truth—that he’s been duped and used by Duffy’s political cronies—and gets drunk, Jack tells Duffy that Willie has "been on the road to Damascus and he saw a great light and he’s got the blind staggers" (89). That Willie is compared to Paul (the most misogynist of New Testament authors) fits the patriarchal logic of the novel, for the calling takes place on a road—the masculine path toward revelation, knowledge and power.

Not only does Willie’s call to politics involve this mixture of Old and New Testament elements, that mixture also persists throughout his career. When Sadie tells Willie that he’s been framed by Duffy, she says that instead of the "little white lamb of God," the Christ that Willie thinks he is, he is in fact "the sacrificial goat," or "the ram in the bushes" (81). Rather than the true redemptive sacrifice, he is merely the Old Testament substitute that can only stave off the debt temporarily. The ram in the bushes saved Isaac by taking his place, but Christ still had to come and die to bring redemption. When Willie is running for Governor, he preaches his own "gospel" (93), and the legend under his picture once he is Governor reads, "My study is the heart of the people" (6). His name becomes "sacred syllables" (6), and he tells the people that their need is his justice (261). His original political concern is protecting the lives of innocent
children from the dangers of a shoddily-built schoolhouse
(shoddily-built because of other politicians' evil greed),
and his final political dream is of a charity hospital,
untainted by political corruption, that will belong to the
people. Like the Christ who opened his arms to the sick
and healed them, Willie wants to open the doors of this
hospital to any "man woman or child who is sick or in
pain," to offer them healing and ease (261).

Yet in the same speech, Willie declares, "And if any
man tries to stop me . . . I'll break him . . . I'll
smite him. Hip and thigh, shinbone and neckbone, kidney
punch, rabbit punch, uppercut, and solar plexus. And I
don't care what I hit him with. Or how!" (262). Like the
Old Testament God who enabled a vengeful Samson to smite
the Philistines "hip and thigh" (Judges 15:8), Willie
Stark promises to smite those who resist his justice.
Jack tells his mother and the Young Executive that Willie
is close to no one but Willie, "and now and then God-
Almighty when he needs somebody to hold the hog while he
cuts the throat" (113). The God with whom Stark
identifies thus becomes his right-hand man in the meting-
out of bloody justice.

This strong, judgemental Old Testament God appears as
well in Cass Mastern's story as a bloodthirsty creature--
a spider in the middle of the web of history:
Cass Mastern . . . learned that the world is all of one piece . . . like an enormous spider web and if you touch it, however lightly, at any point, the vibration ripples to the remotest perimeter and the drowsy spider feels the tingle and is drowsy no more but springs out to fling the gossamer coils about you who have touched the web and then inject the black, numbing poison under your hide. It does not matter whether or not you meant to brush the web of things . . . [for] what happens always happens and there is the spider, bearded black and with his great faceted eyes glittering like mirrors in the sun, or like God’s eye, and the fangs dripping. (188-89)

Under the Old Testament system, sin demanded punishment, debts required payment, and recompense was swift. The law of the spider web is absolute: to vibrate the web brings immediate death. But this metaphor combines the image of instant, retributive justice with that of mutual responsibility. Cass accepts his personal guilt, his responsibility for setting in motion the events that result in the death of Duncan Trice and the sale of Phebe. On his deathbed, he writes:

I do not question the Justice of God, that others have suffered for my sin, for it may be that only by the suffering of the innocent does God affirm
that men are brothers . . . . And in this room with me now, men suffer for sins not theirs, as for their own. It is a comfort to know that I suffer only for my own. (185)

He not only recognizes his guilt and the deserved justice that demands his death in payment, but he also recognizes the New Testament theology which allows the suffering of the innocent to pay the debt for the guilty.

Cass and the men dying around him are a community—a web of humanity irrevocably connected. The threads that connect these lives form a different pattern than the linear one that dominates the rest of the novel. Instead of a single line that leads toward a predetermined destination (in the spider web metaphor, Jack declares his own version of Presbyterian theology: "what happens always happens"), there can be a network, a woven pattern, not meant to trap but to offer the security and warmth of community. The humanitarian impulse implied in such a network appears in the stories of Cass Mastern and Ellis Burden, the feminized men, while it is lacking in the lives of the novel's masculine heroes. Weaving is, after all, still considered women's work.

At the end of the novel, Jack's preference remains the Old Testament system. Cass Mastern is not, in fact, his ancestor; Judge Irwin is. In a conversation with Burden, Jack describes life and history as a single line:
For Life is a fire burning along a piece of string—or is it a fuse to a powder keg which we call God?—and the string is what we don’t know, our Ignorance, and the trail of ash, which, if a gust of wind does not come, keeps the structure of the string, is History, man’s Knowledge, but it is dead, and when the fire has burned up all the string, then man’s Knowledge will be equal to God’s Knowledge and there won’t be any fire, which is Life. Or if the string leads to a powder keg, then there will be a terrific blast of fire, and even the trail of ash will be blown completely away. (151)

For Jack, life is, once again, motion along a path toward knowledge, and God is the powder keg at the end of that path. Jack cannot accept a New Testament God who offers total knowledge and eternal life. He insists that to know all would be to cease motion toward knowledge, which would mean the end of life. Therefore, he can only make the end of history apocalyptic, without the concomitant utopia promised in the New Testament. The Biblical utopia promised by Christ would necessarily do away with the hierarchies that give Jack’s life meaning.

The Old Testament God, however, leaves patriarchal power structures in place. Whether Jack actually believes in that God or not, he identifies with him: "I felt like
God, because I had the knowledge of what was to come. I felt like God brooding on History" (151). God already knows what is going to happen and knows the pattern that Jack is trying to uncover and piece together; he knows the path and the destination. When Willie is dying, he tells Jack, "It might have been all different" (400), but Jack had earlier rejected that possibility by his own biological version of predestination: "Fellows like Willie Stark . . . are what they are from the time they first kick in the womb until the end . . . [and] their life history is a process of discovering what they really are" (63). History is then the discovery of the predetermined destination toward which the past has always been driving.

The Biblical path ends with the Father's restoration of the Son to power so that he may rule and reign with him. In All the King's Men, Jack is empowered by his father's legacy, yet, in a strange twist, Jack declares himself his father's savior, even though he was the agent of his father's death (429). He takes his father's place in the father's house, establishes the Christ-like (but by this time almost completely powerless) Burden at his right hand, and has as his servant the bird-like Anne (reminiscent of the dove-like Holy Ghost). In this new trinity, Jack has all the power. He (with Warren as the author behind the author) writes the text of these lives; he lays down the thread of the narrative we are to follow;
he is the king’s man who puts all the pieces together. But the line he draws is a line that excludes, and the jigsaw puzzle he puts together does not show the whole picture because it is missing too many pieces.

Women are not the only figures glimpsed in the background of the lives Jack tells. In this novel, blacks are so rarely glimpsed they are almost invisible. Like the women, they, too, are outside the motion of history. In the opening scene of the novel, Jack describes driving down Highway 58 toward Mason City. The highway is straight with a line down the center, and variation from that straight line means death. Here again there are fixed figures, like the woman seen from the train, but here the figures are black. Like the woman, they do not watch the motion; they look up only after the wreck. And as soon as they take brief note of yet another accident, they go back to hoeing the field, a repetitive act which can be seen as a non-happening. Unlike the woman, they are credited with no knowledge at all, not even a worthless domestic secret. They, like the women in the novel, are outside the lines of power, and are, in fact, excluded not only from power, but from the narrative as well, barely showing up even in the margins.

The few blacks in All the King’s Men are largely silent and practically invisible servants like the "black boy in the white coat" at Judge Irwin’s house. Jack
either ignores or interrupts the young man's explanations and walks "past the eyes of which the whites were like peeled hard-boiled eggs and past the sad big mouth which didn't know what to say now and just hung open to show the pink" (341). This young man stands open-mouthed, deprived of language, and powerless to stop Jack's progress into the Judge's study. Of course, there are the slaves in the Cass Mastern story, but even though slavery is a central issue in that story, the slave Phebe is reduced to the role of spectator. Because she has seen what happens, she becomes an important figure in the narrative, but she has no active role. She becomes an object sold at a good market price, and she disappears "down the river," a path set by the master-slave system for disposing of those slaves who threaten the power structure. Since Phebe has gained knowledge (knowledge that is valuable only because it is knowledge of the masters' actions), she has gained power, and that power cannot be tolerated by those whom it threatens.

The Cass Mastern story, which includes the issue of slavery, is the only section of All the King's Men that considers race, yet the story itself seems to disrupt the major narrative progression (or train) of the novel, which sets out to tell the lives of great white men. The major black character in Mastern's story is a woman who is silent and completely commodified, and the exclusion of
blacks from the power structure that informs the whole text is never a central issue. Faulkner commented on the Mastern story in a 1946 letter to Lambert Davis, an editor at Harcourt Brace. His comments draw attention to the odd dissonance between the story and the rest of the text:

The Cass Mastern story is a beautiful and moving piece. That was his novel. The rest of it I would throw away. . . . He should have taken the Cass story and made a novel. (Blotner 239)

Warren cannot make a novel out of the Mastern story since to do so would require knowledge of the other history—the history of the blacks.

Just as Jack cannot imagine and does not choose to investigate the lives of women behind the walls of domestic space, he cannot imagine and does not investigate the lives of those imprisoned by his limited vision of race. The threads of black lives serve to form the dark background against which the lives of the white men stand out more vividly. Phebe’s betrayal is the impetus for the more central story of Mastern’s reaction to it. She is never seen or heard from again.

The betrayal of Phebe is only one of numerous betrayals in the novel. Most of those betrayals are sexual: Cass betrays Duncan with Annabelle; Jack betrays Adam with Anne; Willie betrays Lucy with Sadie, Jack with Anne, Sadie with Anne, and both Sadie and Anne with Lucy;
Irwin betrays Burden with Jack's mother. But in the midst of all these sexual liaisons, there is a strange lack of offspring. Willie and Lucy have a son, but he is born before the action of the novel begins. The child that supposedly results from Tom's affair with Sibyl Frey is of questionable paternity (330). Jack Burden, the protagonist of the novel, is an illegitimate child, born out of the betrayal of Ellis Burden by his best friend, Judge Irwin. Except for Tom Stark, there is no issue born of the marriages in the novel—not from Jack and Lois, the Trices, the Burdens (or Mrs. Burden's other marriages), or the Irwins (both sets). And there appears to be no child in the future of Jack and Anne's marriage. Sexuality in All the King's Men is a largely barren affair because an important piece of Jack's puzzle is missing—the generative power of the feminine. Because the king's man has left no space in his masculine power structure for women to occupy, the egg of fertility, like Humpty Dumpty in the title, can never be put together.16

Instead, the focus of the novel is upon the line from father to son—the line of patrimony—rather than upon the umbilical, life-giving line from mother to child. The emphasis is upon the male generations rather than feminine generation, and the issue of maternity seems unimportant. We know nothing of Governor Stanton's wife, the mother of Adam and Anne, for the only parent we see in Anne's
childhood is the father at whose knee she learns to value ambition and drive. Although Willie Stark's father is present, his mother is not mentioned. Jack's mother, as discussed earlier, is present but achieves no real status in her own son's eyes until he learns that she once loved his father (just as the Blessed Virgin's exalted status derives from the Father of her illegitimate son). At the end of the novel, after Jack has moved into Irwin's house, he wonders if Burden knows that Jack is not his son. In a line that at first seems to discount the importance of paternity, Jack says he cannot "feel that it matters, for each of us is the son of a million fathers" (436). Yet, in view of the patriarchal logic of the entire novel, the conclusion must be that those million fathers and the patriarchal structure they constitute are inescapable.

In the often-quoted final lines, Jack says that he and Anne will now go out of his father's house and into the world, "out of history into history" (438). His patriarchal version of history is inescapable--to step out of it is merely to step right back into it. Hélène Cixous writes in The Newly Born Woman:

The same masters dominate history from the beginning, inscribing on it the marks of their appropriating economy: history, as a story of phallocentrism, hasn't moved except to repeat
itself. "With a difference," as Joyce says.

Always the same, with other clothes. (79)

We do not have to wait for Jack's final version of Cass Mastern's story to see if he can escape the repetition of a phallocentric history: the novel itself IS his version of history, for the lives of these men are told in retrospect by the Jack who "shall have left" Burden's Landing only to return later and "walk down the Row" again (438).

Jack Burden and Robert Penn Warren write the history Hugh Holman describes in The Immoderate Past, a history concerned with "what is as a product of what was and the shaper of what may be, with history viewed as a process in which events are inexorably linked to each other in a broad shape" (11). Cixous posits an/other kind of historical view:

The future must no longer be determined by the past. . . . I refuse to strengthen [the effects of the past] by repeating them, to confer upon them an irremovability the equivalent of destiny, to confuse the biological and the cultural. (Newly Born 245)

The feminist history Christine Fauré describes would offer "a reading of the past through which the projective role of the present that shapes it is taken into account" (qtd. in Robinson 68). By reversing Holman's formula and making
the past a product of the present, Fauré recognizes
history as the product of (and therefore the mirror of)
present ideology. Holman’s view makes history into
destiny (a kind of Calvinist history) and thus blind to
its own ideological content.

In an essay on Faulkner, Warren reveals not only his
view of history as destiny, but also his own ideological
blindness to the content of that view:

The men who seized the land from the Indians were
determined to found an enduring and stable order
. . . But their project—or their great "design,"
to use Sutpen’s word from Absalom, Absalom—was
doomed from the first. It was "accurst"—to use
one of Faulkner’s favorite words—by chattel
slavery. There is a paradox here. The fact of
slavery itself was not a single, willed act. It
was a natural historical growth. But it was an
evil, and all its human and humane mitigations and
all its historical necessity could not quiet the
bad conscience it engendered. (Selected Essays
62–3)

Although Warren here admits that slavery was evil (a view
obvious from the Mastern story), his view of history as
process allows him to call that evil "a natural historical
growth," as if history were organic and beyond human
agency. 17 To see slavery as a "historical necessity" is
to be blind to humanity's responsibility. Hugh Miller tells Jack, "History is blind, but man is not" (436), and Jack never seems to recognize that the ideological blindness of the history he writes mirrors his own.

Jack's image of the spider web offers telling proof of his blindness. He sees his web, a metaphor for the network of relations that makes up the world, as woven by some fatalistic spider/god that spins out a single line to create the web. In his metaphor, the world is given and "of a piece," unified and whole. In A Room of One's Own, Virginia Woolf uses the image of a spider web to illustrate an/other, quite different perspective. She is describing fiction, but since she attaches the web of fiction to life "at all four corners," her metaphor can be compared to Jack's without too great a strain. Woolf recognizes that when the web is "pulled askew, hooked up at the edge, torn in the middle, one remembers that these webs are not spun in midair by incorporeal creatures, but are the work of suffering human beings, and are attached to grossly material things, like health and money and the houses we live in" (44). If we will but tear the web, disrupt its linearity, we will see that it is not a given whole, that it is spun or created by us, and that it is attached to the material.

Unlike Woolf, Warren's Jack Burden never questions the material conditions that produce the network of gender and
power relations in the world or in his history. The responsibility for this blindness lies with the author of the text since, as Louis Rubin writes in an essay on *All the King's Men*, "the artistic image of human life is not arbitrary and capricious, but subject to the logic of the artist's deepest experience as a human being" (114). Warren's own patriarchal logic, rather than any inexorable destiny, structures his novel and limits his imagination.
Notes

1. In a comment applicable to Warren's narratives, Roland Barthes describes "the pleasure of the text" as "an Oedipal pleasure (to denude, to know, to learn the origin and the end), if it is true that every narrative (every unveiling of the truth) is a staging of the (absent, hidden, or hypostatized) father" (10).

2. That particular past seemed so romantic to Warren that he wanted to imitate it in his own life. Although he had an appointment to the Naval Academy at Annapolis, an eye injury in 1920 forced him to give it up and, as Singal notes, "with it his dream of following in his grandfather's footsteps of military heroism" (342).

3. Richard King makes a similar division when he argues that Warren's work shows "little nostalgia ... for the culture of the family romance, at least in any specific historical sense" and that "though the father-son theme is central in his work," the South "as an historical-cultural entity is not thematized in any clear-cut way" (234, 236). His claim that the Mastern story in All the King's Men has no "regional implication" seems to deny the regional significance of slavery and the Civil War, both of which are at the heart of that story (237). He also claims that Judge Irwin's significance to the novel has no relation to his aristocratic "Old South
manner" (236). However, I will argue that Jack’s preference for the Judge as father does depend upon that Old South association. King’s dependence upon the Oedipus story and theories about the family romance to explain the Southern Renaissance produces a blindness to gender issues. Predictably, his central literary figure is Faulkner (and his major critical debt to John Irwin’s Oedipal readings of Faulkner), while he includes only one woman writer, Lillian Smith. Why the other women writers, "whatever the merits of their work, . . . did not place the region at the center of their imaginative visions" (his reason for excluding them) is outside his phallocentric study (9).

4. Murray Krieger classifies the woman in the house as a "classic existent" (along with "her counterpart in the story," Lucy Stark) and calls her a "solid chunk of immovable reality" (89). In Krieger’s schema, Jack enters the same state of classic existence by the end of the novel. But Krieger’s existents are active agents (90), and the women in All the King’s Men are not agents in the sense that Jack and the other men are. Instead, the women are consistently passive rather than active and objects rather than subjects. Simone Vauthier argues that this passage in the novel evokes "the longing for a mother’s love, the desire to know the secret behind the parents’ door" (118), but she offers no further explanation.
Instead, she analyzes the "you" of the passage, whom she sees as Jack's alter ego (117).

5. Jonathan Baumbach equates Jack's "quest for knowledge" with a quest for "manhood," a direct link that indicates the patriarchal nature of the power structure in the novel, although Baumbach does not notice the nature of that structure (25).

6. Of course, Jack sees his reasons differently. To him, his shyness results from a desire to live in the ideal, the time of perfection, and he believes that that desire requires Anne to remain image rather than flesh. However, what he does not yet see is that his ideal world requires the perfect father (still unfound at this point in the novel) at its center while pushing women to the edges of that male-centered world.

7. According to Warren's masculinist logic in All the King's Men, context signifies that which is outside the main text rather than that upon which the text depends for meaning. Within psychoanalytic theory, these two meanings of context would be, in effect, the same. Woman's (Freudian) status as "lack," or (Lacanian) status as "not all," acts as support for man's privileged status and underpins the phallocentric order that excludes her.

8. In spite of Jack's claim that he handed Anne over to Willie and that Willie had chosen her (which makes her a passive object of exchange rather than an active agent),
Louis Rubin says Anne "throws herself at Willie Stark" (129). Rubin's comment indicates the masculinist logic underlying much of Warren criticism.

9. Baumbach argues that, by marrying Anne, "Jack saves her in much the same way Pip saves Estelle at the end of Great Expectations," and he adds that "in redeeming her he at last redeems himself" (35). That Jack has provided himself an empowering future is clear, but what that future holds for the "redeemed" Anne appears empty.

10. Baumbach participates in Jack's masculinist point of view by referring to the "redemption of his mother through the recognition of her love for Irwin (his real father)" (35). Richard G. Law also sees Jack's "perception of the bond between himself and his mother" as Jack's "redemption," but he, too, makes that bond a representation of Jack's bond with the past (a past embodied in his father) (142).

11. Baumbach calls Jack's lie "salutary" and "noble," the "least he can do" for her: "As his mother's rebirth has resurrected him, Jack's lie resurrects the image of his father for his mother" (35). Of course, Baumbach has already argued that his mother's love for his father is what resurrects her in the first place. Baumbach does not seem aware of the circular logic nor the exclusively masculine point of view behind it.
12. Allen Shepherd points out that Warren was a regular Bible reader who not only "commended the Scriptures to aspiring writers" but also made considerable use of Biblical "quotations, allusions, analogies, diction, and sentence rhythms" in his own writing (139).

13. Warren calls himself "a very nonreligious man . . . not antireligious; that is, I have the deepest awareness of its importance," and he then says he is a "yearner" who wishes he were religious. (Connelly, "Of Bookish Men" 103)

14. Carl Freedman argues that Jack "is never able or willing to choose decisively" between the father figures of Judge Irwin and Willie Stark (129). But his argument, which does not include Ellis Burden, has to do with the political stances represented by Irwin and Stark rather than the issues I am concerned with here.

15. When men in the novel are associated with birds, the birds are typically aggressive hawks rather than peaceful doves.

16. I am indebted here to Carl Freedman's comments on sexuality in All the King's Men. He compares the landscape described in the opening passage of the novel and The Waste Land of Eliot, "where the sterility of the land is figured in the sexual incompetence of its monarch, the Fisher-King" (a name he connects with Huey Long's nickname, "the Kingfish"). He then argues that the novel
posits "sexual failure [as] . . . the basic determinant of political failure . . . [while] no quantum of political power is capable of refructifying erotic quality" (131). However, Freedman's overall argument differs significantly from my own since his main concern is with the sexual and political careers of Willie and Jack and not with the subordinate status of the women characters. As a result of that focus, he can conclude that Warren "is deeply sensitive to and interested in the matter of sexuality" (131). And he can complain that Jack's "descent into . . . domesticity" at the end weakens the novel by removing the political from the erotic (134-35), while he fails to see that the women have been reduced to the erotic, bound by the domestic, and excluded from the political all along.

17. Freedman makes similar comments regarding this passage (141).
The focus upon history is an integral part of the Southern literary tradition, and in All the King’s Men, perhaps the quintessential Southern novel about history, Robert Penn Warren’s comments on history reveal his beliefs about the status of women. As we have seen, in that novel two critical scenes conflate these two central issues, history and women. In one scene, Jack Burden’s train passes a woman throwing dishwater from her back porch (76), and in the other he drives his car past another country house in which he imagines a woman lying on her back, listening to his phallic engine "get big" as he passes her by, and watching the flies circle overhead. In both of these scenes, the male character is identified with the directed motion of history, a crucial equation in Warren’s novel. The women, however, are static, fixed within a domestic, passive role, and thus are outside the masculine history that is the focus of the text. In a similar scene at the beginning of the novel, Burden drives past several black men hoeing a field. They stop hoeing to watch him go by and then return to their task, framed and frozen in a seemingly endless repetitive motion. Like the two women, these men are also outside Warren’s
patriarchal history. As the women are relegated to the margins by sex, the black men are marginalized by race.

Although Eudora Welty seems to identify overtly with the masculine tradition (to which All the King's Men so unquestionably belongs), she also persistently subverts that identification. Her autobiographical One Writer's Beginnings offers a different perspective on the issues we have examined in Warren, a perspective that I am identifying as feminine. In one passage, Welty talks about the childhood train trips she took with her father. The train is the particular symbol of her "father's fondest beliefs--in progress, in the future," and with these "gifts, he was preparing his children" (4). A man always concerned with progress, or directed motion, Christian Welty constantly checked railroad timetables, mileposts along the track, and the time on his pocket watch. In spite of her claim that she and her father were "in no other respect or situation so congenial" (73) as in their hunger for travel, she admits a difference in their perceptions of the world through which they passed. His "fatherly gift," a phrase identifying the trait with masculinity and patriarchy, is to "put it all into the frame of regularity, predictability" (74). The daughter's gift is to see the outside world "in a flash," dreaming over what she could see as well as what she could not:
Part of the dream was what lay beyond, where the path wandered off through the pasture, the red clay road climbed and went over the hill or made a turn and was hidden in trees, or toward a river whose bridge I could see but whose name I'd never know. A house back at its distance at night showing a light from an open doorway, the morning faces of the children who stopped still in what they were doing, perhaps picking blackberries or wild plums, and watched us go by—I never saw with the thought of their continuing to be there just the same after we were out of sight. For now, and for a long while to come, I was proceeding in fantasy. (75)

In Welty's view, the paths that wander, unlike the railroad tracks that proceed straight to their predetermined destination, offer more interest than the "known world" of landmarks by which her father charts their progress (73). Her concern is the hidden, the nameless, the domestic, a feminine world she imagines not as changeless, or fixed and static, but as continuing in its own way, proceeding as she does, in a fantasy that includes others along with the self.

Unlike the two women or the black men in the scenes from *All the King's Men*, the children Welty passes do not continue "just the same" once she is out of sight. Unlike
Warren’s static women, these children have a narrative independent of Welty’s own, for she grants them their separateness and their status as subjects rather than as the mere static objects of her gaze. The children’s task is only possibly picking blackberries or wild plums, their harvest from nature intended for their own pleasurable consumption. The cash crop the black men are working in Warren’s scene, on the other hand, doubtless belongs to white men who alone will consume its profit. Welty’s children could also possibly be doing something entirely different, for the realm of fantasy, of the imagination, is without boundary lines.

When Welty later describes the inception of her "first good story," which began "spontaneously," or, to use her earlier words on viewing the world from the train, "in a flash," she returns to those childhood train rides:

As usual, I began writing from a distance, but "Death of a Traveling Salesman" led me closer. It drew me toward what was at the center of it, to a cabin back in the red clay hills—perhaps just such a house as I used to see from far off on a train at night, with the firelight or lamplight showing yellow from its open doorway. In writing the story I approached and went inside with my traveling salesman, and I had him, pressed by imminent death, figure out what was there. (87)
When Welty's salesman Bowman enters this house, what he discovers shocks him into silence: "A marriage, a fruitful marriage. That simple thing. Anyone could have had that." Again, as with the children seen from the train, Welty imagines a life of ongoing community beyond the solitary subject who passes through their lives, for there is a child to be born even after Bowman's death and the end of the story.

As pointed out earlier, Warren's Jack Burden imagines a woman inside the house he passes, but when subjected to his patriarchal gaze, she becomes passive, static, almost lifeless flesh—an object to the male subject. Nowhere in Warren's novel is there that "simple thing," the happy "fruitful marriage," the fully-lived domestic life. When Warren's protagonist enters the house, he finds instead a masculine fantasy, a woman in bed, waiting for him to come to her somewhere along his progress. She lies in the margins of his history, for he is telling the lives of men. Welty's Bowman, on the other hand, enters a house and finds the center of the story there, in a domestic relation.

Whereas directed motion is central to Warren's teleological history in All the King's Men, with the feminine domestic realm relegated to the sidelines, Welty makes that feminine world the center of her fiction, a world feminine not only in its subject, which includes the
lives of women as well as men, but also in its perspective. Her view is the daughter's rather than the father's, a view more concerned with the hidden lives within those distant houses than with progress, more concerned with the daily living of life than its destination. For Jack Burden, motion is life, but Welty claims in her essay "Place in Fiction" that "as soon as the least of us stands still, that is the moment something extraordinary is seen to be going on in the world" (Eye 123). In her feminine perspective, the stillness that Warren associates with death and with the feminine is required for revelation. And in Welty's fiction revelation does not come through piecing together the chronological sequence of the past or determining the causal logic of events. That is Warren's project, dependent on the father's gift. Using the daughter's gift, she looks for significance elsewhere, in what Warren marginalizes—the feminine.

An appropriate place to begin in determining Welty's view of the past is One Writer's Beginnings, a woman's personal history that significantly has multiple beginnings, a textual trait Hélène Cixous, among others, identifies as feminine.² And it is also a writer's history that includes discussions of aesthetics alongside accounts of past events. Throughout this text Welty often uses the common metaphor of the journey not only to
discuss her past but to discuss her writing as well. The image thus becomes significant in determining her concept of history and how that concept is revealed in her fiction, particularly since the two genres she keeps in such close proximity in this text, the factual and the fictional, often blend to form a tangle that complicates the search for Welty's "line" on the past.

At one point she claims that the trips she took as a child were "whole unto themselves," that they "were stories":

Not only in form, but in their taking on direction, movement, development, change. They changed something in my life: each trip made its particular revelation, though I could not have found words for it. But with the passage of time, I could look back on them and see them bringing me news, discoveries, premonitions, promises—I still can; they still do. (OWB 68)

Welty here compares single events in her life to unified stories with linear form, stories that seem to reflect the traditional plot diagram with directed motion and developmental progress ending in revelation. Here life has the properties of fiction.

Unlike the radical narrative disruptions found in Faulkner or Douglas, Welty’s fiction does tend to conform to more traditional, often chronological narrative form.
However, describing the short story, her favorite form, as a "lyric impulse," she adds in a 1981 interview that it "begins and carries through and ends all in the same curve" (Prenshaw, Conversations 309). Insisting that she is "not a very good novelist," she prefers thinking of a novel as scenes which "have to mount and have a continuity and momentum." In a comment that sounds undeniably teleological, suggesting linear diagrams of fictional plots, she claims that the end of a story is "implicit in the beginning":

It must be. If that isn’t there in the beginning, you don’t know what you’re working toward. You should have a sense of a story’s shape and form and its destination, all of which is like a flower inside a seed. (309)

Though here she seems aligned with the father’s perspective, Welty does admit, in the same interview, that her personal practice does not always adhere to her own authorial theories, for in the "working out" of a story, it may not turn out to be that lyric, whole curve she anticipates. She confesses, "I don’t really write as headlong as I would like" (310). In other words, she subverts the progress of her own writing, altering the expected path, the anticipated ending, and giving it a voice unique to Welty.
When Welty talks about writing fiction, she often seems to agree with the teleological view of the past, for she describes writing as "one way of discovering sequence in experience, of stumbling upon cause and effect in the happenings of a writer's own life":

Connections slowly emerge. Like distant landmarks you are approaching, cause and effect begin to align themselves, draw closer together. Experiences too indefinite of outline in themselves to be recognized for themselves connect and are identified as a larger shape. And suddenly a light is thrown back, as when your train makes a curve, showing that there has been a mountain of meaning rising behind you on the way you've come, is rising there still, proven now through retrospect. (OWB 90)

In this passage, Welty seems to adopt the masculine perspective of her father and Warren, in which events are causally aligned, in which landmarks mark progressive stages, and in which the past has a specific shape. The mountain of meaning appears to rise on its own, as pre-existent as the pattern of history Jack Burden claims to uncover.

But the mountain imagery (an organic metaphor, as is her metaphor of the story as a flower) does differ from Warren's metaphor of the past as a puzzle. Although Jack
writes of events gradually "piling up," his vision of their significance takes place gradually as well, for he must take those events as separate pieces and fit them together into the "correct" arrangement. Welty's mountain exists and rises whole, and she sees it whole in a moment of illumination. Rather than taking the mountain apart, stone by stone, to discover its significance, Welty's characters tend to have fleeting visionary moments. But, as Susan Donaldson notes of Welty's story collection, The Wide Net, "She exposes the drive for power underlying the desire for illumination and the illusory nature of immediacy and revelation created by those brief moments of epiphany" ("Meditations" 76).

After describing this mountain of meaning, Welty speaks of looking back at her parents' lives and wonders if she may see them better because she writes fiction:

See them not as fiction, certainly--see them, perhaps, as even greater mysteries than I knew. Writing fiction has developed in me an abiding respect for the unknown in a human lifetime and a sense of where to look for the threads, how to follow, how to connect, find in the thick of the tangle what clear line persists. The strands are all there: to the memory nothing is ever really lost. (OWB 90)
Here again Welty may sound like Warren as she looks for threads and finds a single "clear line" to follow. In fact, she echoes Jack Burden's "nothing is ever lost" (AKM 228). But it is necessary to note that her clear line does not lead to any totalizing explanation of her parents. Fiction has made her respect the clear line, but her parents are not fiction and persist as mysteries in spite of her retrospective gaze. In Warren's novel, Jack is the historian as detective, trying to solve a mystery, and when he claims that nothing is ever lost, his examples are listed as "clues" that lead to the solution of mysteries. His mystery, which is a patriarchal one, the son's search for a father, is ultimately and permanently solved. Welty never solves the mystery of her parents, in spite of the threads of memory she follows in writing this autobiography, because she can accept the indecipherable complexities of human existence. Welty would no doubt agree with Adrienne Rich on the nature of truth:

There is no "the truth," "a truth"—truth is not one thing, or even a system. It is an increasing complexity. The pattern of the carpet is a surface. When we look closely, or when we become weavers, we learn of the tiny multiple threads unseen in the overall pattern, the knots on the underside of the carpet. (2)
As a weaver of fiction, Welty must try to look closely at the threads that constitute life, but she is also aware that she can never completely unravel it. As she comments in "Words into Fiction," fiction is "full of mystery," and that "mystery lies in the use of language to express human life":

In writing, do we try to solve this mystery? No, I think we take hold of the other end of the stick. In very practical ways, we rediscover the mystery. We even, I might say, take advantage of it. (Eye 137)

In this essay Welty implies that fiction does not travel along the straight paths of a plot diagram but is less predictable, or perhaps more "mysterious," because it is subjective. In fact, she says that no one, not even the author, can retrace the development of a novel. Comparing the stages of revision to stations on a track, she adds that readers also "proceed by the author's arbitrary direction to his one-time-only destination: a journey rather strange, hardly in a straight line, altogether personal" (Eye 138). In this version of fiction-writing, the direction of the novel depends upon arbitrary authorial choice and is therefore, in spite of the arrival at its destination, erratically personal rather than dramatically linear.
In a passage from the autobiography, Welty uses the train metaphor along with the blurring of fact and fiction to explain the subjective nature of sequence:

The events in our lives happen in a sequence in time, but in their significance to ourselves they find their own order, a timetable not necessarily --perhaps not possibly--chronological. The time as we know it subjectively is often the chronology that stories and novels follow: it is the continuous thread of revelation. (OWB 68-69)

Here she mentions sequence alongside order, a timetable and a thread or path, all of which seem to imply the father's gift or vision, yet she counters that vision by making the sequence subjective, by declaring that the thread need not be laid out according to chronology. Later she refers to the subjective "inward journey that leads us through time--forward or back, seldom in a straight line, most often spiraling" (102).

As a feminine writing subject, Welty writes fiction that reflects the daughter's gift in ways that subvert the father's regulatory vision. Yet Welty has denied the presence of a particularly feminine perspective in her writing with comments like these from a 1972 interview with Charles Bunting:

I am a woman. In writing fiction, I think imagination comes ahead of sex. A writer's got to
be able to live inside all characters: male, female, old, young. To live inside any other person is the jump. Whether the other persons are male or female is subordinate. . . . I'm not interested in any kind of a feminine repartee. . . . All that talk of women's lib doesn't apply at all to women writers. . . . It's a matter of imagination, not sex. (Prenshaw, Conversations 54)

In spite of this disclaimer and others like it, she does admit that some of the work of feminists merits action: "It should be done, but . . . done another way" (251). In her well-known 1965 essay, "Must the Novelist Crusade?," she makes clear her aversion to overt political content in fiction (Eye 146-58). Yet in recent studies of Welty's feminine imagination, feminist critics have begun to discover in Welty's narratives a covert feminist ideological content.

One of the subversive strategies Welty uses in asserting her feminine vision amid her own regulatory notions of fiction is self-contradiction. "Great fiction," she writes in "Must the Novelist Crusade," "abounds in what makes for confusion . . . [,] is very seldom neat, is given to sprawling and escaping from bounds, is capable of contradicting itself" (Eye 149). In spite of her claims about unity, "wholeness," and
direction in fiction, and in spite of the chronological structure of much of her writing, her own fiction escapes the bounds she seems to draw for it. She blurs the lines she draws, challenging culturally accepted conventions not only of narrative, but of gender and history as well. Since I am concerned here with the gendered ideological uses of history, I want to look briefly at Welty's only self-proclaimed "historical novel," The Robber Bridegroom. In this novel we find a blurring of the boundaries between fact and fiction much like that which occurs in her discussions of actual childhood travels and fiction-writing in One Writer's Beginnings. In those autobiographical passages discussed earlier, determining whether she is discussing historical fact, subjective memory or fictive creation is often difficult. In The Robber Bridegroom, historical fact and imaginative fantasy create a similar inseparable whole.

In a 1975 talk, entitled "Fairy Tale of the Natchez Trace," given before the Mississippi Historical Society, Welty says that The Robber Bridegroom "set its foot, lightly enough, across the border between my territory and yours, and for you I'm going to call it my historical novel" (Eye 300). After labeling the novel for them, she adds that it is "not a historical historical novel" since it "does not fit . . . into that pattern, . . . nor was fitting into the pattern ever its aim" (302). In fact,
she claims that "from the start, [it] took another
direction: instead of burying itself deep in historical
fact, it flew up, like a cuckoo, and alighted in the
borrowed nest of fantasy" (311). Its title character
"owes his existence on the one side to history . . . and
on the other side to the Brothers Grimm" (303). What she
has done in this novel is blur the line between fact and
fiction, between history and fantasy, by intentionally
binding together history, legend and fairy tale as
"working equivalents" (305). Historical fact is never
privileged in this narrative. But neither does Welty deny
or dismiss linear history, for the story, in spite of its
multiple narrative threads, moves chronologically from
beginning to end. What she does do is add to history the
marginal stories of the displaced Natchez Indians and
commodified women, altering the traditional story line of
American history by drawing attention to alterity within
that history.

The title character has a double identity, both robber
and bridegroom, as does his father-in-law, Clement
Musgrove, who initially seems to be the typical New Adam
in a new land. But this New Eden, like the men who
inhabit it, also has more than one face. In the opening
sentence Clement is "an innocent planter," both farmer and
merchant, who we soon learn is not innocent. He
constantly distances himself from the greed of his venture
as a plantation owner, claiming that ambition never once stirred his heart, that he was merely "caught up by what came over the others," tugged by some unknown force against his will to join the pioneers (21). The stars that shine down on them on their way seem to count the pioneers' possessions and find them "a small number." Nature then seems to invite, even coerce, her own invasion and possession, her own rape. In fact, the King of Spain grants the land to Clement (25), making Clement's prosperity a result of patriarchal authority and imperialism rather than of the willing submission implied in Clement's claim that nature gave whatever he asked: "there was no limit to its favors" (28).

Although Clement becomes, in spite of his self-declared lack of ambition, a wealthy man, he once again denies his own complicity by blaming his wife Salome: "she made me try cotton, and my fortune was made" (28). According to him, she is the one who wants the plantation home and the wealth provided by an economy that requires "new slaves." Not only does her name suggest the villainous seductress whose wiles won her the death of that wilderness hero, John the Baptist, she is also the New Eve whose will corrupts the New Adam. On the surface, Welty seems to imitate the traditional American myth of the frontier, of the innocent, heroic white man in a
golden age now lost, and even to replicate stereotypical views of women.10

But, in spite of Salome's cruelty and greed, Welty offers a glimpse of a different rationale behind the apparently stereotypical portrayal, a different history that could offer a different portrait, but one that is so hidden in the traditional version of history as to be almost totally invisible. Before joining Clement's band of pioneers, Salome had had "days of gentleness, which must have been left behind in Kentucky" (24), and only after humiliation and torture, after watching the execution of her first husband and being sent into the wilderness literally tied to another man and his child, only then is there "no longer anything but ambition left in her destroyed heart" (22-24). Once even a glimpse of her history is included, she ceases to be capriciously evil but is invisibly marked, as Clement says he is, by her experience. Her participation in the "heroic" pioneer expedition destroys all but the greed that motivated the journey all along.

When Salome is recaptured toward the end of the tale, she exerts the only real power she has: this time she chooses to be a victim. She is denied the heroism of a substitutionary, sacrificial death, for although she replaces Rosamond as the Indians' victim, she is allowed to do so only because Rosamond has already escaped. Her
gesture proves her powerlessness by saving no one. In a last-ditch attempt to wield power over the patriarchal structures that have determined her life, she persists in talking despite their commands to be silent. She even commands the Indian's masculine god, the sun, to stand still, crying, "No one is to have power over me! No man, and none of the elements! I am by myself in the world" (160-61). Declaring her own independence, she even goes on to assert a feminine power greater than the power of the male Indians around her, for she tells them she could punish the sun since she knows it can be eaten by the shadow of the feminine moon (161). But her defiance is futile; she is once again enclosed by the chief, his son, and the others who force her to dance herself to death. She threatens the Indians' source, their original authority, and, despite her defiant death, "still the sun went on as well as ever" (163). She is finally treated as a man's possession when Clement declares, "I own her body" (164).

The other major female character, Clement's daughter Rosamond, is likewise a feminine stereotype, not only fair and beautiful but also prone to lying. She is mistreated by her wicked stepmother and treasured by her father, but in that treasuring lies the other story glossed over by the tradition, for she, like Salome, is commodified. Complaining of her deceitfulness, Clement often remarks
that "if a man could be found anywhere in the world who could make her tell the truth, he would turn her over to him" (39). After Jamie rapes Rosamond, Clement asks Jamie's help in saving her, promising her as the "reward of great price" if he is successful (72). In an ironically material version of Biblical redemption by Christ, the "pearl of great price" in Matthew 13:46, Rosamond is to be the medium of exchange for her own redemption, herself the object that will buy herself back within the masculine economy. In another convolution within this exchange, Clement is giving her to the man who has already taken her, a man who, rather than teaching her to be truthful, is guilty of duplicity much more vile than Rosamond's.

Unlike Jamie's lying, Rosamond's is apparently unintentional: "she did not mean to tell anything but the truth, but when she opened her mouth in answer to a question, the lies would simply fall out like diamonds and pearls" (39). At first, this naturalness seems to imply that deceit is, as the tradition declares, a biologically determined, sexually linked trait in women. But comparing lies with diamonds and pearls offers another possibility within a story where monetary gain figures so prominently. Traditionally, of course, the woman is valued as long as she remains chaste, her virginity being the treasure she should guard at all cost since her virginity and
faithfulness to her husband are all that ensure the patriarchal line of descent whereby the rightful heir receives the father's name and property. Yet Rosamond, when offered the choice of death with honor or the shame of nakedness, decides without hesitation that "life is sweet": "before I would die on the point of your sword, I would go home naked any day" (50). She resists the traditional heroine's plotted role, insisting that her life is of value (like her jewel-lies) in itself, with or without a male-defined honor.14

On their second meeting, Jamie "robbed her of that which he had left her the day before" (65), her virginity. When he sees her later at her father's, he does not recognize her and so does not notice "that true worth which he had sampled" (68). He thinks, in accordance with the tradition, that her true worth is her body, her sexuality. Later, when the despicable bandit Little Harp brutally rapes a young Indian maiden, he claims to be teaching her "the end of her life" (132). Her end, or purpose, is in his view sexual, but that limiting perspective also results in her death, the end of her life. The end, or result, of equating women with nothing more than their sexuality is women's end or erasure from the (his)story.

Rosamond's "true worth," of which both Jamie and the father who treasures her are unaware, is the very thing,
Clement wants to cure, for her lies, the products of her imagination, are as valuable as diamonds and pearls. Although Jamie claims she "cannot sew a straight seam" (165), she can use the spinning-wheel the robbers give her and weave mats; however, her greatest skill is weaving tales. She is the artist in The Robber Bridegroom, and even though, conforming to the traditional romance plot, she eventually marries Jamie and has his children, she is never "cured" of lying. Her imagination makes her quite different from the father who wants her cured:

[He] could have walked the streets of Bagdad without sending a second glance overhead at the Magic Carpet, or heard the tambourines of the angels in Paradise without dancing a step, or had his choice of the fruits of the Garden of Eden without making up his mind. For he was an innocent of the wilderness, and a planter of Rodney's Landing, and this was his good. (182)

When we last see Clement, who we have learned is not innocent either in his own financial success or his treatment of women, he is clutching a bag of money as he walks through New Orleans, still choosing the wrong fruits even without Salome to coerce him, for the city offers "beauty and vice and every delight possible to the soul and body" (182). Rosamond, who says she has everything she wants, is still imagining things she does not have—
not money or objects valued for their price, but a "blue silk canopy" to hover overhead while she visits pirates' galleons on the ocean (184). And, unlike her father, who at the end is about to retrace the homeward journey that began the story, she will gaze upward, toward the unknown possibilities of her imagination.

In these two apparently one-dimensional women characters, who appear at first to be no more than the stereotypical virginal heroine and shrewish fisherman's wife, there is a doubleness that mirrors the doubleness at the core of the novel. Welty's novel is itself double, combining the genres of history and fairy tale, and the title character has a double identity, both robber and bridegroom. At one point in the story he forgets that he has only half his face covered with the berry juice that usually creates his robber's mask and we have a visual representation of the novel's major theme. When Clement discovers that Rosamond's lover is a bandit who, in spite of his trade, loves her, Clement says the man "must be not the one man, but two, and I should be afraid of killing the second": "For all things are double, and this should keep us from taking liberties with the outside world, and acting too quickly to finish things off" (126). He even wonders if someday the bandit will "step out of it all like a beastly skin, and surprise you with his gentleness."
When Jamie does finally give up robbery to become a merchant, "the outward transfer . . . [is] almost too easy to count it a change at all," and he is as successful at his new venture as he was at his old one (184-85). He even decides that he is and has always been a hero, "only with the power to look both ways and to see a thing from all sides." Again, Welty alters what appears to be true at first glance. The robber whose identity seems obviously double, for he has two lives and even two faces, does not have to change to live his new life since, in Welty's wry yet scathing comment on capitalism, being a merchant is no different than being a robber. Unlike the women, who are finally more complex than their stereotypical exteriors imply, the masked man is the same man underneath the disguise.

Both Jamie and Clement finally have a similar identity since they are engaged in a similar task, the accumulation of wealth, and just as Clement's innocence is questioned as the story unfolds, so is Jamie's self-proclaimed heroism. In the traditional history of the American frontier, men like Jamie and Clement are heroes, but in Welty's version there are other points of view that should be included. By telling their stories alongside the muted stories of the women, she undercuts their heroic stature, and she uses the history of the Natchez Indians to further that subversion of traditional history.
At first glance these Indians seem, like the women, to be stereotypes: cruel savages who had to be destroyed for civilization to exist in the New Eden. They capture Clement’s group of pioneers and torture and humiliate them, cruelly kill Clement’s baby son by dropping him into a pot of burning oil (a sight that kills his wife), and murder Salome’s husband (22–23). Yet Welty includes brief comments that imply a different story. As Michael Kreyling points out, the model for Welty’s fictional Indians is the Natchez Indians, who had been massacred in 1730, years before the events of the novel (31). That Welty reorders history, resurrecting Indians who were already ghosts to inhabit her story, creates a doubleness to the narrative that reminds us constantly of the other side of the story, the story silenced by the death of those who could have told it.

When Clement tells Jamie of his first encounter with the Indians, Jamie says he fears the Indians may manage to survive "no matter how we stamp upon them," and Clement says they "know their time has come": "They are sure of the future growing smaller always, and that lets them be infinitely gay and cruel" (21). The reader who knows that the Natchez had already been stamped out may find them more sympathetic even when reading of their cruelty. The bandit Little Harp’s equally sadistic rape and murder of the Indian maiden is the novel’s only portrayal of what
form the whites' destruction of the Indians took, but Welty does finally bring the untamed wilderness and civilization together, just as she brings together savage robbery and civilized business. Toward the end of the story, Clement looks at the "sad faces of the Indians, like the faces of feverish children," and realizes that his people will share the fate of the Indians:

The savages have only come the sooner to their end; we will come to ours too. Why have I built my house, and added to it? The planter will go after the hunter, and the merchant after the planter, all having their day. (161)

The double threads of civilization and what Clement considers savagery are here interwoven so that each group is inseparable from the other, each culture and way of life the same in the promise of ultimate extinction. Although Clement's revelation is tinged with nostalgia for the life that he knows will one day be past, Welty's story of that past includes sufficient criticism to counter her character's nostalgia. Welty subverts the vision of a golden age by portraying a history filled with violence against those who are not both white and male.

In a story where women are supposed to be liars, Welty gives us men like Mike Fink, teller of tall tales, and a robber bridegroom who, while blaming his lover for not trusting him, keeps his true name and identity from her.
In a tale filled with doubleness and duplicity, Welty creates a doubled history in which she combines fact and fiction, truth and lies, and makes us question the validity of the stories masculine history has told us. The presence of marginal stories, muted in the narrative as they have been in history (and criticism), subverts the authority of what has been called the central story and alters our view of the heroes whose lives make up that story. This historical novel which is "not a historical historical novel" draws attention to the fictive nature of all history, not just this particular version. Welty manages to subvert traditional American history while imitating it, not only by parodic exaggeration and the incorporation of fantasy, but also by the inclusion of other possible histories that are subsumed and hidden by tradition.

In another novel that blurs genre lines, the partly autobiographical *The Optimist's Daughter*, Welty again draws attention to the fictive nature of history, this time focusing more on personal rather than national history. In *Writing a Woman's Life*, Carolyn Heilbrun labels Welty's actual autobiography a dangerous book for women because of its "nostalgia and romanticizing" (13). Heilbrun adds, "I do not believe in the bittersweet quality of *One Writer's Beginnings*, nor do I suppose that the Eudora Welty there evoked could have written the
stories and novels we have learned to celebrate" (14). Welty the fiction writer "rescues" herself and her readers from the nostalgia of Welty the autobiographer. In Heilbrun's assessment, Welty is a "camouflaged" writer whose fiction belies what many perceive as her "docile acceptance of what she is given." Famous for her well-guarded privacy, Welty writes what Heilbrun claims is the only autobiography possible to her, one that reveals her life while covering, or camouflaging it with nostalgia, particularly nostalgia for her childhood. Heilbrun sees that nostalgia as a possible "mask for unrecognized anger" (15), a mask that is particularly understandable in a Southern woman whose culture values the genteel lady. But, as Heilbrun explains, the prohibition of both anger and "the open admission of the desire for power and control over one's life (which inevitably means accepting some degree of power and control over other lives)" has been true for women in general (13).

Although Heilbrun accuses Welty of dangerous nostalgia, the nostalgia in Welty differs significantly from that found in writers like Warren and Faulkner. In Nostalgia and Sexual Difference Janice Doane and Devon Hodges describe the kind of nostalgia found in those Southern male writers who yearn for the golden age of the Old South. In the "golden age" so attractive to those writers, women occupy a traditional place, and the
"deteriorating" values of contemporary culture have contributed to the degeneracy of "truer" values by allowing the liberation of women. Doane and Hodges write, "The nostalgic writer wants natural, fixed sexual difference" (7). In their discussion of George Stade's Confessions of a Lady-Killer, they describe the image of women so prevalent in such writers as "hark[ing] back to an idealized past in which sexual differences were uncompromised by questions about the relation of these differences to ideology and culture." If traditional gender roles can be seen as the result of nature, then those roles offer a "stable referent . . . [that] acts as an authentic origin or center from which to disparage the degenerate present and as the 'truth' behind stereotypic sexual oppositions" (8). And, they add, such a referent "is always located in the past."

In Welty's The Optimist's Daughter, autobiography and fiction combine to create an appropriate text for examining the masking or camouflaging (the divergence between Welty's fiction and her autobiography) that Heilbrun points out. Within this text Welty both reveals and covers her life and, in the process, creates a subversive feminine text that allows the culturally unacceptable, a woman's anger, to surface. In One Writer's Beginnings Welty describes listening to her parents' voices after she had been put to bed, feeling
included in their union (20-21). An almost identical scene appears in *The Optimist's Daughter* as Laurel remembers her parents reading to each other, "combined into one unceasing voice" until she "was sent to sleep under a velvety cloak of words, richly patterned and stitched with gold, straight out of a fairy tale, while they went reading on into her dreams" (57-58). In the novel, published more than a decade before the autobiography, Welty connects this nostalgic childhood vision of familial unity with fairy tales and dreams, with a lovely tale woven and patterned by imaginative language. Unlike the apparently straightforward memory in the autobiography, the version altered by fiction allows the mask to slip.

Although Welty is certainly nostalgic in writing about her own childhood and parents in *One Writer's Beginnings*, when that same childhood and those same parents are altered by fiction in *The Optimist's Daughter*, that alteration, that blurring of the lines between factual reality and imaginative fiction, allows her to maintain her privacy and yet express any residual dissatisfaction with the gender roles enforced by the patriarchal culture in which she grew up. I do not intend to offer a psycho-biography of Welty, but her most autobiographical novel is also the novel most directly concerned with history and nostalgia, as well as with a woman artist's desire for
control over her own life without renouncing connection with others. The protagonist, Laurel McKelva Hand, is an artist who begins in nostalgia but manages to work through her desire for the security of her childhood memories to the realization that memory alters the past to fit our present needs. As she tries to unravel the cloak of her memory, to separate the fairy tale and the dream from the truth she seeks about her parents' lives and, through their lives, about her own life and marriage, she gradually recognizes that clinging to the past will result in the loss of control over her own life and will imprison her within the traditional gender role of the Southern lady. Finally, she is able to release the past and go on with her life, open to experience, creativity and love. As Ruth Weston writes, "[In] The Optimist's Daughter, Welty creates a woman's world in which woman is creator and controller, . . . and in which patriarchal myths are devalorized even as they are affirmed to operate" (74).

The novel begins with the illness and death of Laurel's father, Judge McKelva, who has already disrupted her beliefs about him by marrying Fay, a young woman completely different (due in large part to her different class) from the Southern women so familiar to Laurel, and particularly different from Laurel's mother, Becky. In Laurel's memories, her parents in many ways conform to traditional gender roles. Her father, the optimist of the
title, is associated with the progressive motion implied by optimism. He is a lover of train travel (44), and his grave is near the interstate highway (92), both details further connecting him with directed motion. A Judge, his world is the courthouse, a symbol of the patriarchal legal and political system in which Warren places his male characters, the "king's men." The Judge's favorite novels are detective fiction, with clues leading toward final revelation, and his library contains a "shelf-load" of Gibbon, whose history of the rise and fall of Rome epitomizes linear, causal history (83). The fiction and the history both present a similar pattern, linear progression toward final revelation. During the Judge's illness he constantly asks the time, keeping his mind fixed on the progressive movement of clock time, measurable in minutes and hours. In all these details, his world and his perspective are portrayed as traditionally masculine.

Judge McKelva's desk was his father's and before that his grandfather's (121), whose portraits hang in the library, one a Confederate general and the other a missionary to China (118). The Judge is thus the product of both the Old South's violently defensive heroic tradition and its patriarchal religion. Since the Judge's family built the Mt. Salus Presbyterian Church, he is identified with it as well as with the courthouse it
faces. In a comic comment on the town's lack of surprise at the Judge's death, Welty adds, "Laurel seemed to remember that Presbyterians were good at this" (51). In alluding to the Calvinist doctrine of predestination, Welty reminds us of the linear view of history implicit in that doctrine. Furthermore, this directional doctrine and the concomitant belief in original sin, ideas that exert a strong presence in Warren and Faulkner, are directly linked in Welty with the father rather than the mother.

Although throughout her life Becky knew and quoted the Bible, she "dared any McKelva missionary to speak his piece to her" (148). When her illness and impending death cause her to ask for "spiritual guidance," she tells the Presbyterian minister who visits her of wild white strawberries that grow on her mountain in West Virginia. She tells him that even if she gave him directions to the one spot where they grow, he still would not see them. And, she adds, if he did find them he would try to carry them home rather than realizing that they can only be enjoyed "on the spot" (148-49). Her comments are similar to Welty's own view of religion, which involves a "reverence for the holiness of life [that] is not ever likely to be at home in organized religion" (OWB 33). Finding those wild strawberries requires a different perspective than that of the Presbyterian minister.
Reverence for and apparently enjoyment of life are at home on the mountain but not in the church.  

Not only does Becky differ from the McKelvas on religion, she is in many ways her husband's opposite. An avid and gifted gardener from the mountains of West Virginia, the home she yearns for throughout her marriage, Becky is associated with the natural world rather than the Judge's cultural one, an opposition that reinforces the stereotypical feminine/masculine, nature/culture dichotomies. At her funeral, the casket was closed because she did not wish to lie "in front of people's eyes" (63). When Laurel protests the Judge's open casket, Miss Tennyson reminds her that, although her mother was "different," Judge McKelva is "a public figure" and must be seen by the public. Again stereotypical dichotomies are reinforced, this time the gendered division of private and public. Whereas the Judge's desk is a "massive, concentrated presence" in the library (121), Becky's desk is in the sewing room, the former nursery, identifying her with the private domestic sphere she inhabited rather than the Judge's cultural one (132). Unlike her optimist husband, Becky does not believe in inevitable progress but rather expects death and disruption. As Laurel says of her, "Mother had a superstitious streak underneath . . . [and] might have had a notion it was unlucky to make too much of your happiness" (124).
At the same time that the novel presents these stereotypical gender roles, those roles are undercut and the gender line is blurred as Laurel is gradually forced to confront her parents' difference from the pictures she has of them. The incident that makes the Judge realize something is wrong with his eyes occurs after he had been working in Becky's garden, pruning her rose bushes. As he stands on the front porch, he suddenly thinks he is seeing in two directions: toward the courthouse down the street and toward the backyard fig tree flashing with Becky's tin bird-frighteners, or, in other words, toward the masculine world and the feminine one at once (4-5). For the first time in Laurel's memory, her father admits to "a little uncertainty in his bearings" (12), and she is disturbed by his divergence from her memory.

Her distress increases as, during his illness, he becomes more and more feminized. First, his ailment is similar to the one that began her mother's long invalidism and finally her death. On his back in bed, motionless, passive and silent, he becomes in Laurel's eyes "unnatural," and she feels "ashamed to let him act out the part" of an old, feminized man in front of her (22). His hair grows long (29), his skin becomes "soft and gathered, like a woman's sleeve," and, as he dies, his head seems to be under water (33). His final smile is "of a child who is hiding in the dark while the others hunt him, waiting
to be found" (34), and his body in its casket is compared
with that of a newborn baby (64). The masculine father
figure Laurel remembers disappears as she watches, and,
although his feminization can be attributed to illness and
death, Laurel gradually finds that he has always been
other than her remembered image.

This gradual shift in Laurel's perception accelerates
after the Judge's death. While his casket is at home
before the funeral, the people who have come to view the
body begin to tell anecdotes about the Judge, discussing
their memories of him and his character. Major Bullock
claims the Judge was modest yet fearless and then tells of
a night when the Judge, armed and alone on the courthouse
steps, heroically faced down a lynch mob in a scene that
reads like a movie script. Laurel says that she
"doesn't think that was father" because he had no use for
"what he called theatrics" and "no patience for show" (79-80). According to Laurel, Bullock is "trying to make
Father into something he wanted to be himself," and she
insists that it is unfair, that her father "really was
modest," and that he "would have thought of [her] mother"
(80).

At that moment, she realizes that her mother was in
fact the one "who might have done that": "She's the only
one I know who had it in her" (80). At the age of fifteen
Becky had accompanied her desperately ill father to
Baltimore, riding down an icy river at night. After his death in that city of strangers, she had made the return trip alone with his body (143-44). When Becky's home in West Virginia burned one summer, she ran "back into the flames and rescued her dead father's set of Dickens at the risk of her life" (149). Laurel's mother, then, is closer to the heroic tradition than her father. Laurel later admits that her father was a man of "domestic gentleness" and "great delicacy" (146). Not only does Laurel have to begin to face this parental gender reversal, but, as Ruth Weston points out, "at the same time, the text of a patriarchal oration is devalorized as ludicrous and paradoxically recognized at the same time as an instrument of patriarchal myth-creation" (85). Furthermore, she must recognize her own role in that creation.

When her neighbor Adele tries to console Laurel for the stories being told about the Judge, Laurel still insists that people are "misrepresenting him--falsifying" and that her father "never would have stood for lies being told about him. Not at any time. Not ever" (83). She "might have been trying to testify now for her father's sake, as though he were in process of being put on trial," and she insists that, as his daughter, she wants "what people say now to be the truth." To her, the "least anybody can do for him is remember right." But Adele points out a truth about the Judge that his daughter
either does not know or does not "remember right" herself: the Judge would have tolerated lies about himself if "the truth might hurt the wrong person" (83). Adele's reminder serves to question Laurel's own "truth" about the father whose memory she claims to defend against falsehood. The daughter's memory is also suspect, although she has yet to accept that possibility.

One of Laurel's complaints about the new Mrs. McKelva, Fay, is that Fay has lied about her family, creating a romanticized version of them: they were poor yet close and unselfish, and they were all dead now, leaving Fay alone in the world (27-28). After the family shows up for the funeral, Laurel confronts Fay about her lie, to which Fay replies, "It's better than some lies I've heard around here" (99). Laurel, however, still cannot confront her own duplicity. To her, Fay's family is false because they "never know the meaning of what has happened to them" (84), or, in other words, they do not know the meaning of the past. What Laurel cannot see in herself is that she does not know either. As they are, at least in her eyes, too immersed in the present, she is too immersed in the past.

After Fay has temporarily left town with her family, Laurel spends a morning working in her mother's garden while several Mt. Salus women sit in the yard watching her and talking. As Laurel silently pulls weeds, the other
women, one of whom is knitting an afghan, are weaving their version of the Judge's two marriages. Like Laurel, they believe their version is based on "evidence" (111). They even construct a future life for Laurel, based upon her mother's life. To them, Laurel "has no other life" (112), in spite of her career in Chicago, since she has no husband or children. They believe she should live in Mt. Salus on the Judge's money, help them deal with Fay, and take her mother's place at the bridge table. Miss Tennyson has already told her that "daughters need to stay put" and care for the "old folks" (61), reinforcing the traditionally fixed status of women as well as their traditional role as caregivers. Mr. Cheek, the carpenter, already sees her as Becky's replacement, calling her "Young Miss" as he had called Becky "Old Miss," and telling her she sounds like her mother: "You even got her voice" (164-66).

Not only the older women of the town but even Laurel's own generation offend her sense of "true" history as they talk about her parents. Although they are all married (Tish is already divorced) and have college-age children, these women still call themselves "bridesmaids" (49, 123, 125). Both they and their husbands "had gone from the first grade through high school graduation together, and they still stood solid" (63-64). Their stories about Laurel's parents reflect the solidity of their
expectations, for they rewrite the McKelva marriage to fit a traditional romance plot, concluding from a series of humorous anecdotes about Becky and the Judge that "they'd do anything for each other" (126). When Laurel finally objects to their stories, asking if her parents have become "just figures . . . to make a good story," Tish Bullock reassures her that the McKelvas are no funnier than "all our fathers and mothers are" (127). For the bridesmaids, the characters in the marriage plot are interchangeable and the plot predictable, but just as Laurel cannot bear Major Bullock's chivalric plot, she cannot tolerate the bridesmaids' comedic one. Those tales may reassure the ones who tell them but not the daughter determined to uncover her parents' true history.

Since Laurel believes Fay caused the Judge's death, she begins her masculine reconstruction of events intent on proving Fay's guilt, and thus aligning herself with her father's world, the law. Unlike the narratives by the townspeople, Laurel's version is intended to be a detective story put "in the form of facts" that will serve as "a verdict" indicting Fay (130). Believing that naming Fay's guilt, telling it, will release her, Laurel thinks that she wants to show "the proof, the damnable evidence" to her dead mother, "and so be herself consoled" (132). But, realizing that such a desire betrays her own guilt, her similarity to Fay, she asks herself, "What would I not
do, perpetrate, . . . for consolation?" Her desire to reconstruct the past is much more far-reaching than a simple desire to prove Fay's complicity in the Judge's death. Hers is a desire for personal consolation through the impossible "reconstruction" of the past; hers is a nostalgic desire.

When Laurel remembers her parents' arguing after the death of Becky's mother, she recalls, "They raised their voices, cried out back and forth, as if grief could be fabricated into an argument to comfort itself with" (142). Laurel, too, is trying to develop her grief over the lost "golden age" of her childhood, embodied by her parents, into an argument, a defense of that past world as superior to her present one. In much the same way, as I argue in other chapters, Faulkner and Warren reconstruct the past as argument, since out of grief, the sense of a "golden age" lost, they present a frequently nostalgic past as an argument to comfort themselves. What, then, makes Welty's Laurel differ from Warren's Burden and Faulkner's Quentin? Like those male characters, Laurel tries to reconstruct history as a logical argument or pattern. But, unlike them, she finally decides that such a task is artificial and duplicitous.

In "Must the Novelist Crusade?", Welty implies that fiction-writing is opposed to logical argument:
The novelist's work is highly organized, but I should say it is organized around anything but logic. Just as characters are not labels but are made from the inside out and grow into their own life, so does a plot have a living principle on which it hangs together and gradually earns its shape. A plot is a thousand times more unsettling than an argument, which may be answered. It is not a pattern imposed, it is an inward emotion acted out. It is arbitrary, indeed, but not artificial. It is possibly so odd that it might be called a vision, but it is organic to its material: it is a working vision, then. (Eye 150-51)

In that same essay, she also writes:

Great fiction . . . abounds in what makes for confusion . . . . It is very seldom neat, is given to sprawling and escaping from bounds, is capable of contradicting itself, and . . . [contains] absolutely everything . . . but a clear answer. (149)

When Laurel, or anyone else, tries to reconstruct the past as comforting argument, then the past must be forced to fit a prescribed, logical pattern. Events must be organized and arranged so that they lead to a conclusion. Such is Jack Burden's view even of what seems at first to
be the chaos of events; they still contain an innate logic and rush in directed motion toward a conclusion. Welty, on the other hand, emphasizes organic growth rather than mechanical, linear progression.

What Laurel must come to accept is a vision of the past closer to Welty's description of fiction: a possibly unsettling rather than necessarily comforting vision, in which there is chaos and contradiction without artificial boundaries, and a vision patterned after "inward emotion acted out" rather than argumentative logic. But that acceptance comes only after she recognizes that her own versions of the past are as false as the townspeople's versions. After rejecting their stories, she repeatedly attempts to construct her own logically organized and comforting (masculine) history. At the beginning of the novel, while in the hospital waiting for her father's recovery, she has already begun to search for clues that will lead her to some final truth. Looking down the hospital corridor "receding into the distance," she notices for the first time "the design in the tiling . . . , like some clue she would need to follow to get to the right place" (31). All the hallway leads to, however, is her father's room, the room in which he will later die, "the last door on the right."

She is already reading detective novels to her father, and she has allowed him to set the pattern of existence,
herself aware, as is he, of the passage of clock time, "setting her inner chronology with his, more or less as if they needed to keep in step for a long walk ahead of them" (19-20). Trying, even after his death, to emulate what she believes is his perspective, she is disturbed that his masculine presence, embodied in his desk, has been defaced by the feminine trace of Fay's blood-red nail polish, which she diligently rubs completely away (121-23). When she discovers that his books, particularly the set of Gibbon, are out of order, she "set[s] them back straight in the same order" (119). In attempting to make her nostalgia into argument, she is obsessed with order.

An artist, a designer of fabrics, Laurel has since childhood been concerned with patterns and designs. In the sewing room where her mother's desk is now, the young Laurel would sit on the floor while her mother sewed and "put together the fallen scraps of cloth into stars, flowers, birds, people, or whatever she liked to call them, lining them up, spacing them out, making them into patterns, families" (133). In this scene, Welty makes her artist piece together fragments, creating patterns, much like the quilting metaphor I have used elsewhere to describe the feminine Southern text in which the organizing principle seems to be relationship. Even though Laurel lines these fragments up, implying a
masculine order, the images she creates are of a different, feminine order, either natural or domestic.

Furthermore, Laurel is in a feminine space, a nursery and sewing room, where the firelight or sunlight "move[s] over mother and child and what they were both making" (134). The room is also the site of storytelling. Miss Verna Longmeier, the sewing woman who would "at her rare, appointed times" help Becky, had sat in this room "sewing and making up tales or remembering all wrong what she saw and heard" (133). When Verna comes to the house to see the Judge's body, Laurel remembers her "at the sewing machine, listening and talking and repeating and getting everything crooked" (71). There was, then, a time when Laurel participated in a different, feminine creativity, based on a less rigidly ordered, freer aesthetic, one in which the imaginative is allowed to blend with the factual.

Laurel's husband Phil was also an artist, an architect who not only designed houses "to stand, to last, to be lived in," but also "made simple objects of immediate use" (162). Laurel remembers how his example had taught her how to use her own artistic gifts: "She learned how to work by working beside him. He taught her to draw, to work toward and into her pattern, not to sketch peripheries" (161). Although his artistic abilities differ from hers (he values permanence and use over growth
and play), he encourages her to escape boundaries and to work toward her own pattern, using her own feminine gift.

Yet while Laurel is back in Mt. Salus, she allows her artistic vision to be overwhelmed by the desire for order. Her sketchbook remains untouched in her suitcase (165) while she pulls weeds from her mother's garden and straightens her father's library. But in the process of trying to set her parents' house, and their memory, in order, her attempts are disrupted by what she discovers, and her own pattern, her own imaginative gift, surfaces. Part of that disruption has been the realization that her parents do not fit the stereotypical gender roles she has tried to make them play, and that realization is reinforced as she examines the contents and order of their desks.

Although the Judge's office cabinet contains, along with his lawbooks and the Mississippi Code, folders and file boxes with markers, as if they were quite orderly, Laurel discovers that his papers are "in an order of their own," an order that she decides is "of importance to unimportance," but she cannot be sure since his idea of importance seems highly personal rather than logical (119). The personal memorabilia that she does expect to find, letters from her mother, are not there. At first she thinks that, like her mother's photograph, the letters
must have been removed by Fay, but she then realizes what she "should have known" from the beginning:

They weren't anywhere, because he hadn't kept them. He'd never kept them: Laurel knew it. . . . He had dispatched all his correspondence promptly, and dropped letters as he answered them straight into the wastebasket; Laurel had seen him do it. . . . But there was nothing of her mother here for Fay to find, or for herself to retrieve.

(123)

In her nostalgic vision of her parents' marriage, her father would, out of the same nostalgia, keep her mother's letters, but reality betrays her vision, showing her that what she believes is the truth about her father is as false as the stories of Major Bullock to which she so strongly objects.

Her mother's desk reflects a traditional view of Southern womanhood, for it was "built as a plantation desk but was graceful and small enough for a lady's use" (134). When she sees that, like the Judge's desk, her mother's is unlocked, she wonders, as she wondered about his, if it had ever been locked. When opening her father's desk, she had hesitated, but invading her mother's privacy causes her no such pause. Although she has thought of her father as the public man and her mother as the private woman, she seems to respect his privacy more than her mother's. But
she adds that her mother had never locked anything up but "had simply assumed her privacy": "Her privacy was keyless" (134). This keyless privacy overtly implies the inviolate nature of Becky's self, but it also implies the hidden nature of her life as a woman. Her life is without a key, a mystery without a clue, and her past is lost without a trace—just as her letters are lost—except in Laurel's and others' memory.

There are physical traces left in Becky's desk that, at first, Laurel thinks of as clues. Unlike her father's papers, Becky's papers are highly organized according to an obvious logic, for they are pigeonholed "according to their time and place" (135). The Judge's letters, the only exception to that order, are all in one place, but even they are in chronological order. There is also a book of photographs, a "careful record" of their courtship. As Laurel remembers visits to her mother's home in West Virginia, she also recalls Becky's habit of looking closely, "not in order to see ... but to verify something—the truth or a mistake; hers or another's" (141). Unlike the Judge, whose profession centers around factual truth yet who, Adele reminds Laurel, would tolerate a lie to protect someone from hurt, Becky is intent upon verification, upon differentiating truth and error. Thus Laurel's parents again reverse traditional gender expectations. And the contents of Becky's desk and
the memories they evoke are a kind of clue, proving that Laurel's vision of her mother, like that of her father, has been false, too.

One thing Laurel finds in Becky's desk is a stone boat the Judge had carved with a penknife during their courtship. Although his letters to Becky have become "almost transparent, and freckled now, as the skin of her mother's hands came to be before she died," implying the fragility of the past, the boat is solid and marked with the Judge's initials, unchanged after many years, making the past seem fixed and immutable (135-36). This stone boat is a complex symbol, with multiple implications (as is the stone in Douglas's *A Lifetime Burning*). First, carved with a phallic penknife and imprinted with male initials, it seems to represent traditional masculinity. But when, as a child, Laurel first sees the boat, she thinks it is a dish. Not only does it resemble a domestic object, it also now reminds Laurel of a trip to West Virginia when she and Becky, after stepping off a train, with its predictable routes and timetables, stood on a rock, enveloped in a mist that hid the river at their feet. Suddenly a boat "came breasting out of the mist" to carry them to Becky's home on the mountain (139). As Laurel remembers that moment, she says, "All new things in life were meant to come like that."
The memory of the boat appearing out of obscurity without warning associates the apparently masculine stone boat with Laurel's feminine heritage since the event occurred at Becky's home, and it also conflates motion and mystery in a visionary moment. Unlike the train, the boat is carried by nature, and its sudden appearance, apparently from out of nothing, is without a sense of progression. The boat simply was not there, and then it was. Like Welty's description of plot as opposed to argument, the appearance of the boat is illogical, "unsettling," and "possibly so odd that it might be called a vision" (Eye 150-51). Since the image of the boat also incorporates the ineffable, it is in opposition to the Judge's perspective, for he "had a horror . . . of divergence from . . . the real and the explainable and the recognizable" (146). When he could not explain or control his wife's illness, he would go to his office and work on a legal brief, taking refuge in a system that functioned according to a logic he understood. The only way Laurel can finally deal with her sense of loss is to overcome the desire for mastery that so frustrated her father.\footnote{His boat, made of stone, could not float upon the current; it could only sink.} On Laurel's final night in her parents' house, the night she searches through her mother's desk, a bird has been trapped in the house with her. Its frantic attempts
to free itself mirror her own efforts to disentangle the past that holds her, and, unlike the dead, Laurel and the bird "cannot rest" (130). Weeping "in grief for love and for the dead," she thinks of her dead husband, of their life and love, "sealed away into its perfection," kept by memory "undisturbed and undisturbing" (154). But she cannot keep him sealed away because her perfect memory is false, and she imagines him as Lazarus, "raised up," along with the past, "by her own hands." He is "wild with the craving for his unlived life, with mouth open like a funnel's," his voice roaring, "I wanted it!" (155). Rather than clinging nostalgically to the lived past, he cries out in anger for his unlived future.

Finally dropping off to sleep in a chair, "like a passenger who had come on an emergency journey in a train," Laurel dreams of a train trip with Phil that she recognizes, on waking, as their trip to Mt. Salus for their marriage. Looking down from a high bridge, they both saw where the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers come together, while overhead was a V-shaped line of birds following the same course:

All they could see was sky, water, birds, light, and confluence. . . . And they themselves were a part of the confluence. Their joint act of faith had brought them here at the very moment and matched its occurrence, and proceeded as it
proceeded. Direction itself was made beautiful, momentous. They were riding as one with it, right up front. (160)

At that long ago moment, Laurel had considered this scene of confluence a promise that she and Phil would live together forever. After his death ended their brief marriage, she preserves her marriage in memory as one "of magical ease, of ease--of brevity and conclusion" (121). In memory, her marriage has perfection and logical progression, and the remembered plot is linear because it is the traditional marriage plot. The journey by train is then the perfect emblem. But the image of Phil craving and crying out for his unlived life disrupts Laurel's perfect memory and forces her to confront her own present life, a life imprisoned in the past as the bird is imprisoned in the house.

The next morning, even though the front door is wide open, offering a "perfectly clear way out," the bird will not fly out into the visible light, so Laurel determines to "make it go free" (167). She finds it on the floor under the phone table, looking "eyeless, unborn, so still was it holding," and, carefully cupping two baskets around it, she carries it outside, "not a step of the way without the knowledge of what she carried, vibrating through the ribs of the baskets, the beat of its wings or of its heart, its blind struggle against rescue" (168). Once the
bird is released, Laurel, reborn along with it, sets about making herself free from the past as she stands in the driveway burning the documents she had once thought would offer the key to that past: letters, accounts books, garden diaries, notes from Becky's college courses (which include, significantly, notes on Milton's hierarchically organized universe). When she tries to give Adele the little stone boat, Adele presses it back into her hand, insisting that she should "cling to this" (170). But the stone boat, unlike the freed bird, is a static emblem that offers Laurel no way out, an object that can only sink rather than float. The people around her are still trying to make her cling to the past she is trying to escape.

Before she leaves, she has one last temptation, for she finds in the kitchen the breadboard Phil had made with "the gift of his hands" for Becky (175). It had been "made on the true," and, in spite of the abuse witnessed to by its surface gouges and splinters, it was "still as straight as his T-square" (176). When Fay, who has just returned, comes into the kitchen, Laurel confronts her with the "gnawed and blackened" breadboard, claiming that Fay has "desecrated this house" (173). Made of wood and gouged as if Fay had "tried driving nails in it" (172), the breadboard, like the house, becomes an almost sacred symbol in which Becky's bread can offer communion with the sacred past, the past in which Phil, a Christ-like
carpenter whose body was broken and never found, was alive. Determined to take the breadboard to Chicago with her, restore it and learn to make Becky's bread in it, Laurel tells Fay that the breadboard represents the "whole story . . . the whole solid past" (178). In this scene, the past threatens to reclaim Laurel, for the house has become a sacred temple in which the past is to be preserved undisturbed, as she had tried to preserve the memory of her marriage, and the breadboard has become not only a symbol of the past as a unified whole to be restored, but also a means by which Laurel can take her mother's place even in Chicago.

For an instant, the image of the breadboard and the boat merge, for she clings to the board, holding it over her head away from Fay as if it were "a raft in the waters, to keep her from slipping down deep, where the others had gone before her" (177). But the board and the sacred past it represents for her are what she must release in order to live her present life fully instead of "slipping down" to live among the dead. Unlike the stone boat, the breadboard would float, but it would still separate her from the flow of life because it is still an emblem of her dead husband and her dead mother. In Helen Hurt Tiegreen's discussion of Welty's two versions of The Optimist's Daughter, she points out that the breadboard scene in the original short story, published in the New
Yorker in 1969, differs significantly from the final version in the novel. In the 1969 version, when Fay counters Laurel's accusation with her own, Laurel cowers defensively behind the board. In the novel, however, Laurel realizes that she "had been ready to hurt Fay [,] . . . had wanted to hurt her, and had known herself capable of doing it" (178). As Tiegreen notes, "because in the novel Laurel can acknowledge her anger and feelings of passion, she can pardon and free herself":

An important difference between the old and the new Laurel is that the new Laurel now understands that side of herself—of anyone—which feels anger, and learns that in her new-found maturity she can acknowledge her anger and hatred without guilt. (191)

After this recognition and acceptance of her own anger, not only at Fay but also at having to give up her old sacred vision of what has been the whole solid past, Laurel is able to leave the breadboard behind. As she finally tells Fay, "I think I can get along without that too" (179).

But, now that she has given up her old vision of the past, what is her new one? For one thing, her new vision does not demand that either she or her parents fit traditional gender roles. They are now allowed to be whatever they were without her judgement, and she is
allowed her own anger without guilt, for she realizes that "there is hate as well as love . . . in the coming together and continuing of our lives" (177). The anger she finally expresses and the freedom she finds at the end of novel alter Laurel's initially nostalgic view of the past. Rather than the dangerous nostalgia camouflaging anger that Heilbrun complains of in One Writer's Beginnings, the nostalgia in The Optimist's Daughter is countered by the expression of a woman's anger, the anger missing in the autobiography. When Welty blends autobiography and fiction, this author who left home to become an artist but came back upon her father's death, nursed her mother through a lengthy illness and death, and still remains in her childhood home, creates an artist who makes a different choice and does so without guilt. This fictional artist admits not only her anger but also her desire for control over her own life. By the end of the novel, there are no vestigial remains of Laurel's nostalgic desire to return to what she had previously considered the golden age of her childhood. To return to that past would be to return to Mt. Salus and take her mother's place. Unlike Welty's, Laurel's art seems unable to flourish there.

Although Laurel's view of the past has changed, she does not turn her back on it completely. Realizing that the facts of the past are "no more open to help or hurt"
than her dead father but are "like him, impervious, and
can never be awakened," she also accepts the recurrence of
memory, "the somnambulist" that always comes back,
"calling us by our names and demanding our rightful tears"
(179). Unlike a comforting argument, "memory can be hurt,
time and again— but in that may lie its final mercy."
Arguments comfort by creating emotional distance from
grief, a distance that can be deadening, whereas memory is
"vulnerable to the living moment" and makes us vulnerable
to, or alive to life as well. When Laurel decides to
leave the breadboard and the ordering principles it
represents behind, she knows that the past remains with
her in memory even without symbols: "Memory lived not in
initial possession but in the freed hands, pardoned and
freed, and in the heart that can empty but fill again, in
the patterns restored by dreams" (179).

In recognizing that the patterns of memory are
restored, not by careful examination of documents and
records nor by chronological, causal ordering principles,
but by the unconscious released in dreams, Laurel
recognizes that our present emotional needs shape our past
memories, and that the shape of those memories is protean
rather than static, and multiple rather than singular.
While Laurel seeks "to prove some little thing that [she]
can keep" for comfort, she realizes that memory is "as
incapable of being kept as of being proved" (146). The
facts of the past may be immutable, but our versions of it are not, for we impose our own order upon it, arranging and rearranging it until we think we have it straight. As Laurel realizes,

Experience did, finally, get set into its right order, which is not always the order of other people's time. . . . Past and future might have changed places, in some convulsion of the mind, but that could do nothing to impugn the truth of the heart. (174)

But the truth of that ordering depends not upon chronology but upon the heart that controls the arranging, and the heart changes. As Welty says of her childhood trips, she could look back at them later and see those trips bringing her "news, discoveries, premonitions, promises" (OWB 68). She then adds, "I still can; they still do," implying that the meaning of these trips changes as she changes through time.

In Laurel's memory of the train ride to Mt. Salus with Phil and its visionary moment of confluence, she had believed that the order she sensed then, the lines of the two rivers meeting below and the birds overhead mirroring the same pattern, was a promise that life would progress in straightforward, orderly formation and that their life together would move along an expected path, as their train moved along its track. Although, for years after that
expectation was disrupted, she had tried to preserve her memory of their time together as if it were an orderly perfection, she now recognizes another message in that moment of confluence: "For her life, any life, she had to believe, was nothing but the continuity of its love" (160). What makes the direction beautiful in that moment of confluence is not the linear motion of the two rivers or the two lines of birds but their coming together, the point at which the sky, water, birds, and the young couple become one. The comfort of continuity is not in retracing and repeating the reconstructed past but rather in the recurring remembered truths of the heart, for memory returns like spring (115), the same and yet different, a living thing rather than a monument. And these truths allow the hands and heart to fill again rather than merely reach back toward an irretrievable past.

Whereas Warren's Jack Burden is always riding or driving alone, Welty's Laurel McKelva Hand rides beside Phil toward their marriage in Mt. Salus. After taking that same train back there to bury her father (159), along with the dead past, she realizes that the coming together of people has its own order and is of more significance than the progression of events so crucial to Burden. When she leaves what was not just the father's house but her father and mother's house, she leaves in a community of women, a carload of bridesmaids, as if for another
beginning. Jack plans to continue writing the history he began years earlier and then to return to politics, stepping out of his masculine history only to step back into it. But Laurel rides past the courthouse world of her father, the Judge, and the schoolyard world of her mother, the teacher, on the way out of town. As she waves goodbye to the first-graders, who are also at the beginning of their lives, the children wave back to her, and there is, between this woman and these unknown children, unlike Warren's male protagonist and the people he passes, a moment of confluence.
Notes

1. After mentioning that her mother's gifts were "different," she includes reading stories as one of those gifts (4).

2. According to Cixous, feminine texts "work on the beginning but not on the origin. The origin is a masculine myth . . . . The quest for origins . . . doesn't haunt a feminine unconscious. Rather it's the beginning, or beginnings, the manner of beginning, not promptly with the phallus in order to close with the phallus, but starting on all sides at once, that makes a feminine writing" ("Castration or Decapitation?" 53).

3. See All the King's Men 383-84. Jack refers here to the "gradual piling up of events, then the rush to the conclusion." He has at first an "impression of the logic of the events" and can grasp "only the slightest hints as to the pattern that was taking shape," but when everything is over he is "able to gather the pieces of the puzzle up and put them together to see the pattern."

4. See AKM 228: "For nothing is lost, nothing is ever lost. There is always the clue, the canceled check, the smear of lipstick, the footprint in the canna bed, the condom on the park path, the twitch in the old wound, the baby shoes dipped in bronze, the taint in the blood stream."
5. See Prenshaw, *Conversations* 250-51. Welty says she never met prejudice from editors because of her sex, refers to certain segments of the women's movement as "making fools of themselves" and says she hates "the grotesque quality of it." But she does think "it should be done," just "another way"; however, she never offers explicit advice about how she thinks it should be done. See also p. 36: "Writing is a profession outside sex"; she also calls women's liberation "noisiness." Although she says she's for equal pay for equal work, she thinks "some of the other stuff is hilarious" (136-37).

6. Manning's focus is on Welty's depiction of Southern oral culture (particularly Welty's parodies of "the exaltation of selected males through . . . hero-worship and tale-telling" [198]) as related to the use of mythology and fairy tales. Westling examines Welty's biography as well as her work and looks at how Welty "celebrates the feminine," dramatizing the feminine life cycle through her characterizations of women and use of female-centered myths. Using more theoretical approaches, Yaeger sees in "Moon Lake" (via Lacan) an overinscription of the phallus that "begins to deconstruct the enigma of the phallus," removing it "from the overinscribed realm of patriarchal myth" and revealing it as "a cultural delusion" ("The Case of the Dangling Signifier" 268-69). She reads Welty's appropriation of Yeats in *The Golden*
Apples (via Bakhtin) as a "potent rhetorical and ideological strategy" since Welty adapts Yeats' "'phallocentric' diction to fit the needs of 'feminocentric' expression" ("'Because a Fire Was in My Head'" 955-56). Calling Welty's work "strongly feminocentric" (74), Weston shows how Welty devalues patriarchal myths and redefines heroism in The Optimist's Daughter. Although these critics all point to a feminine perspective in Welty's fiction, their central concern is not her historical perspective.

7. Duplessis' project is to interpret "the project of twentieth-century women writers as the examination and delegitimation of cultural conventions about male and female, romance and quest, hero and heroine, public and private, individual and collective, but especially conventions of romance as a trope for the sex-gender system" (ix).

8. Welty's negative definition identifies this novel with Julia Kristeva's description of "feminist practice": "[It] can only be negative, at odds with what already exists so that we may say 'that's not it' and 'that's still not it'" ("Woman Can Never Be Defined" 137).

9. Alfred Appel, Jr., expresses a common early view of the novel when he says it "succeeds in capturing the lost fabulous innocence of the American frontier" (72). Later Warren French says Clement is not innocent in the
sense of guilelessness, "for he is often wary in his dealings," but is free from guilt since he "wishes no one ill, nor does he scheme or connive against anyone; he strives only to make the land productive and to please his loved ones with presents" (184-85). In my reading of the novel, Clement is not guiltless, for there is a certain amount of guilt involved in the means necessary to make the land produce and to buy those presents he gives his loved ones. Rather than portraying the "lost innocence" of the frontier, Welty reveals the guilt at its center.

10. Welty is also, of course, using the well-known Grimms' story, "The Fisherman and His Wife," about a meek, content fisherman and his insatiably greedy wife.

11. In "The Laugh of the Medusa," Cixous claims that speaking in public requires "daring" for women and that such speech is a "transgression." Furthermore, "even if she transgresses, her words fall almost always upon the deaf male ear, which hears in language only that which speaks in the masculine" (251).

12. See Sedgwick on women's status within patriarchal society, where they serve as exchangeable property between men, thus strengthening male bonds: "In any male-dominated society, there is a special relationship between male homosocial (including homosexual) desire and the structures for maintaining and transmitting patriarchal power" (25). Rosamond's status
as exchangeable property between Clement and Jamie strengthens the men's relationship, which has a homoerotic element from the beginning since the men meet at an inn where they share a bed for the night. In much the same way, Anne Stanton is the object of homoerotic exchange between Jack Burden and Willie Stark in *All the King's Men*, as is Judith Sutpen between her brothers, Henry Sutpen and Charles Bon in *Absalom, Absalom!*.

13. Welty here inverts a pattern in traditional fairy tales, in which toads fall from the mouths of liars and diamonds only from the mouths of good girls.

14. See Adrienne Rich's comments on women's honor. She defines it, according to tradition, as "virginity, chastity, fidelity to a husband. Honesty in women has not been considered important. We have been depicted as generically whimsical, deceitful, subtle, vacillating. And we have been rewarded for lying" (1).

15. See Walker and Seaman.

16. See Allen on Welty's fiction as "anti-heroic" (12). Although he claims that Welty allows for a more just heroism, open to both sexes, he makes Rosamond's heroism in freeing herself from the Indian camp a result of her "faithful love" for Jamie rather than her ability to lie (22). Allen cannot see her heroism outside the traditional romance or marriage plot.
17. When asked about her lack of interest in sin or evil, Welty replied, "I am, though. **Not** in 'sin'--not from a Roman Catholic point of view like Flannery O'Connor, because I am ignorant of that religion. But I do believe that there is 'evil.' . . . I recognize its power and value. I do! I thought there was 'evil' in Fay in *The Optimist's Daughter.*" As for her disregard of organized religion, she commented to the interviewer who mentioned it, "I don't know where you got this opinion. I am not a frequent churchgoer, but I am a reverent person" (Prenshaw, *Conversations* 227).

18. Manning points out that this scene resembles one in *All the King's Men* in which Judge Irwin, Jack Burden's real father, takes a pistol away from a man he had earlier sent to prison. She also notes the similarity to Faulkner's *The Unvanquished*, when Bayard faces down and disarms Redmond, his father's murderer (171).

19. See Donaldson again on "the illusory nature of immediacy and revelation created by those brief moments of epiphany" in Welty ("Meditations" 76).
Chapter Four
"Museums of the Unconscious": Ellen Douglas and the Other Southern Narrative

In The New Feminist Criticism, Elaine Showalter includes her own evaluation of various theoretical attempts to define feminine writing. As an epigraph to her essay, "Feminist Criticism in the Wilderness," she quotes Virginia Woolf's insistence that "a woman's writing is always feminine; it cannot help being feminine; at its best it is most feminine; the only difficulty lies in defining what we mean by feminine." Showalter follows that quote with one from Hélène Cixous: "It is impossible to define a feminine practice of writing, and this is an impossibility that will remain, for this practice will never be theorized, enclosed, encoded--which doesn't mean that it doesn't exist" (247-48). In spite of these oft-quoted disclaimers, Showalter, Woolf and Cixous, together with scores of other feminist critics, examine writing that attempts to disrupt patriarchal, logocentric discourse. From these examinations they point to possible characteristics of a feminine practice of writing.

In this study, I am examining Ellen Douglas's A Lifetime Burning as a feminine text, an example of feminine writing within Southern literature. This writing, although not necessarily written by women, is in
many ways counter to traditional views of Southern literature, particularly in its view of history, the purported obsession of Southern writers. In a 1980 interview, Douglas declared her own difference from the Southern literary tradition. Asked her opinion of Richard King’s thesis in *A Southern Renaissance* that Southern writers are motivated by the attempt to come to grips with "the Southern family romance" and the truth behind their own history, Douglas replied, "That’s not the kind of thing I think about" (John Jones 56-57). Beyond that personal declaration, *A Lifetime Burning* offers considerable textual proof of what Douglas’s difference is. In other words, an "other" narrative breaks the expected sequence and disrupts the traditional masculine patterns of Southern storytelling while, and perhaps by means of, bringing light to the concealed, suppressed feminine.

Unlike the "fathers" of Southern literature, Warren and Faulkner, whose women characters are usually either absent presences, as Caddy is in *The Sound and the Fury*, or props for the men whose lives form the central text, as in *All the King’s Men*, Douglas presents a history that includes the lives of women. Although she certainly includes male characters and even uses an exclusively male point of view in her 1979 novel *The Rock Cried Out*, she stresses her knowledge of and interest in women’s lives:
What I know about is how women live, because that's the way I've lived. I've cooked and made preserves and raised children and lived with children and kept house and that's no less absorbing and vital than practicing law or being a doctor. (Broughton and Williams 61-62)

Where the traditional novel centers around masculine, especially father-son relations, *A Lifetime Burning* focuses on women's relationships: as friends, as lovers, and particularly as mothers.

In addition to writing her/story rather than traditional, exclusively masculine history, Douglas also rejects the teleological view of the past so common in Southern letters. Speaking at the 1980 Faulkner and Yoknapatawpha Conference, Douglas admitted that in her youth she had been influenced by Faulkner. She recalls deciding that "his work was no longer relevant" to her ("Faulkner in Time" 284-85) and "no longer useful" in developing her own writing (297). Arguing that "the metaphysic of the subject arises out of the metaphysic of the author" (298), Douglas explains part of her disillusionment with Faulkner: "He fell increasingly into a past, already delusive, created by him and therefore his to change, the past of his beloved and hated South" (299). She also links Faulkner's love-hate relationship with the South to his fictional treatments of women. Since
Faulkner saw both the South and woman as "lost innocence, [as] failed and sinful humanity," she finds his hatred for both predictable ("Faulkner's Women" 166).

Since at the same conference she also delivered a blistering elaboration of what she sees as a virulent hatred of women apparent throughout the Faulkner canon, Douglas's assertion that he also loves women as he loves the South seems to lack conviction. After quoting a series of comments on women excerpted from Faulkner's fiction, she admits, "After a few months of reading, one is ready like Shreve in Absalom, Absalom! to say, 'Wait! Wait!' To want a hand in rewriting, re-inventing the record" ("Faulkner's Women" 154). 2 Although she concedes that "the men in Faulkner's world are less than perfect," she sees a "radical difference between the author's attitude toward evil in men and in women" (161). The evil in Faulkner's male characters "is presented as individual, that of woman as general to all white women of child-bearing age" (162). Her explanation for that difference lies in the material conditions that allow men to vary their circumstances, to gain power and to control their lives in ways unavailable to women. In a society that "defined [women] as almost exclusively sexual," women had no other tools than sexuality with which to control their lives, neither political nor economic nor professional (162-63). In Douglas's view, Faulkner "believed that what
is sometimes a societal problem is always an unalterable
genetic predicament" (164).

Not only does Douglas object to Faulkner’s belief that women are doomed by virtue of their biological sex, she offers a further explanation for her "strong reaction against [Faulkner’s] influence somewhere along the line" when she adds, "I suppose I got tired of doom—and I wrote in a very different way" (John Jones 54). As a means of "rewriting, re-inventing the record" of women’s lives found in writers like Faulkner and Warren, Douglas also rewrites the history found in these writers, making its women subjects and its patterns different from theirs. Her writing resists the "doom" implied in teleological history. For characters like Warren’s Jack Burden, events have a causal logic as they pile up and rush to a conclusion. In his view, history has a pattern that can be uncovered; reality lies only in the relation of past, present, and future; and the pattern of that relation must necessarily be linear since, as he succinctly declares, "Direction is all" (384). Douglas’s protagonist in A Lifetime Burning is no Jack Burden or Quentin Compson piecing together the linear narrative of the past in order to understand its product, the present. Although Douglas’s narrator, Corinne, sets out to do just that, the feminine persists in disrupting that project, changing her
narrative so that it moves in quite different and unexpected directions.

Before turning to the ways Douglas's particular text disrupts and rewrites the traditional masculine view of women and (and in) history, I want to offer a theoretical framework for interpreting Douglas's difference as a feminine difference. The narrator of A Lifetime Burning is caught in a dilemma that, according to French feminist Xavière Gauthier, is common to all women:

Throughout the course of history, they have been mute, and it is doubtless by virtue of this mutism that men have been able to speak and write. As long as women remain silent, they will be outside the historical process. But, if they begin to speak and write as men do, they will enter history subdued and alienated; it is a history that, logically speaking, their speech should disrupt. (162-63)

The very act of speaking or writing is, for women, a subversive act since it inserts woman as subject into a masculine history that has either excluded or objectified her. Yet women's speaking and writing must still avoid identification with masculine discourse in order to remain visible as feminine. To be feminine thus requires the assertion of difference by means of disruption.
As stressed earlier, I am not using "the feminine" to imply any biological essence. Both masculine and feminine subjects are constructed by the social systems in which they exist. But since men are generally empowered by the patriarchy, they tend to value what sustains it, and those values tend to be reflected in their discourse. I am not arguing that women by nature have different values that are of necessity mirrored in a completely "other" discourse. As Luce Irigaray suggests, rather than "constructing a logic of the feminine that would still take onto-theo-logic as its model, . . . [women are] attempting to wrest this question away from the economy of the logos" (This Sex 78). Since the masculine discourse of patriarchy disempowers women by defining them in negative terms, Irigaray argues that women "should signify that with respect to this logic a disruptive excess is possible on the feminine side" (78).

Without positing a feminine "style" in the traditional sense, she argues for a feminine writing that "resists and explodes every firmly established form, figure, idea or concept," yet "without ever constituting itself . . . as some sort of unity" (78-79). In calling Douglas's A Lifetime Burning an "other" Southern narrative, I do not intend to posit a separate, unified feminine discourse in Southern literature. Instead, I am arguing that there are Southern texts such as Welty's and Douglas's that resist
and explode the established Southern literary tradition and that these texts reflect values that empower women, giving them a voice and making them subjects rather than objects.

In *A Room of One's Own*, Woolf describes a disruptive feminine novel by the imaginary Mary Carmichael. As Woolf begins to read, she feels that something is "not quite in order," that the "gliding of sentence after sentence [is] interrupted." She reads on and says that the writing makes her feel the way "one feels on a switchback railway when the car, instead of sinking, as one has been led to expect, swerves up again" because Mary has broken not only the sentence but the sequence as well (84-85). Woolf cannot anticipate the order of this narrative because it is not a traditional masculine narrative. How can the reader know what to expect from someone who has been silent until now? Woolf then goes on to project what Mary Carmichael could do:

[If she] knows how to express it she will light a torch in that vast chamber where nobody has yet been. It is all half lights and profound shadows like those serpentine caves where one goes with a candle peering up and down, not knowing where one is stepping. . . . I wanted to see how Mary Carmichael set to work to catch those unrecorded gestures, those unsaid or half-said words, which
form themselves, no more palpably than the shadows of moths on the ceiling, when women are alone.

... She will need to hold her breath ... for women are ... so terribly accustomed to concealment and suppression. (88)

In *A Lifetime Burning*, Ellen Douglas offers just such a text, one that disrupts both masculine history and narrative by means of its different subject, the concealed feminine, and its different, unexpected narrative movement.

In "The Laugh of the Medusa," Cixous argues that what allows woman to "put herself into the text—as into the world and into history—[is] her own movement" (245). Irigaray offers a description of feminine movement:

You are moving, You never stay still. You never stay. You never "are." How can I say you, who are always other? How can I speak you, who remain in a flux that never congeals or solidifies? How can this current pass into words? It is multiple, devoid of "causes" and "meanings," simple qualities. ... These movements can't be described as the passage from a beginning to an end. ... This unceasing mobility, this life. Which they might describe as our restlessness, whims, pretenses, or lies. For all this seems so
strange to those who claim "solidity" as their foundation. ("When Our Lips" 76-77)

Rather than the traditional view of women as static and passive, Irigaray describes them as incessantly mobile. By virtue of their difference, however, that mobility is apparently invisible to the masculine eye.

When narrative movement reflects this feminine movement, the resulting text is, to use Cixous's term, a "woman-text" that has multiple beginnings, "starting on all sides at once, . . . twenty times, thirty times over" ("Castration or Decapitation" 53). She adds that such a text wanders and is unpredictable, therefore disturbing: "It can't be anticipated, and I believe femininity is written outside anticipation: it really is the text of the unforeseeable. . . . So the movement, the movement of the text, doesn't trace a straight line" (53-54). Douglas's A Lifetime Burning is such a "woman-text." The narrator, Corinne, describes the life she lives as a perpetual roller coaster ride, which goes round and round without ever arriving at a final destination, or as a ride on a "careening, destinationless train" (85). At another point she compares her life to a series of daily rides on an escalator as she careens along. Her life with George, her husband, "continues along its mysterious course" as the narrative about their life together takes a similarly careening, mysterious course. She tries to tell a
straight story but is constantly interrupting herself and therefore constantly having to begin again.

Like the women in Gauthier's dilemma (quoted above), Corinne attempts to write as men do. However, her text constantly reveals its difference from rather than deference to masculine narrative assumptions. The text is filled with ellipses and dashes, multiple beginnings without conclusions because of constant interruptions and digressions. Not only does the narrative leap about in time and space, it also blurs the boundaries of fact and fiction, of memory and fantasy, of waking and dreaming. Because Corinne persistently claims that she wants to tell her story in a traditional narrative form, straight and true, her constant failure to do so and her apologetic frustration at her failure force the reader to see the text as transgressive, a text that challenges the masculine narrative line and suggests the possibility of a new line--an/other line.

Although the novel is in journal form, with most entries meticulously dated, the narrative resists chronology and the straight line. In the first entry, Corinne declares her intention to write as an attempt to understand the events of her life. She sits at her desk with a stack of lined paper, ready to begin, but that first entry ends with an ellipsis. She has already broken the sentence. The next day's entry begins "No. Yes."
No."—a series of contradictions that mirrors the narrative that is to follow, a narrative in which the repressed feminine refuses to be subdued by a narrative line or an authoritarian author. One of the things Corinne does to avoid writing is riding her stationary bike, an image that implies movement without motion—toward, and that is thus another image of the narrative. It is a restless text, constantly digressing and returning to another beginning, and constantly refusing to arrive at the conclusion/understanding its narrator, as well as its readers, seeks. On the fourth day of her journal, she decides, "The way to do it [to tell the truth], I believe, is to tell as straight as I can what's been happening"; but only a few paragraphs later she has already reached a "digression within digression" (13).

These digressions form a web, a network of overlapping, interwoven lines rather than a single narrative thread. Corinne associates her "blue thread of ink raveling across the page" (4) with the feminine art of weaving. Freud links women's fascination with weaving to their "natural" desire for concealment and their "conventional secretiveness and insincerity." At first, Douglas appears to accept Freud's link, since her narrator not only weaves a tale of multiple threads but also struggles throughout against her impulse to lie while searching for truth. As she says at one point
(parenthetically), "Oh, whatever happens, I commit myself to the truth, etc., etc., in the midst of this thicket of lies" (47).

However, Douglas resists the masculine pattern implied in Freud's disparaging assertion by insisting on multiple truths. Because this is a woven tale, there is no single line to follow to the truth. After providing several pages, supposedly part of George's grandmother's diary, Corinne admits that she did not in fact find the diary: "The diary is mine, my invention . . . [based on] verifiable facts" (151). Although she insists that "not just at the beginning, but with every word I meant to tell the truth," she amends "the truth" to "a truth" (153). There is no single truth here, no single thread to be followed to the final revelation. This is a story woven of many truths, truths often revealed through invention, truth as multiple possibilities rather than singular authority.

In one of the early entries, Corinne says she "would like to find a way to tell the truth" (11). The very next sentence is the Biblical declaration that knowledge of the truth makes us free, although the quote is incomplete, broken by ellipses. The truth to which that verse refers is the truth of Christ's paternity as the Son of God, a truth that in a sense reinscribes the patriarchal emphasis on patrilineage, another reason to value the straight
line. Immediately after the Biblical passage, Corinne provides another quotation—"Oh, what a tangled web we weave . . . " (11). In its omitted conclusion, this phrase refers to deception and draws attention to the method she will use to arrive at whatever truths are to be found in this text of woven fact and invention. After declaring that "God knows the truth," she admits that the "problem is, how not to deceive—one self, everyone." But she concludes in typical contradictory fashion, "It doesn't matter. It does matter. In any case I have begun" (11). The way to escape having to make a conclusion is to begin again, to pick up, not the same thread, but another.

Early in the narrative, the thread of ink on the page reminds Corinne of Ariadne and Theseus. In their story, Ariadne gives Theseus a ball of twine that unwinds, leaving a single thread to lead him through the labyrinth to the secret chamber of the Minotaur (thus allowing the hero to perform his heroic deed and fulfill his destiny) and back out again. In the various versions of the story, Ariadne is controlled by the victorious hero until he finally abandons her, in some versions to death in childbirth, in others to suicide by hanging. After Corinne thinks of her writing self as Ariadne rolling the ball into the labyrinth, she wonders why she should cast herself "in the ancient female part of victim of men's
plots and passions" (20). Commenting that some modern writers "say that Ariadne's face and name—Most Holy—mask the face and name of the great goddess, whom men have always feared," she adds that she is not a goddess and does not desire to be: "I want only to try to tell the truth that must be hidden somewhere inside the labyrinth of my dreams and passions and memories" (21).

Corinne will be both the labyrinth and the one who must find the secret at its center, both that which hides and the one who uncovers the truth. Already she has rejected the role of goddess, one who is powerful and feared by men as a direct result of her hiddenness. In Freud's theories of sexual development, the feminine is associated with hiddenness and inexplicable mystery. Not only does he make masculine development depend upon maintaining the "impenetrable obscurity" of the feminine, the persistence of that obscurity is ensured by the fear it engenders in those who benefit most from it. To bring what has been hidden to light would prove that there is more in that darkness than absence. Since the privileged position of any object exists only if others do not have it, the revelation of a feminine presence would threaten the privilege of the phallus.

In "The Laugh of the Medusa," Cixous rewrites the Freudian script of feminine lack; in her scenario the
revelation of the feminine offers a way to change traditional masculine history:

Wouldn't the worst be, isn't the worst, in truth, that women aren't castrated, that they have only to stop listening to the Sirens (for the Sirens were men) for history to change its meaning? You only have to look at the Medusa straight to see her. And she's not deadly. She's beautiful and she's laughing. (255)

While asserting that men have a vested interest in believing that women not only lack but envy what men have, Cixous resists the attempt to make women fearful monsters who must not be looked at. Women are not castrated, therefore they do not represent the feared loss of privileged status. If men would only look straight at what they have been told is hidden, and thus what they have been taught to fear, the result would be a changed history—a history with a different meaning. According to Cixous, the way to bring the hidden feminine to light is to show the priests of the patriarchy "our sexts," a neologism that combines sex and text, thus implying a text that inscribes feminine sexual difference.

Cixous labels the labyrinth, which is Corinne herself in Douglas's novel, a feminine image that represents women as "the repressed of culture" ("Laugh" 248). In "Women's Time," Julia Kristeva claims that literary creation
provides a way for that repressed feminine to come out of hiding. She adds that women's "identification with the potency of the imaginary . . . also bears witness to women's desire . . . [for] a more flexible and free discourse, one able to name what has thus far never been an object of circulation in the community: the enigmas of the body, the dreams, secret joys, shames, hatreds of the second sex" (207).

Corinne's woven tale epitomizes a feminine text, or what Cixous calls a sext, that unravels the masculine tradition while spinning her own narrative. By refusing to be cast in the role of the fearful, masked goddess, Douglas's Corinne refuses to play the role Freud's script offers women, just as she refuses to be the victimized Ariadne in the story of Theseus. Instead, she will step into the hero's role and enter the labyrinth. Her task is to journey through the labyrinth of her feminine unconscious, exposing what has been repressed, silenced, hidden. As she performs that task, she also frustrates the masculine order that has maintained that repression. And a crucial element in performing that task is the dream, a state that allows the repressed to surface.

A year or two before beginning the journal, Corinne had read a monograph titled "Senoi Dreamwork," which described "a people in the Malaysian archipelago, of whom every man, woman, and child has as his profession, from
the time he can talk, dreaming and the interpretation of dreams" (7). The dreamer enters a "semiconscious fantasy state," in which she must identify the "leading figure" in the dream and, "asleep or half asleep, seize him, hold on to him, and ask him to identify himself and to give you a gift" (7). The leading figure may be good or evil, male or female. After the dream, the dreamer makes artworks or finds natural objects to remind her of the dream's lesson.

According to Corinne, these Malaysians "live, as it were, in museums of the unconscious," a strangely paradoxical description, since a museum is ordinarily a place for display, a place where objects are meant to be viewed, while the unconscious keeps its collection hidden. However, this museum reflects the conflict in Corinne's text. She wants to collect, display and study historical facts as if they were artifacts, as if lining them up in chronological order will reveal the truth about the past. Yet she also wants to dream and allow the repressed feminine and its multiple possibilities to disrupt that neatly organized masculine display.

What is required for this dreamwork is a liminal state in which the boundary or line between dream and reality, historical fact and imaginative fiction, the truth and the lie is blurred. The dreamer must be willing to give up the desire for absolutes and binary oppositions, a desire Cixous attributes to logocentrism, phallocentrism, and the
masculine order they support. According to her, logocentrism organizes all thought through a hierarchical binary system, "related to 'the' couple, man/woman," within which the masculine subordinates the feminine (Newly Born 63-65). Questioning that order requires "bringing to light the fate dealt to woman, her burial . . . [and] conjuring up from femininity the reflections and hypotheses that are necessarily ruinous for the stronghold still in possession of authority" (65). A liminal dream state, then, becomes the perfect space in which to do such questioning, for in it oppositions are blurred beyond recognition, and the feminine, buried by repression, is brought to light. Cixous claims that once the logocentric plot (both plan and conspiracy) is revealed--the plot "to guarantee the masculine order a rationale equal to history itself"--then all history, "all the stories would be there to retell differently" (65).

Corinne begins to write this different kind of history, or story, by a dreamlike wandering through the labyrinth. But the wandering is painful. Although she keeps insisting that she wants to, is trying to tell a traditional story, to walk a straight line, she is frustrated by her inability to do so. As a result, the text is filled with contradictions that not only frustrate Corinne but also frustrate critical efforts to label the text or force it into any set of binary oppositions. She
writes what Cixous calls a "new history, or rather a process of becoming in which several histories intersect with one another" ("Laugh" 252), or history as a web of intersecting threads. As a woman, she "un-thinks the unifying, regulating history that homogenizes and channels forces, herding contradictions into a single battlefield" (252).

In Corinne's only successful attempt at Senoi dreaming, her dream portrays an interrupted progression similar to the textual journey she has begun. In the dream she sees herself, her son James, and her grandmother (also named Corinne) driving along a road into the mountains. She has often driven these roads in dreams and "waking fantasies," and in her other dreams she imagines getting off the road to "drink wine with friends, to receive lovers, to conceive babies" (8). But in this dream James is driving, so she stops her reverie "to continue" describing their progress. They finally reach a dead end and must begin climbing a flight of stone stairs toward the mountain top that is hidden in mist. Then, "half-waking," she asks for a gift from James, who is the main figure since he drives the car and leads them up the stairs toward their hidden destination. He gives her a stone, at which point she wakes up, goes into the back yard and finds a stone much like the dream stone. Putting this stone on her desk so that she can see it as she tries
to write her way through the labyrinth, she is sure that with patience the stone will "reveal its significance" to her. In her dreams, the repressed feminine tries to surface in the communal images of drinking with friends, making love, and conceiving babies. But the male leading figure in the Senoi dream deflects those interests with his insistence upon progression and destination.

At one point, Douglas considered calling the novel *The Stone and the Thread* (Speir 243). She explains the stone by quoting Corinne, "It's the stone of my life and I do not wish to--will not--carry it" (Lifetime 77), before commenting further:

So, in that sense, the stone is all the unmalleable material in one's past that one has to deal with. But also, of course, it's the stone of the past, the stone of other people's lives, the stone of the cemetery with the grandmother's name on it and the mysterious circumstances of her life which are there, an unmalleable fact out of the past which is undecipherable. (Speir 243-44)

Since, in Corinne's dream, the stone is a man's gift, part of the "stone of the past" is the burden of the patriarchal values that shape that past. Not only did those values eradicate the circumstances of the grandmother's life, rendering them "mysterious," they also shape Corinne's own life and text. Only after she allows
different values to shape her text can she accept her life without deciphering it. By the end of the novel, the dream stone becomes the symbol of Corinne's textual struggle since, in spite of its masculine associations, she makes it also serve as a representation of the feminine text she finally does write.

Expecting to have many more dreams like the one in which James gives her the stone, she plans to "dream [her] way to clarity, understanding, peace, fulfillment," but the phrase ends with an ellipsis, followed by the admission that this was her only such dream. Although she claims she has "always had a certain control over [her] dreams," commanding herself to dream of a certain thing whenever she wants and always "able to give the dream the shape of a story," she no longer has that ability because the repressed feminine has already surfaced to disrupt such masculine pursuits. This loss of control allows the story to take on a different shape, a feminine shape. She has already altered the story of Ariadne by shifting the protagonist's sex. But there is another crucial difference, for Corinne will not be carrying a ball of thread. The one Ariadne gave Theseus was given to her by Daedalus; following a single thread was thus a man's way to find the secret in the labyrinth. Corinne will use a different method. She will carry a stone she has dreamed, although she questions whether it will be useful in the
labyrinth. Stones, after all, do not unwind; there will be no thread to follow, no line to lead to the truth she seeks. She will resist being a victim of men's linear plots. Hers will be no single story line, for it includes dreams and lies that cannot be separated from the rest of the web she weaves.

That the stone does not unwind also implies the impossibility of retracing one's steps or of recovering the past. Factual history and imaginative memory/dream cannot ultimately be separated. In the epigraph to the novel, Douglas quotes several lines from T. S. Eliot's *Four Quartets*, the source of the novel's title:

> Home is where one starts from. As we grow older
The world becomes stranger, the pattern more complicated
Of dead and living. Not the intense moment
Isolated, with no before and after,
But a lifetime burning in every moment
And not the lifetime of one man only
But of old stones that cannot be deciphered.

The first line implies progression from some original point, home, but the next sentence comments on the complicated pattern that prevents single-thread, linear progression through life. What remains indicates that complicated patterns are not records and documents that can be pieced together into a single story like that of
Cass Mastern or Thomas Sutpen. Instead, what is left of the past is something that is indecipherable—old stones like the stone in Corinne's dream. She carries it with her throughout the novel, but it does not offer her the single truth that will make all the facts and memories line up to tell one story.

At first Corinne says her intention is to "say everything at once" (4), but by the end of the novel she admits, "If I am incapable of putting everything down, as it seems to me to have happened, if I persist in deceiving you about the very center of our lives, what can I say, what can I know?" (153). She wonders if her incapacity to recover the past means that there can be no absolute knowledge. Then she remembers, for the second time in the novel, a childhood trip to a movie against her mother's orders. But Corinne's mother and brother always insist that this episode she remembers never actually happened. Such disparate stories prove that the past cannot be recovered through memory.

Corinne also discovers that the history passed down to her by her family is untrustworthy. Trained in records preservation, Corinne discovers while restoring some old church records that George's grandmother, Rebecca Adams, committed suicide (24). Checking the dates in the cemetery to verify that she has the right Rebecca Adams, she gives a multiple-choice list of possible versions of
the truth. Realizing that the family may have lied all these years about Rebecca's death, Corinne feels "as if everything in the world has changed. . . . dislocated" (25). The discovery of that possible lie triggers her desire to write by showing her that "Nothing is what it seemed":

The facts of my life, my history, their lives, on which I had a tenuous hold at best, dissolve like smoke before my face and vanish away. Why should I believe anything about them, about anyone, if I can't believe what they said about her . . . .

(26)

Looking at a faded photograph of Rebecca, she realizes that the woman's life is a mystery. Determined to tell the truth, to create a document that will tell her children the truth, she finds that she cannot. The text that unravels on the page before her continually resists that attempt, for the repressed feminine, the contents of that "museum of the unconscious," keeps surfacing and disrupting the narrative.

At one point, Corinne describes the thread of ink she is writing across the page:

[It is] the thread that holds the balloon of my head, full of helium or hydrogen or hot air, and keeps it from floating up into the sunny morning, up, up, until the heat of the sun and the
difference between inside and outside pressure are too much for the thin, taut skin and it goes blam.

No more balloon. (11)

She has just finished talking about the bed she and George have shared for the entire thirty-two years of their married life, the bed from which all her children were born, the bed upon which she wept over the loss of her twin babies and the death of her mother, and the bed she now considers chopping into splinters. The thread that holds her balloon/head is tied to a doorknob or the bedpost, a bedpost topped with a penis-shaped finial that inspires masturbatory fantasies. Thus her selfhood is directly connected to her role and her history as wife and mother. She even confesses that she depends upon George to tell her how clothes look on her because, although she recognizes herself when she looks in the mirror, she doesn't know whether she looks "ravishing or ridiculous" (13). Her identity depends to a degree upon his gaze, upon his definition of her and desire for her. When he ceases to care what she wears and no longer feels sexual desire for her, she begins to doubt her identity, since that identity is tied to her domestic role, and she begins to write in an attempt to understand what happened to their marriage to make him turn away.

In her thread of ink metaphor, the balloon which is her head bumps against the walls and ceilings of the
kitchen or bedroom until the "thread unrolls across the page, longer and longer" and until the balloon finally "escapes through a conveniently open window--I must have taken the screen out--and rises and rises until . . . Blam. Dispersed. Not so bad." At this point, only two paragraphs after having stated, "I have begun," she writes, "I will stop now. Begin again tomorrow. I could begin: It's worth doing, isn't it? Trying to tell the truth?" (12). The thread of ink she produces, which she later compares to Ariadne's thread, is now that which both connects her to the domestic life, pictured here as imprisonment, and at the same time allows her to escape that life. The window is "conveniently" open, implying that her escape is without her agency, yet she is the one who removes the screen, making her escape possible. By writing, she achieves freedom, yet that freedom results in the self-destruction and dispersal of her constructed domestic identity.6

Although she decides that that destruction is "not so bad," she cannot continue writing, and she concludes for the moment by questioning the validity of trying to tell the truth. Yet she always comes back to the attempt, and her writing continues to be grounded in the domestic. Since her culture denigrates the domestic, she tends to see that feminine-associated world as somehow antithetical to truth, or at least an impediment in the search for
truth. In describing her life to her children, she makes a point of differentiating that life from the history she is trying to write:

I will try to tell you, although I may in part have forgotten, what my life has been like. Don't be alarmed. This is not to be our history, day by day and meal by meal, like the dull innocuous letters I used to write my mother . . . .  (52)

Although much of traditional history is derived from "dull innocuous letters," Corinne cannot conceive that her everyday domestic life could contribute to her search for truth. Hers is a different kind of history, domestic and feminine, and since it is usually omitted from traditional history, she gives it little space.

She quickly summarizes the first years of her marriage:

I remember that time as the time of warm flesh: of my body and his and yours, of aching episiotomies, burning hemorrhoids, of that first sweet painful fuck after childbirth and abstinence, of the drawing down of milk to the nipple and the long intimate hours of suckling; of dozing as I shook the crib of a screaming infant; of warm ammoniac babies at two years and three and four crawling into bed with us in the early morning hours, nestling between us; a time of rocking, singing,
hugging, skipping, running, hopping, dancing, falling, swimming--jump to me! Jump! And then, later, of all the traumas, the crises . . . the joys, the necessary boredom and rage and anxiety and excitement of raising children. No one had time for anything else. (552-54)

During that time, she was "sunk, immersed, in a dream of sex and mothering." Corinne also includes a description of her naked sixty-two-year-old body, which she examines in solitude, without the male gaze that objectifies her: its "slightly crinkled dry-papery" skin, the "minute red spider webs on the insides of [her] thighs," and the "soft fiery ache inside the labia, the ache that gets softer and fierier when [her] nipples brush against the table's edge" (5). She even tells her daughter and daughter-in-law that they should admire their bodies while they are young (6), and she warns them of certain bodily changes that will occur as they age: bruises, failing eyesight, chin whiskers (17). This inclusion of events of the body makes Corinne's history part of what Marguerite Duras calls the "rhetoric of women," which is "anchored in the organism, in the body" (238).

Her often explicit sexual desires are a recurring theme throughout the text, but she always intimates that this is not the kind of history that warrants telling, not the kind of history to be studied in search of profound
truth. She keeps trying to write a masculine text and so, to her, the feminine rhetoric that surfaces in discussions of the female body is an interruption. In that sense, as with the domestic, the repressed feminine surfaces to disrupt the masculine narrative, an interruption inadequate for the chronological history she tries to make herself write.

During the time that she is searching for the letters George’s lover has written, she admits that her desire "to go ahead, to get it all down" has kept her from stopping to talk about her everyday life with George (129). To discuss domestic details is to stop the progression of history and therefore to stop the search for truth. As she tries to tell about George’s affair, she determines to "proceed methodically, chronologically . . . proceed morning after morning--perhaps even proceed truthfully," but as she begins to relate a particular event, she interrupts the chronological narrative to tell about her house, the home she has lived in with George and the children. Yet she sees that as a digression, an interruption rather than a contribution to the history she is relating.

What is Corinne’s definition of history, then? Because she believes it is the traditional chronological narrative of events, particularly the actions of men, as here she keeps trying to tell the story of George and his
affair with another man, she perceives the domestic
details of her own life as a digression, a turning away
from the path she should be following, or a sidetrack.
Even though she discovers that the neatly plotted stories
she has been told as family history are false,
particularly the story of George's great grandmother and
her great aunt, who she now knows committed suicide, she
still believes that such history is both possible and
necessary. She persists in believing that the past must
be recovered and told straight in order to achieve and
preserve truth.

After the balloon in her metaphor bursts, she
tentatively decides that this story is worth telling, and,
in the next entry, she asserts with more conviction, "The
way to do it, I believe, is to tell as straight as I can
what's been happening" (12). The place to begin, she
decides, is the moment George "turned away" from her
sexually, the moment at which her identity began to be cut
loose from that bedpost, a cutting loose that has made it
possible for her to imagine castrating the bedpost and
George and for her sexual fantasies to become autoerotic.
She describes George as a man who "strides ahead,"
absorbed in whatever goal he heads toward (15). For him
to turn away from her, to change direction, is
significant, and since his are male actions, he sets the
point at which the narrative should begin.
His directed motion is unlike Corinne's wandering, for she not only meanders in and digresses through the text she writes, she wanders through the house at night (11) and drives aimlessly through the town (37). Even when she drives along the straight highway, she is going nowhere but merely speeding along to vent her frustration (37-38). George is, in her perception, capable of the straightforwardness for which she continuously struggles and cannot seem to accomplish.

Not only does George embody directed motion in opposition to Corinne's aimless wandering, he is objective in opposition to the roller-coaster ride of her constantly shifting emotions:

He is never subjective, hates personal emotion, personal crisis, sometimes, it seems to me, transforms or turns back emotions just as they touch his skin, before they reach the vital organs--probably out of fear that their strength will destroy him. As if someone were shooting dumdum bullets at him from a forty-four magnum pistol and he had some magical screening device at the epidermis that caught and turned the bullet before it spread and blew his liver to shreds. (22)

For George, emotions are weapons that shatter the whole, that destroy and disperse, and he is a doctor whose
professional aim is to patch mangled bodies, to put the fragments back where they belong, returning the body to its physical wholeness, or, in other words, restoring the past. Corinne even accuses him of arrogance, the belief that he "could sew up a soul as neatly as he sews up a split lip" (65). And, whereas Corinne must constantly struggle against the impulse to lie, he has an aversion to lying, although Corinne claims it is "intellectual pride" rather than honesty (29). Yet even though she sees the flaws in George's nature, she cannot resist upbraiding herself for not being more like him. In her vision, she and George occupy traditional masculine and feminine roles, and her appraisal of herself and her writing reflects that vision. She does not yet have faith in the feminine.

As George restores bodies, Corinne is trained in records preservation (24), in restoring the documentary pieces of the past, yet she believes that her efforts to restore wholeness to her own fragmented past are failures. She questions her memories of their marriage: "Is this true? We've been married for so long, I simply cannot remember how I felt in all the different segments of time we've spent together" (18). The segments persist in remaining segments and her memory cannot make of them a connected, chronological narrative. Confessing to her children that, unlike the appearance they have seen, she
is "not serene, not orderly, not decent," and that she wants to tell them the truth about herself so that they can know her, she admits: "There is no way to tell you, just talking, how and why. . . . No matter how the conversation goes, it doesn't seem true when we have finished" (27).

The next day's entry, after she has told her children she does not want to give them "a gross pack of lies," is another beginning: "Here is a possible version of what happened to George and me and the Toad" (29). In spite of the warning implicit in her description of this "possible version," the reader believes her bizarre story of George and the woman she calls "the Toad" having sex in a Methodist church nursery while Corinne hides in a closet. Interrupting that story to tell about her courtship, she stops herself:

"Wait!"

Now who's speaking? I hear in my head, as if I were half asleep, inviting the Senoi dream state, a question, spoken with my own private voice, a voice without substance, without resonance, known to no one but me.

"Truth?" she says. "So you think you can borrow George's scalpel and set about methodically, like the maniacal doctor in The
Bride of Frankenstein, flaying yourself alive?"

(39)

Corinne then returns to the story of her courtship, beginning, "The facts are these," and moving on to "try to get the chronology of our lives straight," only to go back to the story of George and the Toad, which she finally interrupts to confess that the story is a lie.

In spite of her determination to tell a history that is straight and true, to piece things together the way George does, the tools necessary to do so are not her tools but his. When she appropriates his method, she becomes both the maniacal doctor in a horror movie and that doctor's victim. Instead of restoring wholeness, she dismembers. And the voice that stops her, that points out to her the falseness of her endeavor, is her private voice, known only to her, a repressed voice that rises to the surface as if in a liminal dream state—a feminine voice that disrupts her attempts to write a masculine narrative. Instead of condemning her for failing to measure up to George and the masculine method, this private voice rises up in defense of Corinne's own method—different but not deficient, a method affirmatively disparate.

But Corinne cannot yet accept the truths this private voice offers, and so she immediately goes back to facts and chronology, only to return to the story of George and
Toad. Although she tries to make it a "true lie . . . a waking dream that would bring its gift of meaning to us all," she feels she has failed. As in the dream, the failure to find meaning is linked to the persistent centrality of the male figure. At this point, she still cannot turn the story away from men. Questioning her own intentions, she stops writing and then comes back to it with a childhood memory that also includes *The Bride of Frankenstein*. Her mother had allowed Corinne and her brother to see the movie when they were children (Corinne supposes the presence of a monster in the title was offset for her mother by the inclusion of "bride" and its traditional implications), whereas *The Unholy Three* was forbidden. After the two children sneak off to see the forbidden film anyway, Corinne is guilt-ridden, remembering her mother's voice: "The truth! We can't depend on each other unless we tell each other the truth" (47). When she finally confesses, her mother merely says that the movie "doesn't seem to have hurt either of [them]" so not to worry.

Although Corinne remembers the moment of her confession in vivid detail--the room, season, time of day, smell of grass, sound of mower--neither her mother nor brother recall the incident at all. Corinne claims that she understands "at least some of the significance of this story," but she refuses to stop to discover the meaning of
this memory: "I can't stop to think about it, to analyze it. I have to go on, just as I did then" (48). She values progression too much to discover the meaning in this segment of her past. Furthermore, since she is the only one who remembers the episode, she questions the validity of the memory and thereby the truth of any meaning she might find there. She is caught between the belief that there is truth to be found in dreams and lies and the demand that haunts her from childhood for what she perceives as superior truth.

Even though she cannot finish the story of George and Toad, Corinne later attempts a similar fabrication. While searching in a storage room for the letters George's lover has written him, she finds some ledgers of George's great-grandfather's. Since these are factual records kept by a man, they belong to traditional history, and she decides they require preservation. Earlier she had hidden her green stone (the one from the back yard that represents the gift-stone from her single Senoi dream) in the window box where the ledgers are. Now as she removes the ledgers the stone slides under the boards down to the subflooring. There she finds George's grandmother's diary, the literally and symbolically hidden record of a woman's life, the other history that is traditionally left out.

After several pages quoted directly from the diary, Rebecca Adams' words are interrupted by ellipses followed
by Corinne's confession: "Again, no. Just as there was no Toad, there was no diary. Or rather, the diary is mine, my invention" (151). Her invention is based on "some verifiable facts," but the rest is her own fabrication: "It poured out of me like water from a spout. I did not think. . . . Yes, her story came easily—like automatic writing—just as The Toad's story did. . . . I began, I wrote on, and in some secret part of me, some hollow hidden even from my own probing, I must have known the writing would lead us here" (152-53). Again her hidden, secret voice has surfaced to subvert all her intentions to tell the straight truth. And here it has brought to the surface a hidden, unknown story of a woman from the past, a woman whose story had been appropriated by her family and transformed to fit the preferred pattern.

The story she has written for, and as, Rebecca is in part Corinne's own story, for she admits, "In spite of myself, I couldn't help pouring all the old devastating pain, all the ancient love and hate, into George's poor helpless dead grandmother" (160). Her admission identifies her with the life of this woman, who is also her ancestress as well as George's, and blending their voices and emotions into one text creates a bond between the women. Corinne pictures Rebecca as the fairy tale image of Sleeping Beauty being awakened by the Prince, with Rebecca "sleeping in the parish roll book, waiting
for me to make up my life and assign her her place in it, to round out her story and bring it to its true close" (154). As in the story of Ariadne and Theseus, Corinne assumes the masculine role in this fairy tale, for she is the one who wakes the sleeper and gives her a voice.

Of course, in spite of her desire to round out and close Rebecca's story, she does not, for the diary ends with ellipses. Instead she has drawn attention to history as a product of the historian's own life and emotions, a product of the present. Not only do the stories of the past lack absolute authority, even the present, Corinne's own life, is "made up": "Maybe we make up our lives like stories. . . . And George? Does he make up his life to match mine, mine to match his?" (154). Her own struggles to write the truth inevitably become an interrogation of authoritative, single truth, even in George, whom she previously claimed has an aversion to lying.

But beyond that questioning, that disruption, she has established a connection, a bond of sisterhood with the ancestress for whom she speaks. She is enabled to write the diary because she feels she and Rebecca have a shared life as women, a shared pain that requires a voice and an audience. Since Corinne is writing a diary, she has Rebecca's voice speak in the same form, a private form written for the self. Yet both Corinne's own diary and the one she writes for Rebecca directly address an
audience, usually an audience of women. Rebecca at first says that she cannot show her words to anyone or talk to anyone, but she admits that the motivation for her writing must be "that someone, some time, read [her] words" (140). In the second notebook, which is supposedly written years after the first, Rebecca says that she had written the earlier diary to herself:

Yes, I understand, as I did not then, that those pages were a cry—a desperate cry—from myself to myself, hidden here where only I in my solitude could hear my own voice. And I know well, too, why I write now. I know why I will leave this notebook hidden here. I have no one to give it to, no one to whom I may allow myself to speak out. Not my daughters. I cannot bear to speak to my daughters. God keep them from the need to understand my life. But I will leave these pages, will put down the record, . . . not knowing who might find it . . . . (144)

But she then begins to address the someone who will find this diary, assuming that the reader will be a woman since she assumes a man would find the diary only if he were tearing down the house.

Determined to get on with his destructive task, and "too busy to labor over the fading script," he would perhaps take it to his wife, sister, or mother. Of
course, she assumes that the most likely one to discover the diary is a woman performing the traditional task of housecleaning. She speaks directly to those imagined women as sisters:

Sisters, reading, I charge you, do not turn away from this reflection of your loneliness, your despair. I know that many women live as I did with Clarence and as I do now, year after year in isolation from all other human beings, all equals, all peers. Children, warm children, children's arms and bodies, but all else—solitude. No man, no woman, to stand facing you, eye to eye, hold out a hand and say, Speak to me, sister, fellow traveler, sufferer, fellow human creature. Reveal yourself to me. I lived in just such solitude during the eight years of my marriage. (144)

Throughout the rest of the diary, she addresses her "invisible, . . . unknown" sisters, and finally, just before the ellipses and Corinne's admission that the diary is invention, charges her "Sisters in pain, whatever your circumstances, whatever the time," to hate and torment men (150). In this invented diary, Corinne has imagined a woman speaking to her as a sister, as one who shares the isolation, oppression and silence of women, and as one who stands in solidarity with her against the men who have power over them both.
In Corinne’s own diary, which she claims at first is a means to come privately to an understanding of her own life, she often addresses all her children (although she most often addresses her daughter, also named Corinne) and at times even George, admitting that she needs their understanding as well. By constantly referring to the text she is writing as a "confession," she further reinforces the need for and the expectation of a listener or reader. The audience her culture assumes for both Corinne and Rebecca, the male spouse, is there for neither of them. Admitting that for twenty-three years she had hidden herself from George, she speaks of her need for a listener:

To whom could I speak, if not to George? You, children, were there, of course, but no friend, no peer, to hold out a hand and say, I am listening, sister, fellow traveler, sufferer. (172)

In echoing the words she had earlier written for Rebecca, Corinne further establishes the sisterhood she feels with her ancestress, her identification with the earlier woman's isolation and silence. But there is a further parallel between her own life and the life she imagines for Rebecca: each has an affair with another woman, establishing a bond of sisterhood that includes sexuality as well as sympathy.
In Rebecca's story, sex with her husband is totally degrading, and his desire is only to impregnate her and empower himself. Her "situation is that of a bitch under a dog," and she prefers not having to face him as he "violates" her since she can then reduce him to "disembodied hands, a bodiless cold iron tool forcing its way in, pounding at my womb" (142). He thus becomes an "it" just as, for him, she is no more than the womb he violates. Both he and her father incessantly preach the submission of wives to their husbands. Quoting The Proper Conduct of Christian Wives and the Bible, they, and, "vaguely," even her mother, offer divine sanction for her powerlessness and self-loathing.

In her own view, her husband Clarence "took me from my self, made me into nothing" (150), and she repeatedly questions how that could be by divine purpose: "No god could have meant his creature, made in his likeness, to endure such a life" (139). At one point she even addresses the question to her "invisible, unknown sister": "Did God indeed mean women to be subject to men?" (145). When her husband dies, she offers prayers of thanksgiving to a different god, one she can believe in, for "the blessed, lovely loneliness, the sacred solitude" of sleeping alone and owning herself (143). But four years after Clarence's death, her cousin Maria comes to live with her and offers her the "eye to eye" love of an equal.
Maria, whose husband "would no longer have carnal relations with her," is a "passionate woman" who "longed for the warmth of a man's body in her bed, for love, for children" (147-8). She and Rebecca "came to love each other" as "sisters in loneliness and pain," and because of Rebecca's economic independence they are able to live together until a custody battle over Maria's son, a son who represents patrilineage and property, forces her to return to her husband's house.

Meanwhile, Rebecca's father is determined to regain control over his "unnatural daughter" by taking her children and her property. A religious man who pores over his Bible every evening and "swears every oath by the religion of love and forgiveness," he does not see that "even from his point of view," his treatment of his daughter is "monstrous" (149). Rebecca quotes from "the Bible of the gentle Jesus" the words Christ spoke to the crowd about to stone the adulteress: "Let him who is without sin . . ." Not only does she note her father's rejection of Christ's merciful example, she also sees the inconsistency that rejection reveals. A literalist regarding the submission of women, her father easily ignores the scriptures that contradict his patriarchal views. For him, the Bible is a tool for maintaining power over women.
But just as Rebecca can imagine a god who differs from her father's version, she has a different view of sin:
"Ah, sisters, is contentment a sin? Is tenderness a sin? Gentleness? Cherishing? Joy? Ecstasy? But this hatred in my heart now is a sin" (149). Unlike her father, she recognizes hatred as a sin and does not justify it. Instead, she sees that her love for Maria has produced in her more positive, and more Christ-like, emotions than her father's religion has produced in him. The scriptures he and Clarence quote about proper conduct for Christian wives equate fruit with children, but neither man ever cites scriptures about the proper conduct of Christian men, or the spiritual fruit all Christians are supposed to bear. They are like those warned against in Matthew 7:15-16: "Beware of false prophets, which come to you in sheep's clothing, but inwardly they are ravening wolves. Ye shall know them by their fruits." And there is no evidence of their having read Galatians 5:22-23: "But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law." Rebecca is capable of seeing the falseness in her father's and her husband's Christianity, and she is likewise capable of correctly judging the fruit of her relationship with Maria. What she recognizes as sin is her hatred and wrath, both of which are among the "works of the flesh," listed prior to the catalog of
spiritual fruit in Galatians 5. The love and sisterhood of these two women engender more Christlike fruit than legalistic religion produces in Rebecca's father or her husband.

Rebecca's story contrasts the strength to be found in women's relationships with each other with the debilitating impact of masculine attempts to keep women isolated. The freedom and equality of female exchange, both sexual and linguistic, are in graphic contrast to the oppressive hierarchy of male-female relations. However, the relation between Rebecca and Maria fails in part because both women are too conditioned by the patriarchy to be completely free. Maria desires a man's body and becomes Rebecca's lover only after her husband refuses to have sex with her. Although it is difficult to interpret as weakness a mother's refusal to give up her child, Maria returns to her husband because she cannot give up her son.

Perhaps more difficult to explain is Rebecca's address to unknown sisters when she cannot speak to her own daughters. Her inability to encourage resistance in her daughters may be read as an acceptance of their inevitable subordination. On the other hand, her prayer that God will "keep them from the need to understand [her] life" (144) may also imply the hope that their lives will be better, freer, and more independent than hers; therefore,
they would not need to understand her life in order to lead their own.

These same tensions appear in Corinne's own story. She uses the voice of a woman she never knew to say what she cannot say herself, to make women the subject of her story instead of men, who have been at the center of both her Senoi dream and the George-and-Toad story. But after imagining Rebecca's story, after turning her attention toward a woman, Corinne begins to free herself from the patriarchy that has shaped her as well as Rebecca and Maria. After the invented diary, she returns to her own voice, and, after a few entries, writes on New Year's Day, "I will begin again" (159). This new beginning, unlike Rebecca's address to unknown sisters, is addressed directly to her daughter Corinne and is a confession of "a long love affair with a woman."

Denying the love of women as her "natural bent," she declares her difference from the woman in the diary, for, like Maria, she delights in and prefers sex with a man. But she describes her relationship with Judith in language similar to Rebecca's: "We cherished each other, were carnal and spiritual sisters. We lay down together in love and trust" (175). This sisterhood allows them both to speak, even about the trivial, the domestic, and to be heard, offering them a new selfhood in each other:
She created for me a world of absolute acceptance. If I had said to her, Have I ever told you about my second tonsillectomy? (a dreary, horrid, boring tale), she would have said, No! And even if I'd told her twice before, her interest would have been genuine. She listened to me—and I to her—with the kind of sisterly acceptance one gives oneself. (168)

The problems they confront together are never totally resolved, but they "continued to weave and elaborate and embroider the fabric of [their] life together" until, as with Maria in Rebecca's diary (although under entirely different circumstances), Judith's husband forces their separation.

However, just like the choices available for Maria, difficult though they may have been, there are also choices for Judith and Corinne. Although Corinne says she would "probably" fall in love with Judith again (168), she also says that she would have chosen her children and their father, would have given Judith up, had she been forced to choose (170-71). When Judith does have to choose, she chooses to leave her husband and Corinne, both for the sake of her son and the child she is expecting. Judith believes what she has been conditioned to believe, that a Lesbian household is "no way to raise a child" (186). After she leaves, has her child, and divorces her
husband, she remarries (195), returning to the traditional relationship she believes is better for the children.

Although at first angered by Judith's choice, Corinne later realizes that she would have made the same decision: "I couldn't have carried a child and gone on with the affair, it would have gone against my deepest, most uncontrollable feelings" (188). Looking back on that relationship, she understands that Judith "had to acquiesce in rape" (187), that she chose to remain in her marriage and to continue having sex with an abusive man. But Corinne also accepts that she has likewise consented to her own relationship with George:

I set it up. I consented to it. I arranged the continuing life that invited him to rape and permitted me to hate. I drew him close and opened my legs and stared over his shoulder into the darkness—all in the name of stable family life and what was best for the children. (182)

Now she questions whether her choice was indeed best, and she even asks the children if "some other life" would have been better after all (183). She is beginning to question the patriarchal assumptions she has internalized.

Although Judith is the only female lover Corinne has had, Judith is not Corinne's first female love. In fact, Corinne describes Judith as "the adult incarnation of a child I had loved when I was eleven" (166). Sent to camp
that eleventh summer, separated from her mother, she "met
and lost the first friend of [her] dreams, [her] ideal
companion":

What did we say to each other, how did we
establish our passionate friendship? . . . I
forgot my own mama as completely as if I'd cut out
the part of my brain in which she lived. . . . The
summer ended and she was gone. But her face has
stayed in my dreams. (167)

Corinne's mother, whom this girl temporarily replaces, is
the first female-female bond in Corinne's life, and she
even describes her feelings for her mother as being "in
love" (18). During an early affair with a married man,
the feeling she has when they part is the same sensation
she felt at eleven when parted from her mother, and she
compares that feeling to her present feelings about her
separation from George:

Do you remember that I used my homesickness, my
heartsick longing for my mother's touch, her kiss,
as model for the moments when I had to send my
first lover home to his wife, the moments now when
I feel my separation from George, whether physical
or spiritual, as a rending of myself? (167)

In these two incidents, unlike the affair with Judith,
women's relationships with each other take precedence over
those with men. Unlike Corinne's Senoi dream, in which
James is the leading figure, the dreams she mentions here are of a female friend. And unlike Warren's *All the King's Men* and Faulkner's *Absalom, Absalom!*, the crucial figure for Douglas's protagonist is the mother rather than the father. In fact, Corinne never mentions her father. The relationship with her mother becomes the pattern for the other relationships in her life, and her own mothering is central to the story she is telling. Her audience most of the time is her children, and a major motivation for telling her story is to gain their understanding and acceptance.

Her first childhood listener is her mother, who hears Corinne's confession about sneaking to the movie she'd been forbidden to see. Her mother, replacing the masculine priest who ordinarily hears confessions, does not mete out the expected "punishment, expiation, relief, purity" (47). Instead, she offers understanding and mercy—"Well, It doesn't seem to have hurt either of you, does it? . . . Well, don't worry about it, then" (47-8). Instead of demanding penance, by which one pays off the debt of disobedience, the mother grants a free absolution that disrupts her daughter's expectations. Her mother's response is in direct contrast to the father's response in Rebecca's story, for his Old Testament version of religion shows no mercy.
Rebecca's diary includes Biblical images that reveal women's oppression: scriptures on the submission, silence, and even the stoning of women. Just as Rebecca struggles to imagine a different kind of god and a religion that does not serve as support for the patriarchy that destroys her, Corinne also participates in that struggle. In the first journal entry, she refers to the "feeble old Methodist God [who] still easily holds me by the throat (I'm feeble, too), twists my arm, gives me a toothache or a kick in the breasts" (3). Theirs is obviously an adversarial relation. Corinne goes to church only for funerals and weddings: "Not that I don't care desperately about God and all that, but that church... It's—I don't know—crazy, useless, boring. I don't know what to make of it" (32). The religion taught at the Methodist church does not make sense to her because it is a patriarchal religion and therefore seems useless to a woman desiring equality and a voice.10

Although she had grown up in "a pious churchgoing Methodist family," she had "lost interest" in the church during her adolescence:

What was said there no longer sounded sensible to me; the building seemed to crumble, the wind whistled through the gaps, and I moved out into the open desert. What I though I was left with, even in the open desert, was a conviction about
human responsibility. One must cherish one's living, keep watch beside one's dying, bury one's dead. All answers could, must be worked out in relation to these necessities. But how? How?

(89)

Since the feminine is left out of that religion, the feminine gap becomes the source of that religion's destruction for her. As the Israelites wander in the wilderness, a punishment for not proceeding straight into the Promised Land, so Corinne pictures herself a wanderer in an open desert. She turns away from the Old Testament promise of property and prosperity in search of a different religion, one centered on human responsibility and community. And in that search, although she wants to believe that all questions can and must be answered, the questions always remain. Not only does she wonder how this other religion is going to be worked out, she also wonders why she cares about lying and why she continues "frantically, like a Catholic at the hour of death, to confess" (89). What her constant confessions in fact do is establish community, a necessity for a religion centered in human responsibility, for her confessions provide a connection between her and those for whom and to whom she speaks.

Corinne cannot talk to George because he does not listen, and he does not listen because he is not
interested in the feminine history she has to tell. When she tells him about Rebecca's suicide, a mystery that fascinates her to the point of writing a diary in the woman's voice, George "registered the fact, filed it under some poem or other . . . . , filed it, then, and thought no more of it" (22). Although Rebecca is George's maternal grandmother, a much closer relation than her relation to Corinne, he is not interested in her life or her death. When Corinne tells him about her own affair with Judith, he is equally uninterested:

Although he expressed astonishment, he forgave and forgot, or so it seemed to me, almost before I finished speaking. He had only the most tenuous interest in my past. He was absorbed in his own present. (173)

George is absorbed by his own present affair with another man, and that relationship has excluded Corinne and the feminine from his attention. Not only is he uninterested in her story, her voice, he deprives her of his own. When he speaks to his male lover, his voice is "full of tenderness that said in every commonplace word, 'You, only you, only you,'" a voice he "never used, never, not even in the earliest days" of marriage, with Corinne. His interest apparently depends upon likeness rather than difference.
Although Corinne has earlier claimed that her selfhood is dependent upon his gaze, his desire for her, that relationship is based upon objectification and therefore does not allow her to stand eye to eye with him, as equals. And when his desire is removed, in the process of her attempt to determine the cause, she writes of her relationships with women. These are the relationships that provide her a voice and an audience, and the text she writes becomes a means of creating sisterhood and community. By writing the diary, she establishes a bond with Rebecca. In writing her own journal, she establishes a closer bond with her children, for she not only speaks directly to them, she imagines their responses as well. Beyond those connections, she establishes a connection with any other reader of her text, for this is a text that asks for the reader’s participation.

I have already referred to places in the text where Corinne offers multiple choice answers for questions she poses about cause and effect. Although she at times chooses certain of those possibilities to explore, she never determines finally which is the answer to any of her questions. The reader is left to ponder, along with her, the possibilities. She also draws attention to the materiality of her text by offering the reader an opportunity to participate in making the physical structure as well as the meaning of the text, and she
connects that textual structure to the human physique. Wondering if George has for years been denying his preference for assholes rather than vaginas, she imagines her children, part of her audience, objecting to her language and silencing her. She imagines them replicating the system that has shaped them as it has shaped her. Although she refuses to hush, she does defer the explicit sexual passages until later:

There may be a segment in this account, like the chapter in *Tristram Shandy* devoted entirely to punctuation, into which I will put all the sexual fantasies, all the explicit sex—get it out of the way. Read on, then, anticipating. When you come to it, if you don’t like explicit sex, you can skip it. If you do, perhaps I’ll arrange the pages so they can be clipped out and moved around to the appropriate places and reinserted. It just occurred to me, I might include an additional challenge, the element of a puzzle: Which episode goes where? (67)

The text is already a puzzle, requiring the reader to sift through her lies, tricking us into believing the stories she tells of George and Toad, of Rebecca and Maria. We are forced to question the authority of the authorial voice, to acknowledge the fictive nature of the text we are reading, and now we are asked to participate in
ordering the text. If we insist on linearity, then we are the ones who must figure out which episode follows which. We are challenged to draw the line, to piece together the whole, and some of the pieces are to be withheld.

What is left out are the sexual scenes, some real, some imagined or dreamed. At one point, determined to win back George's sexual desire for her, she imagines her readers question: "Why did you care whether he wanted you or not?" (83). Without answering, she again offers the reader a chance to participate in making the book: "When you're rearranging pages, perhaps one block of the explicit sex should go here." But this time she goes on to suggest how the passage could read, describing herself masturbating to stay awake while driving (quite a different picture from the woman in All the King's Men who lies in bed passively waiting for the man, listening to him as he drives by). In one dream she is in bed with George and his male lover, examining feces, when she interrupts herself with ellipses followed by "See Sexual Appendix" (96). Later she announces that she and George, after a period of sexual separation, are "fucking again," and she follows that with another of her ubiquitous multiple choice lists. Here the list is titled "Items for exploration in the Sexual Appendix," and this time she does not choose to explore any of the questions she poses (134).
She is willing to offer masturbation, sex with George, and even George’s sex with his lover as material for this appendix, with its contents to be inserted as desired by the reader, but she refuses to include her sexual relations with Judith: "There is nothing I want to put into that ridiculous Sexual Appendix. We cherished each other, were carnal and spiritual sisters. We lay down together in love and trust" (175). That relationship must remain marginal to any attempt at ordering events or creating a unity out of disparate puzzle pieces. It will not fit such a masculine pattern, just as this entire text refuses to fit a traditional narrative pattern.

Ultimately she does not include the appendix, deciding that "there are more than enough books on these subjects" (206). Instead, the reader, whose expectations have once again been disappointed, must continue to fill in the gaps that Corinne continues to leave. She has already revealed her own mind as what Zulma Martinez calls a "meaning-producing center, endlessly renaming the world" (238). In Martinez’s "holographic paradigm" for feminist writing, a constantly changing perspective draws attention to "a world conceived of as generative . . .: a world that has genuinely invalidated the Logos":

Thus the novel becomes an open-ended field inviting the reader’s participation in an endless meaning-producing process. Consequently, there is
no transcendent meaning to be recovered by the reader: there is only the creative interaction between the reader and the text . . . . Thus the novel is to be viewed not as present to itself or self-identical but rather as holo-movement or holoflux; or as an ever-changing text within the larger and all-inclusive text of the world. (238)

This holomovement or holoflux is not a masculine, linear pattern but is linked instead with feminine procreativity and the body (239). By associating sexuality with the physical making of her text, Corinne draws attention to her own procreative act, and by withholding the material that she invites the reader to insert and order at will, she is both asserting her own status as author and yet at the same time insisting that the reader make an imaginative contribution to the text as well.

Powerless to alter her own exclusion from George's life, she tries to use her power as author to rewrite the story, to reinsert herself as a central rather than a marginal character. In her first version of George's affair, she renames the woman "the Toad," and when she finally tells the story of George and his male lover, she withholds the boy's name and renames him:

He . . . I cannot write his name. I cannot bear to speak his name. I think of giving him a name like "The Toad"--The Technician, for example.
That’s his trade. No, I’ll call him Chuchundra—
The Musk-rat. (73)

Later she reduces even the name she has given him to the initials "M-r" (81), initials that can also represent "mister" or "master," as they do in Alice Walker’s *The Color Purple*. Aware that by calling him Technician or Muskrat she is "making him less than human" (91), she continues to use her own names for him, at one point referring to him as a "creature" (121). Her power as author allows her to rewrite the male-dominated text that excludes her, although she still cannot completely overcome her need to write about men.

Not only does she rename George’s lover, she rewrites his love letters to George. Her search for these letters parallels her attempts to find meaning by piecing together her own history, for when she begins looking for them she believes that in them she will find "the truth, the objective truth" upon which she can base her life (131). Knowing that she is obsessed with finding the letters, George intentionally leaves them, torn into pieces, in the trash can for her to find. Gathering the fragments, Corinne pieces the letters together with Scotch tape and files them at her office "among back tax records and copies of old examinations and class rolls" (204). Fearing that if she threw a letter away she "would not then be sure it had ever existed," she files them with
more transparent documents: lists of numbers that can be subtracted and added until the single answer is found, exams that can be graded because there is a right answer, lists of names that have percentages and number of absences alongside. But the letters, like the history she is trying to piece together, resist such singular interpretation.

When she first sees one of the letters in the trash can, she stares "as if the fragments, inscribed in radioactive ink, might glow, reveal themselves to me, burn my eyeballs in punishment, blind me" (204). But there is neither punishment nor revelation in the letters. All they prove is what she already knows—that, in spite of George's denials, the affair continues. Reading the letters does not give her the clue to George's desire, nor does it "set [her] upon a new path" (202). Again she withholds from the reader, refusing to include what the letters said; instead she offers "some passages they might have contained" (205), passages she writes in the Musk-rat's stead. But she admits that these samples from the letters are only in her "relentless imagination," written by the "puppet boy in [her] head who must have so little connection with the real man in the real world" (206). In spite of her efforts to exert power as author by renaming and rewriting, she undercuts that power by drawing attention to the fictionality of her creation.
In one of the last entries, Corinne tells of a dream she has in which a voice says, "Where art rules, the artifact is a source of power" (209). Thinking again about Senoi dreaming, she wonders "if that's what the Senoi are doing with their found objects and their artifacts made to recall to them the gifts their dream spirits give them." If that is so, then she decides that the text she is writing is not confession after all but "an object that will wield power" over the imaginations of George and her children, transforming and distorting their lives. She even wonders if she is after all "insatiable only for power" instead of love. But she adds that the voice in her dream is not her own. It is not that feminine, private voice that has spoken to her before but a masculine voice:

That voice in my head, I remembered later, was no part of me, but the voice of Frederick Karls in his biography of Conrad. I had been ready to claim as my own so neat an aphorism, but I can't. (209)

In spite of her efforts to assert power through authorship, she cannot finally claim a masculine voice as her own. To do so would be to make her art an act of power rather than of love. Just as her desire to tell a story straight and true is disrupted by her feminine
voice, her attempts to use art as empowerment are denied by her desire for community over hierarchy.

In Rebecca’s diary and in Corinne’s own journal, both women reject the Old Testament version of religion so clearly and grimly personified in Rebecca’s father and husband. Both women try to imagine a new religion that is not based upon hierarchy, particularly the subjugation of women. When Rebecca questions whether God intended women to be subject to men, she wonders if there are places "out there, in the world" where a woman’s life is different, where each woman is not isolated "in her cage," and she finds it strange that "we all consent together to abandon control of ourselves, that men consent with us in this corrupting exercise of power" (145). Corinne, too, wonders what can be done in the face of the world’s corruption of power. She thinks of the starvation in Somalia, Cambodia and Chad; of political prisoners in Chile, Argentina, South Africa and San Salvador; of nuclear waste and nuclear power plants in Louisiana and Mississippi; of people in her own community who suffer illness, insanity and violent death. Her vision of a religion based on human responsibility demands a response to such suffering, but what?

Rejecting the possibility of Christ’s command to the rich young ruler—that he should give all to the poor and follow Him—she imagines her own solution:
That, like the magical kings and queens of old, we must love one another, lust after one another, cherish one another, indulge one another, lie down in the fields and fornicate so that the land will be fertile and the poisons washed away?

That we must put hands and feet and lips and foreheads together and live as brother and sister, man and wife, in childlike trust? Let down the milk in our breasts, raise up the child in our arms?

Yes, I think we must all do that, somehow.

(158)

This is a religion unlike the Old Testament or the New, for it includes lust as well as love, fornication along with fertility, and the final image in its catalog is of motherhood rather than fatherhood. Yet even in offering her own version of religion, she leaves her answer incomplete—"somehow"—and follows that answer with more questions: "But how? Can you help us, children? How are you managing? Have you any advice?" Rather than imposing her own authorial power, she asks again for imaginative contributions from her audience, making community even as she describes her vision of it.

The text itself ends both with unanswered questions and with a vision of community. After Corinne has tried to write her way out of an external labyrinth by exploring
an internal one, she still has not discovered what she set out to find. Just as she never learns what actually caused Rebecca's suicide, she never learns the cause of George's disaffection. In both cases, she is left with possible versions, with multiple-choice answers, and decides that perhaps this is the truth. After struggling through her conflicting desires—with the patriarchal voice of her culture insisting that she write a traditional linear text and the internal feminine voice persistently disrupting that text—she does conclude. The text does end, but not with a traditional resolution. She and George are still together in a strange separateness—playing double solitaire, both broken-hearted and unable to go their separate ways. Their relation produces isolation rather than community. But she imagines her children, to whom she has been writing, in the room with her, reaching out as one to comfort her: "Never mind your motives, Mama. . . . Never mind your character or, for that matter, ours, or Daddy's. What can we do, any of us, except reach out to one another, stay within reach?" And she responds, "Ah, children, ah, George, here I am, then, and here is this. Waking and dreaming, I reach out to you all" (211-12).

The gift she offers them along with herself is the text she has written. A moment earlier she had thought of destroying "this record" and leaving instead "only some
cryptic impenetrable scrawled word" for her children to puzzle over after she’s dead. What she has written is actually both: a record and a cryptic impenetrable text. The novel’s epigraph from T. S. Eliot’s Four Quartets refers to "a lifetime burning in every moment/ And not the lifetime of one man only/ But of old stones that cannot be deciphered" (my emphasis). In this novel, Ellen Douglas has given us the passionate "lifetime burning" of a Southern woman in a narrative that resists being deciphered. This feminine text is Douglas’s dream gift to us, like the cryptic stone in Corinne’s dream and those in Eliot’s poem, an artifact of community rather than power, and it suggests new lines, new patterns that are being drawn in Southern literature.
Notes

1. Although Douglas has in recent years been a writer-in-residence on university campuses, her earlier life did not allow her the luxury of being a full-time writer. After marrying in 1945, she says she had three sons "in rapid succession and had no time for writing" (John Jones 50). Only after her youngest son was in nursery school did she begin to use her child-free mornings for writing.

2. She goes on to ask several pointed questions about the logic of Faulkner's portrayals of women:

What is all this anyhow? Can we be blamed both for living governed entirely by the mores of the community (respectability) and for having been born evil and sinful? Both for being mindless and stupid and for being capable of taking over the universe from God and running it to suit ourselves? Both for feeding on our relatives like vampires for the practical purpose of surviving and for being "irrevocably excommunicated from all reality"? Both for being very demons of vengeance from whom a man cannot buy immunity and for having as the sole end and purpose of our lives "loving, being beautiful, diverting"? And then can there be thrown in for good measure hypocrisy, vanity,
silliness, vindictiveness, and a general capacity to "weaken the blood"? The answer, of course, is Yes. By Faulkner's lights we can and must be blamed as women for just about everything. (154)

3. See New Introductory Lectures 117 and Three Essays 17. In his scheme, women need to conceal their genital lack and got the inspiration for weaving from the pubic hairs that perform that function.

4. See Three Essays 17, Sexuality and the Psychology of Love 76, and "The Uncanny" 152-53.

5. Kristeva asks the following questions about why literature allows this to take place:

Is it because, faced with social norms, literature reveals a certain knowledge and sometimes the truth itself about an otherwise repressed, nocturnal, secret and unconscious universe? Because it redoubles the social contract by exposing the unsaid, the uncanny? And because it makes a game, a space of fantasy and pleasure, out of the abstract and frustrating order of social signs? ("Women's Time" 207)

6. See Suleiman on motherhood as both obstacle to and link between work and world. Although Corinne's children are adults, relieving her of the duties of motherhood, she is still bound in her own imagination to the perception of herself as bound to and by the domestic.
The imaginary status of those bonds are emphasized by her status as a college English professor, which offers her work outside the home as well as a connection to language and textual production.

7. Joan Wallach Scott writes about the impact of the "her-story" approach on historical scholarship (20-27). Although the "narrative line of political history" has been changed by the inclusion of traditionally feminine historical phenomena--details from everyday life, family relations, fertility and sexuality--the conflation of the personal/subjective and the public/political has still resulted in the absorption of the private sphere by labelling it a public creation. The emphasis is still upon public discourse and tends to focus on narratives with male subjects at the center, neglecting female agency and implicitly diminishing the historical importance of personal and social life, where women are visible participants.

8. In fact, the concept of écriture feminine is based upon the idea that women's writing is derived from their physiology (see Ann R. Jones). Douglas also connects women's writing with physiology. When an interviewer commented that her novels deal with alienation only "as it sometimes affects certain male characters," she replied:

To me it seems more a male problem. . . . I think just the biological fact that women bear children
makes them less likely to think of themselves as alienated—certainly from the physical world—than men are and that the necessity of caring for children, the loving and cherishing of children, ties one to a very strict reality. There isn't any reason why that might not disalienate a few males too as far as that's concerned. (Speir 244)

In that same interview, she suggested that women tend to be realists rather than idealists, adding that "that realism is a king of biological realism, you know—that one's life is tied much more closely to the biological realities of birth and the child-bearing years and menopause" (245). Men, on the other hand, "can fly off from those things more easily than women can. They can certainly fly off forever from child-bearing and menopause."

She then goes on to explain another cause of women's realism, arguing that neither women or blacks can "afford idealism" since they "live in a world in which you see very clearly that it's essential to lie a good deal of the time in order to keep people who are in control of the society you live in reasonably comfortable and get from them the things you need" (245). Although in these comments Douglas uses biology to explain gender-linked traits, she also shows a clear understanding of certain ways in which gender is a social construction as much as a
biological one.

9. See Gilligan, who delineates two different "moral ideologies," a traditionally feminine ethic of care as opposed to a traditionally masculine ethic of rights: Since women . . . define their identity through relationships of intimacy and care, the moral problems that they encounter pertain to issues of a different sort. When relationships are secured by masking desire and conflict is avoided by equivocation, then confusion arises about the locus of responsibility and truth. (164)

Gilligan's research indicates that males tend to make moral decisions " impersonally," based upon " systems of logic and law," while females tend to rely upon "a process of communication . . . and connection" (29).

10. When John Speir asked Douglas if her fiction were "concerned primarily with perpetuating the 'ethical norms of the Judaeo-Christian tradition,'" she replied: Well, I think people ought to try to be decent to each other. But I don't know, that's a heavy-duty question and maybe not relevant. It's relevant, of course, in the sense that there's a ground out of which your work rises, and obviously the ground out of which my work arises is a childhood in a Presbyterian family who took their religion seriously. But, when you write novels, it doesn't
seem to me that perpetuating norms is one of the things you think about. (244)

*A Lifetime Burning* clearly indicates that no Methodist or Presbyterian god has Douglas by the throat. Instead of the patriarchal values of the Judaeo-Christian tradition, she posits a much less rigid moral code in which trying to be "decent to each other" is the most important tenet.
Chapter Five

"A Shape to Fill a Lack":

William Faulkner and the Pattern of History

In his Nobel Prize speech, William Faulkner claims that a writer (who is male throughout the speech) must leave "no room in his workshop for anything but the old verities and truths of the heart, the old universal truths lacking which any story is ephemeral and doomed" (Meriwether 119). In Absalom, Absalom!, published fourteen years earlier, Quentin Compson's father makes a similar observation in noticing "how so often when we try to reconstruct the causes which lead up to the actions of men and women, how with a sort of astonishment we find ourselves now and then reduced to the belief, the only possible belief, that they stemmed from some of the old virtues" (121). Compson's speech occurs during his attempted reconstruction of Thomas Sutpen's life, a history Compson tries to reconstruct as a logical series of causes and effects that he decides necessarily originate in "old virtues." The examples he uses are of a thief stealing for love rather than greed and a murderer killing out of pity rather than lust (121), but these examples appear amid his primary attempt to explain the actions of Judith Sutpen. Actually he is explaining what he sees as her inaction, for in his version of the Sutpen
history, Judith waits for the struggle among her father, brother, and fiancé with "no effort to do anything else" other than wait. Thus, in spite of Compson's declared interest in the actions of men and women, he speaks of women as passive while the men act around them. In his version, Judith makes no investigation into the causes of the conflict among the men, nor does she engage in any "moral debate between what she wanted and what she thought was right" (121).

What appears in both these instances is the belief that action, both in fiction and in history, originates in truths and virtues from the past rather than the present, a belief also apparent in Faulkner's critique of Robert Penn Warren's All the King's Men. In July of 1946, Faulkner wrote to Lambert Davis, an editor at Harcourt, Brace, thanking him for a prepublication copy of Warren's novel and adding his appraisal of it:

The Cass Mastern story is a beautiful and moving piece. That was his novel. The rest of it I would throw away. The Starke [sic] thing is good solid sound writing but for my money Starke and the rest of them are second rate. The others couldn't be bigger than he, the hero, and he to me is second rate. . . . He was neither big enough nor bad enough. (Blotner 239)
Faulkner then repeats his preference for the Cass Mastern section, adding his admiration for "the way Warren caught . . . the pattern of their acts," and finally claiming that "there has been little in this country since that time--1860--'70 etc. good enough to make good literature" (239).

To Faulkner, the section of Warren's novel set in the more distant past is of far greater worth than the much larger section set in his and Warren's present. In claiming that heroes since 1870 have become "second rate," not big or bad enough to "make good literature," Faulkner again expresses his preference for the past over the present. Furthermore, in referring to the "pattern" of those past heroes' actions, a pattern he claims Warren has replicated, Faulkner aligns himself with the view of history espoused by Jack Burden. Burden's task is uncovering the pattern of events and reconstructing the past in order to discover truth and understand the present, a task Faulkner sets for his own Quentin Compson in another Old South novel.

But in addition to Faulkner's belief that the heroes, truths, and virtues worth writing about are found in the past, another belief surfaces in his Nobel Prize speech and Mr. Compson's comments. Faulkner's view of history, especially in *Absalom, Absalom!*, excludes women, subordinating them to a patriarchal logic that finds only
masculine patterns in both past and present (and in ways quite similar to Warren's view in All the King's Men). Women are outside the logic inherent in Faulkner's old, original "verities." If, as his own speech makes clear, anything outside these old truths is "ephemeral and doomed," and if women are outside (or, to use Faulkner's significantly Freudian term, "lacking"), then women are doomed to exclusion from the Faulknerian writer's workshop and the Faulknerian character's history.

In discussing his own writing process, Faulkner told an interviewer in 1956 that his stories usually begin "with a single idea or memory or mental picture," and that the actual writing that follows consists in "working up to that moment, to explain why it happened or what it caused to follow" (Cowley, Writers at Work 133). In the midst of this causally linked series of events, he sets his characters in motion. In As I Lay Dying, he "subjected [the Bundrens] to the simple universal natural catastrophes which are flood and fire, with a simple natural motive to give direction to their progress" (129). This directed progress is central to his project as a writer since, in his definition (as in Jack Burden's), "Life is motion, and motion is concerned with what makes man move—which is ambition, power, pleasure" (138). The artist's aim, he says, is to "arrest motion, which is life" so that later when "a stranger looks at it, it moves
again since it is life" (139). The only access man has to immortality is "to leave something behind him that is immortal since it will always move" (139).

The artist who creates this motion which is life has not only immortality, but Godlike power since he "can move these people around like God, not only in space but in time too" (141). And his created cosmos becomes "a kind of keystone in the universe; that, small as that keystone is, if it were ever taken away the universe itself would collapse" (141). After his last book, to be called "the Doomsday Book," he will break his pencil and have to stop (141). But what lines does that pencil draw before he breaks it? His comments indicate his interest in directed, progressive motion, as well as his admiration for writing that captures the pattern of events. He says that not only did each of his own books have "to have a design but the whole output or sum of an artist's work had to have a design" (141). Although the design of As I Lay Dying is apparent in its journey-plot, The Sound and the Fury also has a design, though one that Faulkner apparently found much more difficult. Although he claims that he knew "probably every single word right to the end" before writing the first word of As I Lay Dying (129), he says he wrote The Sound and the Fury "five separate times, trying to tell the story" (130). After having all three Compson brothers tell the story, he concludes,
That was still not it. I tried to gather the pieces together and fill in the gaps by making myself the spokesman. It was still not complete, not until fifteen years after the book was published, when I wrote as an appendix to another book the final effort to get the story told and off my mind . . . and I never could tell it right, though I tried hard and would like to try again, though I'd probably fail again. (130-31)

The design Faulkner desires and keeps attempting to create is a peculiarly masculine narrative, similar to Warren's in *All the King's Men*, in which the pieces are gathered together into a pattern and the gaps that remain are filled in by the master narrator's (male) voice.¹

In the introduction to *The Portable Faulkner*, Malcolm Cowley describes the Yoknapatawpha novels as part of a single "living pattern," adding that that pattern "is Faulkner's real achievement" (8). Identifying that pattern with an historical perspective, Irving Howe sees the "fundamental source" of the novels as "less the artificer's plan than the chronicler's vision" (30). While Cowley and Howe miss some artistic and cultural subtleties, their parallel focus upon a pattern of history in Faulkner's writing suggests how overarching was that pattern. In fact, it emerges from an almost Calvinist view of the past, in which the present is the product of
the past, a product that necessarily evolves from the events that precede it. James G. Watson describes Faulkner's interpreters of history as "historian-prophets who discover in the past the laws of historical evolution" that predict as well as explain (501): Darl Bundren finds in his version of history "portentous patterns" that predict his destruction while Benjy Compson's juxtaposition of synchronic past and present reveals "profound patterns of historical recurrence" (502).² Faulkner's view of history is, like Warren's, teleological, a history in which characters move toward the inevitable doomsday book that will conclude the narrative, toward the death that will break the master narrator's phallic pencil and end the line he has drawn. But until that inevitable conclusion, the wielder of the pencil, the figure in the workshop, the prophet and the historian are inevitably masculine.

In contrast to these masculine figures are Faulkner's women characters. In the introduction to a collection of essays on Faulkner and women, Doreen Fowler admits that although Faulkner's women often "embody the endurance and indomitability [passive traits Fowler does not note as such] which he extolled in the Nobel Prize address," many of them (particularly Lena Grove and Eula Varner) "seem to lack the intellectual awareness that typically characterizes Faulkner's male characters" (viii). Among
the exceptions she lists "introspective women"—such as Addie Bundren, Joanna Burden, Drusilla Hawk and Charlotte Rittenmeyer—whose striking resemblance to their male counterparts reinforces "the equation of cerebration with masculinity" (viii).

The preponderance of (usually enigmatic) female characters in Faulkner's fiction has produced surprisingly various critical stances. As Judith Wittenberg noted in a 1982 essay, Faulkner criticism, which showed signs of "approaching consensus on other issues," remained polarized regarding Faulkner's depiction of women, one extreme attacking his misogyny and the other applauding his gyneolatry (325). Although Wittenberg does concede the prevalence of the male voice and viewpoint in Faulkner, as well as the circumscription and limited options of his fictional women (336), she ultimately defends him from either critical extreme, concluding that he is "neither pro- nor anti-female, but rather an absorbed student of the endlessly variegated human scene" (327). She adds further that his "men and women alike are poor frail victims of being alive" (336).

But there is another way to approach what Fowler calls the "knotty" problem of Faulkner's women characters (ix): through examining their place and voice within his historical vision. Although Faulkner may overtly adore, sympathize and empathize with his fictional women, he
covertly undermines, subverts and silences them because, however critical of the Old Southern patriarchy he thought himself, his notion of history (and hence of narrative) is inexorably patriarchal.

In an article subtitled "Paradox in Faulknerian Imagery of Women," Gail Mortimer summarizes critiques of Faulkner’s women:

Rather than being fully rounded, his female characters are often stereotypes, incarnations of such qualities as fecundity, serenity, sexual desire, death, or evil. Because we view them only through the (often troubled) consciousness of his male characters and narrators, they attain a degree of reality determined by the quality of the male’s awareness that they exist, and they embody characteristics that are essentially projections based on his own needs and anxieties. (149)

Mortimer sees Faulkner’s women as representing paradoxical masculine responses to the feminine, both attraction and repulsion (150), and she concludes that the typical Faulkner character "experiences women in archaic ways" (159). Mortimer then compares the characters most obsessed with the passing of time to the "earliest Church Fathers [who] associate women with materiality, with sin and damnation, with the presence of evil in the world" (159).
In describing the typical Faulknerian male character's attitude as "archaic" and in comparing those attitudes to the "earliest Church Fathers," Mortimer points again to the "old verities" that undergird Faulkner's constructions of masculinity and femininity, constructions that likewise portray history as masculine and exclude the feminine. Since the most archaic viewpoints belong to those characters most obsessed with time and history, the position of women within Faulkner's most historical works is not surprisingly the most limited and limiting. When they are included in history, they are singularly inactive and peculiarly marginal. And if they enter the workshop, they are not the authors.

Critics who defend Faulkner's women characters interpret them as signs of Faulkner's subversion of traditional notions of the feminine and of history. In The Feminine and Faulkner, Minrose Gwin argues that "Faulkner himself, as speaking subject, interacts . . . with some women characters of his own creation, whose disruptive female voices articulate his male artistic consciousness even as they differ from it" (11). Gwin, like Mortimer, also refers to Faulkner's paradoxical nature, but in her argument the paradoxical signifies the subversive relationship between Faulkner's patriarchal Southern culture and his "bisexual" artistic consciousness: "[Faulkner] becomes in his greatest works
the creator of female subjects who, in powerful and creative ways, disrupt and sometimes even destroy patriarchal structures" (4). Seeing Faulkner's world as "one which explodes with female creativity and feminine force" (21), Gwin calls his female characters "creative soundings of the feminine" whose "subversive deconstructive feminine voice[s]" undercut the "discourse of the male creative consciousness" (24-25).

But Gwin's readings of Faulkner's women characters valorize all women's silence as feminine subversion. Her chapter on *The Sound and the Fury* begins, "I do not believe in Caddy Compson's silence" (34), only to admit that Caddy's voice is muted, a whisper that speaks from "the folds of Faulkner's text" (35), a "feminine space in Faulkner's narrative" (46). She also asserts that, within similar gaps in *Absalom, Absalom!,* "Rosa Coldfield's hysterical voice narrate[s] the female body's otherness to the patriarchal culture which shuts out and shuts in and eventually shuts up the woman who dares articulate herself as a desiring subject" (131-32). Again the woman remains enclosed, and, in spite of her efforts to speak (speech that is hysterical and therefore without the masculine logic that would give it credibility), she is ultimately silenced, her voice appropriated and altered by the male voices within the text. ³
Peter Brooks agrees that in spite of Faulkner's "concern with genealogy, authority, and patterns of transmission" in *Absalom, Absalom!*, the novel subverts the tradition it appears to exemplify (286). The chronology, genealogy and map that appear in the appendix "are traditional schemata for the ordering of time and experience from which *Absalom, Absalom!* markedly departs, yet by which it is also haunted, as by the force of an absence" (286). In a reversal of Gwin's claim that the feminine subverts the apparently patriarchal text, Brooks argues that Faulkner's subversive text is instead haunted by the patriarchal tradition it appears to challenge.

Although Brooks admits (as do most critics) that there is no authoritative voice or version in the novel (292), he goes on to argue, "The 'truth' of narrative may have come to depend, more than on any fact, on powerful formal patternings, designs, eventually, of the narrative itself" (299). The primary pattern is masculine: the narrative center is the history of a male character, Thomas Sutpen, and the transmission of that history is largely from father to son (General Compson to his son, who then relates the story to the grandson Quentin). As Brooks succinctly states, "Nothing can be solved or explained without getting Sutpen's story straight" (300), and the Compson lineage sets out to solve this male-centered, historical detective story (an equally apt description of
All the King's Men). Even the documents used to piece together the Sutpen story are male-authored: both Bon's letter to Judith and Mr. Compson's to Quentin.

Although Brooks acknowledges that the recovery of the past "may not succeed," he adds that the attempt reveals how past desire shapes "the project of telling" in the present (311). The nostalgic desire is for a "revelatory knowledge" that never comes, but, in Faulkner "that desire never will cease to activate the telling voices" (312). The nostalgic attempts to recover the past and to order history that in Brooks's argument merely haunt the text, are, I believe, at the center of Faulkner's project. As Brooks writes in the conclusion to Reading for the Plot, the failure to achieve revelatory knowledge "may only make it the more necessary to construct meaning . . . , moving back to recover markings from the past, reconstructing the outposts of meaning along the way" (321).

The very indeterminacy of Faulkner's reconstructions forces us as readers to remain trapped in recapitulating that old patriarchal history, to continue our efforts to line up the events in some logical sequence. Even in Faulkner's most disruptive narrative, The Sound and the Fury, Jean-Paul Sartre points out, "The reader is tempted to look for guidemarks and to re-establish the chronology for himself" (79). Carl E. Rollyson, Jr., refers to the "historiographical design" in Absalom, Absalom!, by which
Faulkner insists that readers "move constantly from evidence to inference, from details of individual interpretations to patterns of meaning" (195). But neither critic isolates the source of the pattern of meaning he describes.

In part, the pattern central to interpreting historical reconstruction in *Absalom, Absalom!* is Biblical, replicating the typological patterns apparent in many Southern defenses immediately following the Civil War. Since the past in Faulkner's texts is the Southern past, Brooks' "reconstructing" has a particular resonance, especially in connection with the nostalgia Brooks sees at the heart of all narrative (311-12). For post-Civil War Southerners interested in their past, reconstruction connotes the victorious North's attempts to restructure Southern society after the war. White Southerners who worked diligently, and often subversively, during that period to ensure that the rebuilt South would retain its old form called themselves "Redeemers," and the former Confederate states were euphemistically labeled "redeemed" as, one by one, the radical Reconstruction governments were ousted. Faulkner's obsession with the Southern past, and particularly with the pre-Civil War past, signifies a nostalgia for that pre-war patriarchal culture. Even the impulse to reconstruct that past only in narrative is an impulse to control history by undoing or redoing
(reconstructing) the past, an ideological impulse that reveals itself by the patterns it repeatedly follows.

The title of *Absalom, Absalom!* points toward an underlying Biblical narrative pattern that stresses patriarchal lineage, the transmission of political power from father to son, from the king to the prince intended to succeed his father. The narrative then depends upon origins, particularly upon paternity. In the Biblical story of David and his son Absalom, the son prematurely tries to take his father's place and disrupt the "logical" sequence of primogeniture (II Samuel 11-19). He murders his older brother, Amnon, who would precede him in the order of succession, and then tries to usurp his father's throne by armed revolt. As a result, he is murdered, erased from the lineage, and his position is ultimately inhabited by another of David's sons, Solomon.

David, too, is punished for failing to follow the prescribed sequence of God's plan. Because David arranged the murder of Bathsheba's husband Uriah in order to make her his wife, God promises to "raise up evil" from within David's "own house" (II Samuel 12:11), a punishment fulfilled by Absalom. Later, when David desires to build a temple, God refuses to allow it: "Thou hast shed blood abundantly, and hast made great wars: thou shalt not build an house unto my name, because thou hast shed much blood upon the earth in my sight" (I Chron. 22:8). Instead, God
promises that Solomon, a man whose very name means peaceable, will build God's house as God's son: "And he shall be my son, and I will be his father; and I will establish the throne of his kingdom over Israel for ever" (I Chron. 22:10).

Since David's design was not aligned with God's, he is displaced as his own son's father by God, the eternal father and the origin of all fathers. Solomon is chosen because he is an Old Testament type, or forerunner, of the Son of God, the Prince of Peace. And even though Solomon's temple is destroyed in the destruction of the Jewish state, the temple is rebuilt during the restoration of Israel recorded in Ezra, and that temple is to exist eternally in the New Jerusalem prophesied in St. John's Revelation. In the Biblical pattern, destruction of the father's house is always followed by restoration, or reconstruction of that house by the father's male descendant.6

The Biblical model thus establishes that, despite reversals, the patriarchy is always restored. Faulkner's title calls attention to the disparity between that model and Sutpen's attempted but unsuccessful replication of it. Sutpen's design for a father's house to be preserved by his male descendants fails in part because he fails to replicate the linear pattern of history so necessary to the perpetuation of patriarchal antebellum Southern
culture. Like David, Sutpen is a man of war, but in Faulkner's construct, this is no cardinal sin. Instead, Sutpen's fatal flaw is his view of the past. As Carl Rollyson suggests:

Sutpen's tragedy, indeed, is his lack of historical consciousness, his inability to adjust his sense of the past to the present . . . . He could not see the past as part of the continuum of time and of his own life. (81)

In a novel preeminently about origins and paternity, Sutpen is ignorant of his origins: he does not know his age or his birthplace (227) nor his father's origins (223). Worse yet, his progress does not follow the linear pattern of history that makes the present a product of the past and thus predetermines the future.

His family leaves their home without intention or direction, merely falling from the mountains of West Virginia into the Tidewater, sliding "like a useless collection of flotsam on a flooded river, moving by some perverse automotivation such as inanimate objects sometimes show, backward against the very current of the stream" (223). Where the journey begins there are no roads, and his father makes the trip "flat on his back in the cart, oblivious among the quilts and lanterns and well buckets and bundles of clothing and children" (224), a static, passive, feminized figure aligned with children
and domestic objects, and thus an unfit pattern for a father. The journey is without beginning or end, becoming a "sort of dreamy and destinationless locomotion . . . during which they did not seem to progress at all" (224). Instead, the earth seems to pass by them "as if the cart moved on a treadmill" in repetitive circles without linear progression.

Not only is Sutpen's faulty historical consciousness evident in his ignorance of origins, the non-linear, "destinationless locomotion" that carries him away from those origins is replicated in his version of his personal history. When Sutpen relates that history to General Compson, he tells it without regard for continuity or completeness, leaving gaps in the story, stopping abruptly and then starting again without warning or transition:

He was telling some more of it, was already into what he was telling yet still without telling how he got to where he was, nor even how what he was now involved in came to occur . . . . This anecdote was no deliberate continuation of the other one. (246)

At one point Compson stops Sutpen until he starts over "with at least some regard for cause and effect even if none for logical sequence and continuity" (247). Sutpen tells a story but without "recounting" his career. Much of his story is omitted, particularly the journey to
Haiti, which he forgot along with how the revolt there began (255). In fact, he apparently did not know "the steps leading up to it," a further indication of his disregard for cause and effect (252). Omitting how he subdued the revolt, recovered from his wounds and became engaged, he finally stops talking, "flat and final like that, like that was all there was, all there could be to it, all of it that made good listening from one man to another" (255). The omissions in his story and its lack of closure frustrate General Compson, whose repeated cries of "Wait, wait" (247,254) beg for the gaps to be filled. Years later those same cries are echoed by Quentin and Shreve while they try to put together a more complete history.

After leaving Virginia, Sutpen wants to "shut the door himself forever behind him on all that he had ever known, and look ahead" (261), believing the future to be more important than the past so that he can alter the pattern of events set in motion within his past. Such a view is at odds with the traditional version of the Southern historical consciousness, the obsession with the past considered a dominant Southern characteristic and certainly dominant among the other characters in this novel. During the Haitian revolt, Sutpen is nearly castrated, sustaining a scar that General Compson says "came pretty near leaving him [a] virgin for the rest of
his life" (254) and thus preventing him from extending his future beyond his own lifetime through his children. That future is the focus of his design, but the narrators of the novel (including Rosa Coldfield, who has been so shaped by the patriarchy that she echoes its values) persist in linking that design to their own narrative design of linear storytelling, making of Sutpen's life a connected, causal and complete story at great odds with Sutpen's own storytelling.

When Quentin tells Shreve the story Sutpen told General Compson, Shreve refuses to accept Sutpen's abruptly halted narrative and insists that Quentin not "bother to say he stopped talking now; just go on. . . . Just get on with it" (258). When Quentin gets sidetracked with the story of Sutpen's financial arrangement with Mr. Coldfield, Shreve interrupts: "But Sutpen. The design. Get on, now" (260). Sutpen's design for his future thus becomes, for Shreve and Quentin as well as for the reader of Faulkner's novel, a narrative design in which the listeners or readers cry "wait" when there is a gap to be filled and "go on" when the story line is diverted or sidetracked. The narrative picks up speed as it progresses, and at times even the cries of "wait" do not stop or even slow the narrative flow as Quentin and Shreve switch back and forth, often resuming as if the
interruption had never occurred (275) and taking the story "up in stride without comma or colon or paragraph" (280).

At one point, after Quentin has insisted on maintaining possession of the narrative ("Wait, I tell you! . . . I am telling." [277]), Shreve replies, "No, you wait. Let me play a while now" (280). Not only has Sutpen's story become the possession of others, an object to be fought over, it has also become a game, the game of reconstructing history. Sutpen's version is "about something a man named Thomas Sutpen had experienced, which would still have been the same story if the man had had no name at all, if it had been told about any man or no man" (247). But in the hands of the others who tell his story for him, it becomes a story that centers on Sutpen's name, the name of the father, and his refusal to grant that name to his eldest son.

The rules of storytelling among these other narrators --the insistence upon filling in the blanks and achieving closure--not only pass judgment upon Sutpen's narrative design, but also upon the design for his life, his plan to look toward the future and forget the past. The other narrators cannot escape the past. As Quentin thinks, "I am going to have to hear it all over again I am already hearing it all over again I am listening to it all over again I shall have to never listen to anything else but this again forever" (277). Nor will the other narrators
let Sutpen escape, even after his death, for they keep his ghost imprisoned within the history they keep telling and retelling.

But what motivates these narrators to take over Sutpen's story? What in his own version, his own design, is inimical to them? His resistance to linearity, his determination to look forward rather than backward and to work for a self-created future rather than one predetermined by the past place him outside the logic that supports the patriarchal system in which he wishes to participate. Not only is he outside that logic, but his own, quite different logic threatens the basis of the system itself. Sutpen tells General Compson that he wants to become a wealthy planter, a planter wealthier and finer than the man whose slave had turned the boy Sutpen away from the front door. Once he had attained that position, Sutpen meant to take that boy in . . . so that that boy, that whatever nameless stranger, could shut that door himself forever behind him on all that he had ever known, and look ahead along the still undivulged light rays in which his descendants who might not even ever hear his (the boy's) name, waited to be born without even having to know that they had once been riven forever free from brutehood just as his own (Sutpen's) children were. (261)
In *Sutpen's Design*, Dirk Kuyk, Jr., argues that Sutpen plans to become part of the plantation aristocracy and take in a nameless stranger so that he can make that stranger part of the class that had excluded Sutpen as a boy. Rather than replicating the scene in which he had been turned away from the plantation door, Sutpen plans to reverse the scene and act according to an opposing logic: "Sutpen intends to free the stranger's descendants from brutehood forever and, by doing so, to strike at the heart of the patriarchal structure on which not only the southern plantation but also Western culture itself had been based" (21). Kuyk goes on to argue that Sutpen must refuse to open his door to Charles Bon because Bon is not a nameless stranger but his own son (23). That Bon is of mixed race is one of five other, less important reasons Kuyk offers for Sutpen's rejection of Bon (27).

Kuyk's effort to rank class difference above racial difference is unnecessary since both kinds of difference support the plantation system Sutpen tries to join. Whether or not one accepts Kuyk's interpretation of Sutpen's design, whether the design was to subvert the system or to be part of the system (which would also subvert the system by including an alien within it), the design never works. Sutpen is never accepted by the plantation aristocracy and remains in the margins although he acquires all the accoutrements. They cannot accept him
because he is an "underbred" man whose lower-class origins show "in all his formal contacts with people" (46). His "trouble was innocence" (220); he does not know that his acquisitions will never include a new origin or hide his old one.

His innocence requires him to believe that "the ingredients of morality were like the ingredients of pie or cake," and he relates to General Compson the "logical steps by which he had arrived at a result absolutely and forever incredible, repeating the clear and simple synopsis of his history" (263). At this point, Sutpen is trying to explain to Compson his design, which he imagines to be logical and orderly, and is therefore unable to understand its failure. As a result, he assumes he has made a mistake, left out a step, omitted an ingredient, and that in recounting his history (something of which he earlier seemed incapable) he can find his error (267-68).

After telling Compson his story, Sutpen rides away (ironically back to Virginia), struggling to hold onto "his code of logic and morality, his formula and recipe of fact and deduction whose balanced sum and product declined, refused to swim or even float" (275). Although he tries to ape the logic of the masculine ruling class, his logic is still associated with the feminine: his moral code is concocted as if he were baking a pie or cake.
What he fails to see is that his recipe lacks an ingredient he will never have—the correct origin, the right father. That lack prevents his progress and denies him active motion. The boy whose family had left Virginia like "flotsam on a flooded river, moving by some perverse automotivation . . . against the very current of the stream" (223), now appears unable to swim or float. Whereas his earlier journey had seemed to be locomotion without progression (224), he now seems immobile. After the war, his acquired "shrewdness . . . broke down, it vanished into that old impotent logic and morality which had betrayed him before," and he "stopped dead" with the realization that he must hurry to rectify his lack of a son (279). But his plan to have a son with Rosa fails because he "bogged himself again in his morality which had all the parts but which refused to run, to move" (279). His impotent, immobile (and thus stereotypically feminized) logic does not equip him to succeed because his lack cannot be rectified by producing a son. The desire for a son proves his gaze is still forward rather than backward, and a backward-glance would show him that he is stopped dead by the irrevocable lack of a father. He appears on horseback throughout the novel, constantly riding into and out of scene after scene, but when Wash sees him just before his death, Sutpen is an image "galloping through avatars which marked the accumulation
of years, time, to the fine climax where it galloped without weariness or progress" (288). His motion is without progress, and he still ends up where he began--without prosperity or posterity, without past or future, father or son.

At this point in the narrative, the scene shifts to Quentin and Shreve's Harvard dormitory room "dedicated to that best of ratiocination which after all was a good deal like Sutpen's morality" (280). Here Sutpen's logic is aligned with the logic of the Western culture that otherwise appears to exclude him. But there immediately follows a reference to Sutpen as "Quentin's Mississippi shade who in life had acted and reacted to the minimum of logic and morality, who dying had escaped it completely, who dead remained not only indifferent but impervious to it" (280). This description again clarifies Sutpen's inability to acquire the logic that supports the Southern plantation aristocracy.

The men who make up that aristocracy maintain it by setting "the order and the rule of living," and that order is based upon boundaries, upon lines that exclude difference. The threshold that stopped Sutpen at the door of the plantation in Virginia represents a line that separates class from class. His logic is outside a system based on difference because he represents difference. To include him, much less the nameless stranger he wishes to
include, is to erase the order that grants the aristocracy power and privilege. Although the Biblical King David was not an aristocrat from birth, he crosses class lines based upon the highest authority: he is chosen by God to become Israel's king. Although ante-bellum Southerners saw themselves as a classless society since anyone at the bottom could supposedly rise to the top (one reason the poor majority fought to support the wealthy minority), there remained a desire to believe in aristocratic origins. To take in Charles Bon as the stranger is, of course, to do away with not only the difference of class but that of race as well, and the line between the races was a much more serious division than that between classes.

In the New Testament, Christ tells his followers that by taking in strangers, they are taking in Christ ("Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me"—Matthew 25:40), a sentiment echoed in Hebrews 13: "Be not forgetful to entertain strangers: for thereby some have entertained angels unawares" (verse 2). Furthermore, the New Testament Christ brings together the formerly divided Gentiles ("strangers from the covenants of promise") and Jews, breaking down "the middle wall of partition" that had separated them (Ephesians 2:12-14). But whereas in the New Testament, "there is neither Jew nor Greek, there
is neither bond nor free, there is neither male nor female" since all are united in Christ as "Abraham's seed and heirs" (Galatians 3:28-29), the Old South in Faulkner's novel still operates under Old Testament values. The patriarchal pattern of their society depends upon divisions of class, race and gender. To erase those boundaries would be to alter the patriarchal path of history and produce an alternative future.

*Absalom, Absalom!* presents a history that maintains those old lines. The doorways at which both Thomas Sutpen and Charles Bon stand separate class and race, but there is another doorway, another line, other figures left standing on the outside: Judith Sutpen and Rosa Coldfield's sex leaves them outside the patriarchal house and the patriarchal narrative. In *Discourses of Desire*, Linda Kauffman comments on the "astonishing number of forbidden doors, gates, and corridors" in the novel, adding that these images "contribute to the sense of the novel as a labyrinth and to the narrative line as a thread" (252-53). Kauffman reads Rosa as Ariadne to Sutpen's Theseus but pays little attention to Rosa's role within that mythic paradigm.  

When this same image appears in Douglas's *A Lifetime Burning*, Corinne refuses the position of the victimized Ariadne and determines to be the hero Theseus. Instead she becomes both, laying down her own thread and following it, only to realize
finally that the labyrinth is inescapable and has rewards of its own. After weaving a web rather than spinning out a linear thread that can be followed to a single destination, she rejects the masculine project she had originally set for herself—piecing together the past in search of the single truth hidden there—and determines to enjoy the relationships she has in the midst of life's multiplicity.

Like Douglas's Corinne, Faulkner's Judith Sutpen uses a weaving metaphor to describe the chaos she sees in relationships. To Judith, people are all mixed up together, attached to each other by strings, trying to achieve goals for motives they do not understand, "like five or six people all trying to make a rug on the same loom only each one wants to weave his own pattern into the rug" (127). This image seems to represent a recognition similar to Corinne's, that there is no single pattern to be found in history, no single path that will take one out of the labyrinth that is life. But Judith's image is superceded by another, for "all of a sudden it's all over and all you have left is a block of stone with scratches on it" (127). The feminine image of the loom, of the pattern that can never become a single, discernible pattern because there are too many weavers with individual perspectives, disappears and leaves a monumental, phallic stone with a fixed, singular text inscribed upon it.
Of course, Judith adds that eventually the writing on the stone will become meaningless scratches and the name upon it forgotten. She proposes an alternative in the exchange of a letter passing from one hand or mind to another, making a mark on something living rather than dead. As Patrick McGee says of that exchange:

In passing Bon's letter to Quentin's grandmother, Judith ties herself . . . to the descendants of the entire human community. By passing it out of her family, she passes it to the radical alterity of an indeterminate history where its trajectory and purpose cannot be governed or predicted. (78) Because Judith privileges the letter "as sumbolon, a part or fragment," McGee elaborates, the letter enters into a never-completed process, "the process of symbolic exchange": "Through exchange, the letter as event (re)constitutes the human collective" (78-79). But such an interpretation is undercut by the fact that Judith's voice is overwhelmed by Mr. Compson's, who reminds us that the letter Judith passes on is Charles Bon's, that the text is, as always in this novel, authored by a man.11 And in Mr. Compson's version, the letter makes its "undying mark," not on something living, but "on the blank face of oblivion to which we are all doomed" (129). What surfaces in his interpretation of Judith's alternative
vision is the doom that awaits at the end of Faulkner's teleological historical design.

Judith's voice and vision are not the only voices supplanted in Faulkner's novel, for throughout *Absalom, Absalom!* women's voices are drowned out by male voices. Faulkner constantly reduces them from writing, speaking subjects to the blank page upon which men write. When Rosa Coldfield begins telling her story (which is actually Sutpen's), her voice "would not cease, it would just vanish" as Sutpen's ghost haunts, or inhabits her voice as if it were a house (8). His voice, unlike hers, is Godlike as he speaks Sutpen's Hundred into existence *ex nihilo*, "like the oldentime Be Light" (9). Yet even that diminishing of her voice is insufficient, for Quentin takes over, becoming two Quentins, both speaker and listener, with Rosa's words in parentheses.¹² Much like Sadie Burke handing over her knowledge to Jack Burden in *All the King's Men*, Rosa tells Quentin her story so that he may write it, even though a woman who could write poetry could write her own story (11). She offers the story for his profit, not hers, claiming that he may sell it to a magazine and buy domestic trinkets for his wife.¹³ Faulkner, like Warren, creates an articulate female only to have her voice subsumed by the male characters around her.
But Rosa's gift is not enough for Quentin, who immediately begins rewriting her story, deciding that her stated motive is a lie, that "she wants it told" (10). In his version, the only way the story can be told is by a male subject who can fulfill the woman's desire to speak. Furthermore, he concludes that the purpose of the narrative is to explain "why God let us lose the War," making the story a causal history of that most masculine of historical events, war (11). He then decides that the motive behind her story is the man, Thomas Sutpen, whose ghost, "as though in inverse ratio to the vanishing voice, . . . began to assume a quality almost of solidity, permanence" (13).

Rosa's narrative method disturbs Quentin, who complains that "the getting to [the reason for choosing him] . . . was taking a long time" (13), and her telling seemed "to partake of that logic- and reason-flouting quality of a dream" (22). Her narrative must be rewritten, retold through the filter of a masculine voice so that it leaves the feminine realm of the dream, in which the repressed surfaces, and returns to the masculine realm of logic and reason. Mr. Compson claims that women are "irrevocably excommunicated" from reality (191), that they draw sustenance from an unreality in which facts have no ability to hurt them, and that they can ignore "incontrovertible evidence" (211-12), all traits that
disqualify them from participating in Faulkner’s version of historical narrative.

Faulkner’s subversion of the female narrative tacitly endorses Mr. Compson’s notion that women are removed from reality. Rosa attempts an alternative, feminine version of history much like Corinne’s mixture of lies and fact in Douglas’s novel, when she asks if "true wisdom . . . can comprehend that there is a might-have-been which is more true than truth," a might-have-been she connects with dreaming (143). She goes on to declare that "there is no such thing as memory: the brain recalls just what the muscles grope for: no more, no less: and its resultant sum is usually incorrect and false and worthy only of the name of dream" (143). Like Laurel McKelva at the end of Welty’s The Optimist’s Daughter, Rosa is aware that memory fictionalizes her historical narrative. Here, as in Judith’s image of the loom, Faulkner seems to offer a feminine narrative, a feminine version of history. But again, that version is subsumed by the master narrative that persists in drowning out the feminine voice, and Rosa ultimately speaks as an agent of patriarchy, supporting rather than subverting it.

Although Kauffman admits that Rosa "gets lost in translation" (267), she insists that Rosa defies the dominant logic of the phallus by positing another logic in her "true wisdom which can comprehend that there is a
might-have-been which is more true than truth" (AA 143). After Rosa claims that "might-have-been is the single rock we cling to above the maelstrom of unbearable reality," she goes on to speak of the war years when the "stable world" of peace and security, pride and hope dissolved (150). All that remained was "love and faith," but Rosa's apparent affirmation of love and faith does not actually oppose the abstracting masculine economics at work in the novel. Instead, she believes love and faith were "left with us by fathers, husbands, sweethearts, brothers" who fought the war and died "for that love and faith they left behind" (150). For Rosa, this legacy—a remnant of the dissolved, stable, masculine South before the war—is all that has been salvaged from the "old lost enchantment of the heart" (150). Here she seems to repeat the sentiment found in Faulkner's and Mr. Compson's speeches, returning us to the "old virtues," the "old verities and truths of the human heart." Faulkner makes her a mouthpiece for the masculine vision expressed in Mr. Compson's, and elsewhere his own, voice, since Rosa, too, associates pride and hope and love and faith with a lost, masculine world.

In spite of Rosa's feminine narrative meandering, her vision of history and the version she tells is linear and teleological, in keeping with her Calvinist father's theology. She tells Quentin at the beginning of her
story that her own life "was destined," as well as the lives of her sister's "two doomed children" (18). If all their lives are moving toward some predetermined end, then she should be able to reconstruct that path those lives have followed. But, as a woman, associated by Mr. Compson with "the fluid cradle of events" (66) rather than the causal progression of events, she is still an inadequate historian.

In Absalom, Absalom!, women cannot even write their own lives and therefore must entrust the final narrative to men. Rosa's sister Ellen speaks "meaningless phrases out of the part which she had written for herself" (69), although, like Rosa, she seems to have had little opportunity to script any part of her life. She and her father at one point discuss her life as if it were "something printed in a magazine" (27), a pre-scripted, set piece. "Supine and receptive" (66), a "bound maidservant to flesh and blood" (65), Rosa, too, is part of that commodified femininity whose purpose is to divert (117), to draw one away from the path. Her life has been an "unpaced corridor" (144), during which, "instead of accomplishing the processional and measured milestones of the childhood's time," she stands silently at "one closed forbidden door" after another (145). Her destiny, "that doom which we call female victory," is to "endure, without rhyme or reason" (144).
Even when Faulkner gives his women characters more active tasks than passive endurance, those actions appear ineffectual. After Charles Bon’s death, Rosa, Judith and Clytie lead the "busy eventless lives of three nuns in a barren and poverty-stricken convent" (eventless because they are busy with repetitive domestic tasks—gardening, sewing, spinning, weaving and nursing—and because there are no men among them) while they wait for Sutpen’s return (155). According to Rosa, their lives consist of "that normal useless impotent woman—worrying about the absent male" (157-58).16 By refusing to speak of Bon’s death, they deny the event, making of the shot that killed him another closed door, this time between them and "all that was, all that might have been":

a retroactive severance of the stream of event: a forever crystallized instant in imponderable time accomplished by three weak yet indomitable women which, preceding the accomplished fact which we declined, refused . . . . (158)

Rather than moving with the stream of event, women sever that stream, divert progression from its apparently predetermined path. Events stop Rosa dead, she says, leaving her "immobile, impotent, helpless; fixed, until [she] can die" (151-52). That fixed status disqualifies her from writing history as Faulkner envisions it.
By handing the story over to Quentin, she allows the narrative she cannot sort out, piece together and tie up ("since there is no all, no finish" [150]) to be concluded. She ultimately lets go of the threads and the loom so that the masculine pattern can be woven. Shreve claims that Rosa refused to be a ghost or let Sutpen lie in peace because she wanted closure but could not manage that closure alone:

That even after fifty years she not only could get up and go out there to finish up what she found she hadn't quite completed, but she could find someone to go with her and bust into that locked house because instinct or something told her it was not finished yet. (362)

In spite of her masculine "instinct" that demands the story be finished, Rosa's femaleness makes her incapable of finishing the story herself. She is still on the outside of the threshold, standing outside the door of a locked house. Quentin drives her onto Sutpen's "Domain," where she is determined to discover what is hidden in the dark house of patriarchy. She seems possessed, as if "it were not she who had to go and find out but she only the helpless agent of someone or something else who must know" (365). Although she gives the directions to Quentin, as if she were in command of the events, she is in fact the agent of the patriarchal logic that will control the
narrative. She cannot pass the gatepost, standing beside it whimpering until Quentin walks through it with her. Although she carries a phallic umbrella, flashlight and a hatchet, as if to compensate for her feminine lack, she still cannot walk without stumbling, finally having to grip Quentin's arm. Giving the hatchet to him, she must be guided toward the steps and "almost lifted, carried" up the steps, supported "from behind by both elbows as you lift a child" (367). Although Rosa then runs across the gallery to the door, there she is again stopped dead. When Quentin hesitates to break the door, Rosa asks him to give her back the hatchet, but the inexorable logic of Faulkner's masculine narrative cannot allow her to enter the patriarchal house unaided. Instead, Quentin easily breaks through the shuttered window, the shutters proving "a flimsy and sloven barricading done either by an old feeble person--woman--or by a shiftless man" to Quentin's hatchet blade (367).

Once Quentin enters the house, the door can be opened for Rosa. Although Clytie is the one who actually opens the door, she does so "as if she had known all the time that this hour must come and that it could not be resisted" (369). The door must be opened once the master narrator (Clytie even calls him "young marster") is in the house so that he can discover the missing piece and finish the story. By knocking Clytie down "with a full-armed
blow like a man would have" (369), Rosa is aligned with the masculine long enough to ascend the stairs. Once she comes back down, she is taken to the gate and the buggy by Jim Bond, "the scion, the heir, the apparent (though not obvious)" (370). Because she refuses Jim's arm or advice about where to walk, she stumbles and falls. After Quentin drives her back home, he has to lift her down out of the buggy, support her and lead her through the gate, up the walk and into the house (371). She moves "like a mechanical doll" into her "doll-sized" house, her "fixed" face looking like a sleep-walker's (372).

What is hidden within the Sutpen house, the secret she discovers when Quentin accompanies her, is the male heir (actually, two male heirs) to the Sutpen line. Quentin is compelled to walk up the stairway, down the hall, and, in spite of his resistance, must go through the door to find Henry Sutpen. By killing Charles Bon, Henry has redrawn the lines between the races, lines that Charles's mixed blood blurs. He has also prevented his father's plan to take in the stranger at the door by removing himself from the Sutpen lineage. After the murder, Henry disappears, having "abjured his father and renounced his birthright" (79), forcing Sutpen's failed attempts to sire a new heir. Just as Henry draws a line that he forbids Charles to pass ("Don't you pass the shadow of this post, this branch" [133]), he redraws the cultural lines between race and
class. And those lines result in his imprisonment within the patriarchal house, a house he cannot escape (as he cannot escape the law) without destroying both the house and himself within it. The lines that excluded women have never been threatened. When Rosa returns to the Sutpen house in an ambulance (this time without Quentin but still accompanied and driven there by men), she still cannot enter the house. The men who take her there physically restrain her from entering the now unlocked door. Although she does not die in the fire along with Henry and Clytie, she does not speak again, slipping into a coma and dying soon thereafter.

Yet the house is not destroyed by Henry, but by Clytie, a woman, and one of mixed race, a doubly marginal figure who sacrifices herself to protect the patriarchy that has kept her in the margins. Like Rosa, Clytie is shut up in the father's house in spite of the keys both carry. But patriarchy has not been destroyed when Clytie sets fire to the house, merely Sutpen's faulty, feminized version of it. His attempts to join, or to subvert, the patriarchy fail, but that failure is "his allotted course to its violent (Miss Coldfield at least would have said, just) end" (11). He had abruptly upon the Old South from "out of nowhere" (8-9) and "out of no discernible past" (11) without concern for sequence. The eldest son cannot inherit his father's kingdom because of his black blood, a
taint that stems from his mother: "he had stemmed from the blood after whatever it was his mother had been or done had tainted and corrupted it" (331). His race excludes him from any legal lineage, nor can Sutpen acknowledge Charles Bon as his son and heir and retain his kingdom.

In one of Quentin's imagined reconstructions, Charles considers his situation a "jigsaw puzzle picture" in which the answer is "just beyond his reach, inextricable, jumbled, and unrecognizable yet on the point of falling into pattern which would reveal to him at once, like a flash of light, the meaning of his whole life, past" (313). The missing piece is the father he does not have, and he believes that the moment he sees that father "he would know; there would be that flash, that instant of indisputable recognition between them and he would know for sure and forever" (319). That these views belong to Quentin's version of Charles is significant. As Quentin's voice overwhelms Rosa's (whose voice is always already overwhelmed by the patriarchal values she echoes), his Southern white male perspective swallows up the possibility of another narrative. The racially-mixed Bon, like the lower-class Sutpen, is feminized throughout the novel and, as a result, is not authorized to tell his own story. Rather than imagining other possible motivations, other narratives for these characters marginalized by
race, class and gender, Faulkner makes them all become, like Shreve and Quentin, echoes of the father's voice.

The search for the pattern of the past is the search for the father. Roland Barthes describes the "pleasure of the text" as an "Oedipal pleasure (to denude, to know, to learn the origin and the end), if it is true that every narrative (every unveiling of the truth) is a staging of the (absent, hidden, or hypostatized) father" (10). In Absalom, Absalom! this staging of the father is at work in Charles Bon's attempts to gain Sutpen's recognition. However, Bon's mixed race (in a white society that excludes the other race) prevents the moment of illumination and closure possible, for example, in All the King's Men. Instead, the ledgers are not cleared, the dark house not totally destroyed, because Jim Bond remains—uncatchable, unuseable, and threatening to "conquer the Western hemisphere" (378). Once again, the imperialist father's voice takes over as Shreve assumes an equally imperialist motive in Jim Bond, a character not only disqualified from telling his own story by race, but also denied even a comprehensible human voice. He is finally reduced to a distant, bestial howl that cannot be located (376).

By leaving the racially mixed heir at large, Faulkner leaves the post-Civil War South un-reconstructed. That former world, that "country all divided and fixed and neat
with a people living on it all divided and fixed and neat because of what color their skins happened to be and what they happened to own" (221), is irrevocably lost. Just as Charles Bon cannot be compensated for the loss of a father (since those "who could have given him a father had declined to do it, . . . revenge could not compensate him nor love assuage" [343]), there is no compensation, no pay-back or redemption for the loss of the Old South, of that "dead time" that Mr. Compson considers "simpler, . . . larger, more heroic" (89). Compson considers those former heroic figures "distinct, uncomplex," unlike the fragmented people living in the present, "diffused and scattered creatures drawn blindly limb from limb from a grab bag and assembled" (89).

Much recent Faulkner criticism considers the role of loss in Faulkner's writing (Gwin, Matthews, and Mortimer). John Matthews claims that, for Faulkner, "writing itself is as much a kind of loss as it is a kind of compensation" (19). Although Matthews admits that "Faulkner's novels display a nostalgia" for the "loss of authoritative truth, the center, the signified realm, the place of origin, innocence," he also sees the apparent lack of "conclusive sense" in the novels as proof of "a spirit of lively play about the possibilities of infinite interpretation" (36). Faulkner certainly plays with the reconstructed Sutpen story in Absalom, Absalom!, leaving the reader with
historical inventions "probably true enough" (335) from narrators willing to accept the fictionality of truth. But the form of that historical fiction, the way in which Faulkner patterns his play, signifies more than a paradoxical, yet innocent sense of loss.

Part of what is lost in the Old South is the division between races and genders that enabled white males to maintain authority and mastery. With the blurring of those lines, the power of patriarchy is undermined and Southern white males left with a sense of powerlessness and loss that extends beyond structures of language. They have lost the ownership of the other race, part of the material base that supports their hierarchy. Heidi Hartmann defines patriarchy as "relations between men, which have a material base, and which, though hierarchical, establish or create interdependence and solidarity among men that enable them to dominate women" (14). As compensation for the losses that threaten that solidarity, Faulkner reconstructs history in forms that dominate the women within his history.

When Quentin and Shreve work to provide the closure that Rosa cannot, they engage in an all-male "marriage of speaking and hearing," creating "this shade whom they discussed (rather, existed in) and in the hearing and sifting and discarding the false and conserving what seemed true, or fit the preconceived--in order to overpass
to love, where there might be paradox and inconsistency but nothing fault or false" (316). Beginning with this passage, Matthews describes Quentin and Shreve hunting for explanations "as hunters follow tracks," on a hunt in which "the quarry seems less compelling than the excitement of the pursuit" (16). In other words, whether the shades created are true or false, whether the explanation or answer they offer is the answer does not matter so much as the pursuit of that answer. As Matthews says, "The trail is the destination" (16). Or, as Jack Burden claims in All the King's Men, "Direction is all" (384).

For both Faulkner and Warren, life is defined as motion, and the women within their narratives are outside that motion. Since the trail, the journey toward the answer at the end of narrative (which, in both Faulkner and Warren, is tied to the search for the father) is a journey through language, telling the tale gives life to the tellers. Quentin and Shreve not only tell a story, they also "exist in" the telling, in the narrative motion toward its end. As Matthews writes, "The tellers of tales seem to have no life or consciousness--no selfhood--exterior to their speech" (16), adding that for "Faulkner's characters not to speak . . . is for them not to be" (31). By denying motion and narration to his women characters, Faulkner excludes them from history and life,
thus constructing a world even more patriarchal than the Old South he has lost.

However, Faulkner's created world is not a reconstruction but a fictional realm that significantly belongs to him as its creator. He is "sole owner and proprietor" of this land and its people, more godlike in his power than the masters of the Old South ever were. He also uses his own version of Biblical history, a version that reflects his attraction to Old Testament paradigms. Faulkner placed the Old Testament first among the list of books he read as a young man and returned to repeatedly "as you do to old friends," commenting further that reading the Old Testament made him "feel good" (Cowley, Writers at Work 129, 136). His work reflects the Puritan heritage he describes in Absalom, Absalom! as "a granite heritage where even the houses, let alone clothing and conduct, are built in the image of a jealous and sadistic Jehovah" (108). Although he includes the comment that people "evoke God or devil to justify them in what their glands insisted upon" (346), he also sets up the flesh ("the old mindless sentient undreaming meat") in opposition to God:

If you dont [sic] have God and you dont need food and clothes and shelter, there isn’t anything for honor and pride to climb on and hold to and
flourish. And if you haven't got honor and pride, then nothing matters. (349)

Here God becomes the base upon which the old verities are founded, and he is the Old Testament God who sets history in motion at creation and predetermines the path it will follow to the apocalypse—the destruction of earth by fire and the restoration of Israel in the New Jerusalem. In other words, history will return to its origin, the great Patriarch, who, with his only son, will rule his unified kingdom by his transcendent word.

Faulkner's attraction to this paradigm in writing about the history of the Old South does not include the promise of its restoration. Instead, he restores the Old South by means of narrative reconstructions that repeat the historical pattern of what has been lost. Faulkner's most linear novel, *As I Lay Dying*, does not at first seem part of the historical vision so apparently central to *Absalom, Absalom!*, with its Old South setting and its overt concern with narrative reconstruction. But underneath the surface journey plot of *As I Lay Dying* lies a paradigmatic patriarchal structure that reveals the strategies of power at work in Faulkner's vision of history. Rather than a narrative repetition like the telling and retelling of the Sutpen story in *Absalom, Absalom!* *As I Lay Dying* presents an active, historical repetition in which a patriarchy more originary than the
Old South is restored—the Old Testament patriarchy of Israel. By making the Bundrens re-enact Biblical history as bizarre neotypes of the Old Testament Israelites, Faulkner reverts to the comforting paradigms so prevalent among Southern apologists during and immediately following the Civil War.

The Bundrens' journey takes place against an apocalyptic background, and the action seems to hover at the beginning or the end of time where the world is in chaos. The flood and fire become more than two great catastrophes the family must suffer, for Genesis describes the world's destruction by flood, and Revelation prophecies the earth's ultimate destruction at the end of time by fire. The two moments at opposite ends of Biblical history are sometimes conflated in the novel. Before the rain that will bring the first catastrophe, the flood, Darl describes the sun as "a bloody egg upon a crest of thunderhead; the light has turned copper: in the eye portentous, in the nose sulphurous, smelling of lightning" (39). Darl's description seems an allusion to the opening of the seals of judgment at the end of time in Revelation 6, verse 12: "And the sun became black as sackcloth of hair, and the moon became as blood." The word sulphurous conjures up the lake of fire, the second death, that is a part of the last judgment, and it is used five other times in the novel (39, 42 [twice], 43, 72).
After the rain that begins as the air smells sulphurous, the Bundrens confront a flood, and the landscape is a scene of apocalyptic destruction and disorder, where "a fellow couldn't tell where was the river and where the land" (118). Darl describes it as "a scene of immense yet circumscribed desolation filled with the voice of the waste and mournful water" (135). To him they have reached "the place where the motion of the wasted world accelerates just before the final precipice" (139). When Darl sets fire to Gillespie's barn, the family faces a second apocalyptic scene, like that in Revelation 8:7 when God sends fire down from heaven: "There followed hail and fire mingled with blood, and they were cast upon the earth: and the third part of trees was burnt up, and all green grass was burnt up." Vardaman watches the fire and sees the stars move backward, as in Revelation 6:14 when "the heaven departed as a scroll when it is rolled together." Darl connects the two catastrophes the family has faced by comparing the sound of the fire to the sound of the river. In additional parallels to Revelation, Jewel is connected with the returning Christ and Darl with the Anti-Christ.20

In Biblical history, the earth is replenished after the Genesis flood, just as after the Revelation fire there is a new heaven and a new earth. In As I Lay Dying no such affirmation follows the destruction. In a reference
to the journeys of the Israelites, Psalm 66:12 states, "We went through fire and through water: but thou broughtest us out into a wealthy place." Faulkner brings the Bundrens through the fire and water, but they reach no wealthy place. Addie does finally reach her place of rest, but Darl has been sent to an asylum for the rest of his life. Dewey Dell has not managed to get the abortion she sought. Vardaman gets no electric train, Cash no "graphophone," and Jewel no longer has his beloved horse. The only one whose desires are fulfilled is Anse.

Throughout the novel he is described in bird imagery: "a tall bird" (162), "a dipped rooster" (43), with an "owl-like quality . . . awry-feathered" (48). Parasitic and predatory, like the buzzards who feast on the carrion after Armageddon in Revelation 19, Anse feeds off his children and ends up with his new teeth and a new wife. 21 The others merely fulfill Tull's vision, having passed through fire and flood "all just to eat a sack of bananas" (133). They have suffered through a paradigmatic Biblical journey toward redemption to be symbolically returned to the beginning of time (signified by a discordant Darwinian image), and history begins all over, to be repeated and reconstructed again.

Whereas the woman in the house Jack Burden passes lies passively on a bed watching the flies overhead, in As I Lay Dying Addie Bundren is literally reduced to flesh,
with buzzards circling above her. In spite of the power
she seems to wield over her family, she is allowed on the
road only as a putrefying object within a wooden box, a
thing to be carried and finally fixed forever within the
grave, a destination she shares with Rosa Coldfield. When
Mr. Compson declares women "irrevocably excommunicated"
from reality, he adds that their funerals and graves are
"of incalculable importance" (192). Women are thus
connected with the grave and its dark silence in
opposition to the facts and events that are to them mere
"shades and shapes" (211).

But the significant word in Compson's description is
"excommunicated," for women are excluded from Faulknerian
history's facts and events by excommunication, by being
excluded from language and narration. Grandfather Compson
defines language as

that meager and fragile thread . . . by which the
little surface corners and edges of men's secret
and solitary lives may be joined for an instant
now and then before sinking back into the darkness
where the spirit cried for the first time and was
not heard and will cry for the last time and will
not be heard then either. (251)

The grave is a place outside of language, a place from
which one's voice cannot be heard, and thus a place in
which women cannot find community and solidarity. By
denying them the thread of language and the telling of their own stories, Faulkner, like Warren, denies women access to the loom and protects the patriarchal pattern repeatedly woven in nostalgic Southern texts. To Quentin, Rosa's summons seems "out of another world almost," her note written in a "neat faded cramped script" (10), and her voice--from that otherness of the feminine--is cramped by the male narrators' own scripts until she is mute, her story faded into oblivion. Addie Bundren proclaims her distrust of a language that has excluded her, calling words "just a shape to fill a lack" (164). For Faulkner, the shape of history in his narratives compensates for the loss of the patriarchal Old South, restoring authority to men who tell the stories over and over while the women listen silently from the grave.
Notes

1. As in Warren's novel, the narrative belongs to men. Although Faulkner claims that *The Sound and the Fury* is "a tragedy of two lost women," the story is told by the male relatives of those two women. The last section is referred to as Dilsey's, but, as Faulkner admits, he is the final spokesman.

2. Watson describes these "historian-prophets" in Faulkner as "seminal" figures (503), thus unconsciously linking such figures to a masculine perspective.

3. In a similar argument, Susan V. Donaldson claims that although the four narrators in *Absalom, Absalom!* are all concerned with the making of sequential, coherent history, based upon cause-and-effect relationships, the women, "who seem to live in the breaks and empty spaces of the narrative, . . . threaten to disrupt and even destroy the continuities of history woven by the narrators" ("Subverting History" 21). Once again the marginal, silent status of women in Faulkner's text is valorized as feminine subversion by Donaldson's claim that the women characters' "retreats into the margin . . . remind us of the breaks, inconsistencies and absences that the narrators seek to repair . . . and remind us that these connections are tentative, speculative and ultimately uncertain" (25).
4. Apparently General Compson also talked to Quentin, since Quentin knows about Charles Bon's black blood while Mr. Compson does not.

5. Note the resemblance to Holman's comments on the Southern writer's "concern with what is as a product of what was and the shaper of what may be" (The Immoderate Past 11).

6. John V. Hagopian draws other parallels between the Biblical story and Faulkner's novel but concludes that the relation between the two is "by ironic inversion" since Sutpen "neither triumphs nor survives his younger son and he does not lament his disappearance" (134).

7. Whether or not Charles Bon is of mixed race would not necessarily interfere with Sutpen's plan since Sutpen's dynasty was to be founded upon Henry rather than Bon. See Cleanth Brooks (Toward Yoknapatawpha 298) and Kuyk (13-14).

8. While David is king, he does bring a stranger into his household, but that stranger, far from nameless, is Mephibosheth, the son of Jonathan and therefore the grandson of the former king, Saul. David not only welcomes the boy into his home but also restores to him all Saul's lands (II Samuel 9) "because of the Lord's oath that was between them, between David and Jonathan the son of Saul" (21:7). In this instance, the male heir has his property restored as a result of a homoerotic bond.
Mephibosheth's lameness (a result of being dropped by his nurse; see 4:4) apparently disqualifies him for God-anointed kingship.

9. Cleanth Brooks describes the "society of the lower South in the nineteenth century" as "rather fluid" with flexible class lines: "Men did rise in one generation from log cabins to great landed estates. But the past was important, blood was important, and Southern society thought of itself as traditional" (Toward Yoknapatawpha 297). In Social Relations in Our Southern States, an 1860 defense of Southern society, Daniel R. Hundley describes the "Southern Gentleman" as one who "comes of a good stock . . . usually of aristocratic parentage," a man of "faultless pedigree" (27-28). For further discussion of various historians' views on the antebellum South's social structure, see Campbell.

10. Kauffman does note that the "male characters see female sexuality as a labyrinth" (265). But in her argument, Sutpen is the figure trying to escape, a focus which leaves the patriarchal labyrinth that entraps the women relatively unexplored.

11. Carolyn Porter claims the speech is Judith's (265), but David Krause argues that the "context, construction, length, style, and tone all mark it as fundamentally the (re-)invention of Compson" (231-32).
12. Philip Weinstein argues that Rosa, unlike Mr. Compson, talks at Quentin rather than to him, and that Quentin "can only assent to" her rather than question her (91). But, in fact, Quentin not only dissents, he also rewrites her while she is still speaking.

13. Both Sadie and Rosa share the Sphinx's role in the myth of Oedipus as De Lauretis describes it: "She only served to test Oedipus and qualify him as hero. Having fulfilled her narrative function . . ., her question is now subsumed in his; her power, his; her fateful gift of knowledge, soon to be his" (112).

14. Weinstein argues that Rosa's "utterance" is "unaware of its status as a narrative" and that Rosa "does not ponder" or ever "say maybe" (92). Her comments on memory (quoted above) belie that argument.

15. Kauffman's claim that, "despite her imprisonment in the rigid structures of male logic and patriarchal discourse, Rosa Coldfield manages to defy those structures and to make an affirmation by embroidering her vision of what might-have-been" is seriously undercut by the footnote attached to that claim:

I should note that even when Rosa is not being interpreted by Mr. Compson, Quentin, or Shreve, there are moments when her own voice is clearly Calvinistic. Nevertheless, those passages can be attributed to Rosa as voice—looking back after
Sutpen injures her—rather than to Rosa as focus.

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Accepting Kauffman's odd dichotomy of voice and focus (and ignoring her focus throughout the argument on Rosa's voice) still does not counter the weight of Rosa's Calvinism.

16. That Rosa judges her own life in these harsh terms reinforces her immersion in and internalization of patriarchal values.

17. A simpler explanation for her ineffectuality is her age. Nonetheless, that Faulkner chooses to make her a weak, doddering old lady incapable of independent progress reinforces his pattern of portraying ineffectual women. Furthermore, Rosa is perfectly capable, once in the house, of dashing up the stairs and shoving Clytie out of her way.

18. Veronica Makowsky has drawn my attention to the possibility that Clytie, having been a black matriarch for years, may be protecting that matriarchy from Quentin, and that she may prefer destroying her world rather than having the patriarchy tie up all the loose ends and exclude truth. However, I am not convinced that Clytie's domain would qualify as a black matriarchy, in part because she is caring for the male heirs of a man who not only fathered her but owned her as well. Her status, even after emancipation, does not seem authoritative. She
cannot stop even the slightly-built Rosa from penetrating the recesses of her domain.

19. André Bleikasten describes Joe Christmas as "much closer to the jealous Jehovah of the Old Testament than to the Man-God of the Gospels" (132), adding that "there is little Christianity in the society portrayed in Light in August" (135). However, he claims that the religion of Yoknapatawpha is not that of the Old Testament because "no covenant has sealed the mutual recognition of father and son" and since Christmas's death does not discharge the debt (135). That failure to discharge the debt, the failure of the sacrifice to bring redemption, is precisely what makes the covenant an Old Testament one. The sacrifice of animals did not atone for sin. Only Christ's death could abolish that old code and provide redemption. In spite of Joe Christmas's name, he is no New Testament figure and therefore cannot discharge the debt even through a sacrificial death.

20. See Deborah Wilson for further discussion of these comparisons.

21. In an odd remark on reincarnation, Faulkner said he would "want to come back a buzzard. Nothing hates him or envies him or wants him or needs him. He is never bothered or in danger, and he can eat anything" (Cowley, Writers at Work 129). The comment can be read as an aggressive desire for (godlike) self-sufficiency.
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